



CHARACTER BUILDING ACTIVITIES

LIGHT YOUR CANDLE

Story Description

Witnessing the deterioration of her inner-city neighborhood, Stephanie decides to “light her candle” to help clean up the trash and stop the violence. After convincing her two friends to do as much good as they can for one week, Stephanie and her friends, with the help of parents, end up transforming their inner-city school and the whole city from a place of violence and deterioration to a model of order and cleanliness.

Carl Sommer shows that in spite of many obstacles, one person’s determination and desire to do well can transform an entire community. This inspiring story teaches the importance of citizenship, caring for others, and community service.



Major Objective

To define and present the following virtues so they can be integrated into the life of each student:

- Citizenship: having the rights, privileges, duties, and responsibilities of where you live
- Caring: being concerned about the safety and prosperity of another person or thing
- Community Service: performing work for the good of people living in the same area



Story Time Interaction

Read the story, **Light Your Candle**, and then write these three virtues on the board: citizenship, caring, and community service. Define and discuss these virtues.

Ask students to describe the main characters: Stephanie, Lori, and Cindy. Discuss their friendship, closeness, differences, and attitudes.

Activities

Objectives: To use the following activities to help reinforce the virtues of citizenship, caring, and community service. Students should learn the joys that come from helping others.

Community Service

Goal: To help students understand community service

Defining Community Service: Community service is when individuals help one another. Communities are like a family. They are made of many families who work together to help each other keep the area where they live safe and inviting.

List of community volunteers: Community volunteers are those who help to make your community run smoothly and safely. Ask students to list examples:

Volunteers helping in schools and libraries

Organizations feeding and providing shelter for the homeless

Volunteers visiting the sick in hospitals and senior homes

Volunteers coaching teams

Religious volunteers: Ask students to name things volunteers do at their place of worship: Teaching, ushering, singing, playing instruments, etc.

Discuss: What would the community be like without these volunteers?

Home Volunteer Tree, Class Citizenship Tree, and Community Volunteer Tree

Goal: To get students to volunteer to help others

Help Wanted: Make a help-wanted sign that says: "Help Wanted—Community Helpers."

How Can I Help? Everyone can help through the use of a home volunteer tree, class citizenship tree, and a community volunteer tree. By being willing to volunteer, students may experience the rewards of joy of giving to their home and community.

Projects: There are three projects that can be made. All three projects can be made and displayed at the same time. This will give ample opportunity for all students to help others and be recognized.

Where to Start: Where do you start to make a difference?

Start where you are with one need at a time. Remember: Enthusiasm is contagious!

Community Service at Home: Let's start first at the home. Do you help at home? Working together makes a happy home. A family works together because they *care* about each other. Each family member has an important responsibility in making the home run smoothly and efficiently. When family members do not help, there is dissension.

Project—Construction of Home Volunteer Tree: Draw and cut out a large green poster board tree shapes and staple them to a bulletin board with a sign labeling it *Home Volunteer Tree*. Ask students to write or illustrate ways they can help at home. Stress that students should help around the house without bitterness or complaining. Make a list

of the ideas and place them on the tree. For example:

- Taking out the trash
- Doing the dishes
- Vacuuming the house
- Keeping their room clean
- Mowing the lawn
- Weeding the garden

Project–Construction of Class Citizenship Tree: Draw and cut out a large green poster board tree shape and staple it to a bulletin board with a sign labeled *Class Citizenship Tree*. Ask students to write or illustrate ways they can help in the classroom. Make a list of the ideas and place them on the tree. For example:

- Picking up trash in the room
- Keeping your desk clean and orderly
- Being willing to help other students in need
- Raising your hands and not speaking out of order
- Not talking when you should be quiet
- Not disturbing other students while they are working
- Obedying school rules
- Treating others the way you want to be treated

Project–Construction of Community Volunteer Tree: Draw and cut out a large green poster board tree shape and staple it to a bulletin board with a sign labeled *Community Volunteer Tree*. Ask students to write or illustrate ways they can help others outside the classroom. Make a list of the ideas and place them on the tree. For example:

- Running errands for a shut-in
- Picking up trash outside a shut-in's house
- Helping a friend with a difficult project
- Taking food to a sick neighbor
- Helping a blind person cross the street
- Giving up your seat to an older person

Student Action: Have each student pick a “gift” or action for each tree that he or she will try to complete in a specified time period. The student can make a construction paper greeting card describing the chosen action and decorate it. When an action has been performed, the gift card may be stapled beneath the Community Volunteer Tree. The object is to bring many gifts, which represent the community, to the tree.

Circle of Care Community Bulletin Board

Goal: To help students recognize others in the community who are helping others

Project: Make a *Circle of Care Community Bulletin Board*. Students should select community helpers from newspapers or magazines

and write a brief paragraph about how that member or job helps the community. If there is a group of volunteers, paste a picture of the group in a circle on some construction paper. Write in the middle a short paragraph about what the group does for the community.

Thank-You Card to the Community Volunteers

Goal: To get students to be thankful for those helping as community volunteers

Project: Make a large thank-you card and send it to the place where there are community volunteers. If it's possible, have the class as a group present the thank-you card to the volunteers. Notify the local newspaper and they may write an article on the event.

Meet Our Community Volunteers

Goal: To learn from community volunteers what they are doing so to inspire students to help others

Project: Meet Our Community Volunteers Day:

Schedule community volunteers to give a brief talk to the children about how they help the community. This is a good time to use parents of students who are involved in helping the community. Ask students to list some volunteers they know.

Meeting Our Community Workers

Goal: To learn from community workers what they are doing

Project: Meet Our Community Workers Day:

Schedule community workers to give a brief talk to the children about how they help the community. This is a good time to use parents of students who are involved in working for the community. Ask students to list some workers they know. These workers can be a police person, doctor, nurse, waste control specialist, fireman, youth worker, etc.

Explain the difference between community volunteers and community workers. Volunteers do not get paid for their services, workers do. Stress that both are important for a happy community.

Tying It All Together

Students can make a difference by starting with one good deed at a time. Encourage them to look through their "giving eyes" to see what they can contribute to their family, school, or community that will make it a better place to live. Encourage them to start small and be committed to helping others.