

Views from VanDeWalle

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Making Contributions During the Holidays

The holiday season gives youth and adults an opportunity to stop and reflect on events of the past year, one's beliefs and values, and what gives life meaning and purpose. For the last 21 months, the global pandemic has given many young people and adults the opportunity to re-evaluate what is important to them. As 2021 draws to a close, it is a wonderful time to reflect and act in ways that provide contributions to others.

Research has found when we feel we have made a difference in the lives of others, it often gives our own life meaning and purpose. Even small acts of kindness can provide great life satisfaction. By serving others in a positive way, one can gain a deeper sense of perspective. When considering ways to contribute, make sure to ask a few questions. Does this opportunity align with my values, budget, and time capacity? Below are some tips to help you and the young people in your life make meaningful contributions this holiday season.

- **Become a Volunteer** – This requires giving your time, talents, and energy to a cause without receiving money. Volunteering can be an individual or family activity. It can be a great way to meet new people and strengthen existing relationships. Taking the initiative to address a need in your community can give you a sense of accomplishment. Depending on the task, volunteering can help you or a young person build self-confidence and improve one's physical health. This holiday season, look for places to volunteer like a food pantry, school, animal shelter, or a youth program like 4-H Youth Development.
- **Raise Funds** – Raising money can build momentum around a cause in your community. It is important to support something that aligns with your values. Many organizations rely on the generosity of others to assist them in their work through financial contributions. These funds go toward needed items, services, and programs. Raising funds for others can teach children, youth, and you to appreciate what you have and understand that at any age you can share your resources with others.
- **Be an Advocate** – By bringing awareness to a topic you are passionate about helps other people learn more about an issue which, in turn, can lead to additional support now and in the future. For example, you might want to raise awareness about issues of hunger and poverty in your community or highlight the need for safe places for children and youth to gather.
- **Express Gratitude** – Gratitude is expressing a feeling of appreciation for something or someone that has added goodness to your life. It costs nothing and the advantages can be life changing. The benefits of gratitude can bring us happiness, reduce anxiety and depression, and strengthen our immune system. It can help us to sleep better, be more resilient, and strengthen our personal relationships. Showing appreciation can have a lasting impact on others. Take time to say "thank you" to a friend, neighbor, or family member for all they have done this past year.



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Contributing this holiday season can lead to meaningful events throughout your life and have a lasting impact on you, your family, and your world. Remember to always ask the question, what can I do to contribute to others and in my community now and in the future?

More information and resources about youth social-emotional development can be found on Nebraska 4-H's [Supporting Young People](#) page or by contacting [local county Nebraska Extension offices](#).

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