

Family Engagement Toolkit

Teach Compassion. Inspire Action.
Honor the Day.



AmeriCorps



INTERACTIVE

What is 9/11 Day?

September 11 is now a federally recognized National Day of Service and Remembrance. Inspired by the unity and compassion Americans showed in the aftermath of the attacks, this annual observance encourages people to turn a day of tragedy into a day of doing good. Each year, more than 30 million Americans participate by performing good deeds in memory of those we lost and in honor of those who responded with courage.

While many adults remember the events of 9/11 firsthand, most young people today were not yet born. 9/11 Day offers families an opportunity to teach values of kindness, unity, and service—through action.

How Families Can Get Involved

1. Do a Good Deed Together

Choose a simple act of kindness or service you can do as a family—on 9/11 or anytime in September.

Some ideas include:

- Donate gently used clothes or toys
- Make care kits for neighbors or shelters
- Pick up litter in a local park
- Write thank-you notes to firefighters, police officers, or veterans
- Bake cookies for a neighbor or teacher

2. Share Your Story

Inspire others by sharing your family's good deed online. Post a photo or story using #911Day and tag @911Day. Even small acts can spark big change when shared.

Visit 911day.org/resources for more ideas.

3. Join the 9/11 Day Good Deeds Challenge

Turn your family's good deed into a chain reaction of kindness. When you share your story on social media, challenge others to join in. Use or display your Good Deed Pledge Card, and tag your friends and other families. Be sure to include #911Day and #GoodDeedsChallenge to help kindness go viral! **Scroll down for more detail and sample post language.**

4. Talk About 9/11 in an Age-Appropriate Way

Use this day to start meaningful conversations with your children:

- What does it mean to help others?
- Why is kindness important in difficult times?
- How can we turn a tragedy into something hopeful?

If helpful, use books or short videos designed to introduce younger children to the concepts of community, courage, and compassion.

5. Join or Organize a Local Event

Many communities host 9/11 Day events such as service projects, memorial walks, or donation drives. Attend one together or invite neighbors to do something simple, like creating a sidewalk chalk message of hope on 9/11 Day.

Why It Matters

- Teaches kids to connect history with action
- Encourages empathy, responsibility, and gratitude
- Creates new family traditions grounded in kindness
- Honors the lives lost by lifting up others

Need Help or Ideas?

Scroll down in this doc and/or visit: 911day.org/resources for ready-to-use tools, [pledge cards](#), good deed ideas, and more.

Visit 911day.org/teachers for age-appropriate 9/11 Day lessons and activities!

Let's raise the next generation to remember not just what happened—but how we responded. With unity. With compassion. With service.

TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

9/11 Day Good Deeds Challenge

About the Challenge

The 9/11 Day Good Deeds Challenge is a simple, powerful way for families to honor 9/11 by doing something kind together—and encouraging other families to join in.

Inspired by the incredible unity and compassion shown by Americans in the days after the September 11 attacks, this challenge invites families to perform a good deed, post about it, and tag others to keep it going.

Like the Ice Bucket Challenge, it spreads kindness one act at a time—creating a ripple effect of service, remembrance, and unity across neighborhoods, schools, and communities.

How It Works

1. Do a Good Deed (or multiple!) as a Family

Make sandwiches for a shelter, donate outgrown clothes, help a neighbor, or write thank-you notes to first responders.

2. Capture the Moment

Take a photo or short video of your family in action or simply holding a “We Did a Good Deed!” sign.

3. Post and Challenge Others

Share your good deed on social media. Then tag 2–3 friends or other families to keep it going.

4. Use Suggested Hashtags

#911Day #GoodDeedsChallenge

Pre-9/11 Social Posts (Family Pledge and Challenge)

Facebook/Instagram

- September 11 is now the largest day of service in America, with more than 30 million people doing good deeds!
- This year, our family is joining the 9/11 Day Good Deeds Challenge by [INSERT FAMILY GOOD DEED—e.g., making care kits, writing notes to first responders].
- We’re challenging [@Family1], [@Family2], and [@Family3] to take the challenge too.
- Let’s show what families can do—together.
- #911Day #GoodDeedsChallenge
Tags: @911Day @AmeriCorps @[OrganizationHandle]

X

- Our family is joining the #911Day Good Deeds Challenge by [INSERT FAMILY GOOD DEED].
- We challenge [@Family1] [@Family2] [@Family3] to do a good deed too.
- What will your family do to spread kindness?
- #GoodDeedsChallenge
- Tags: @911Day @AmeriCorps

Post-9/11 Social Posts (Reflection)

Facebook/Instagram/X

- Yesterday, our family took the #911Day Good Deeds Challenge by [INSERT FAMILY GOOD DEED].
- We were proud to be one of many families honoring 9/11 through kindness, service, and unity.
- Never forget what we're capable of doing together.
- #911Day #GoodDeedsChallenge
- Tags: @911Day @AmeriCorps

Family Video Pledge Script

- Hi, we're the [LAST NAME] Family, and we're taking the 9/11 Day Good Deeds Challenge!
- This year, we're honoring the spirit of unity by [INSERT FAMILY GOOD DEED].
- We challenge the [@Family1], [@Family2], and [@Family3] families to take the challenge too.
- Let's keep it going—every act of kindness matters.

9/11 Day Conversation Starters for Families

Ages 4–7: Introducing Kindness and Helping Others

Focus: Kindness, being helpful, and working together.

- “Do you know what a good deed is? Can you think of one we could do together today?”
- “Sometimes people do something kind just to make someone smile. Who could we do something nice for?”
- “What does it mean to be a helper? How can we be helpers in our home or neighborhood?”
- “If someone is feeling sad or scared, what can we do to make them feel better?”

Activity Tip: Let young children draw their good deed or deliver a handmade kindness card to a neighbor or teacher.

Ages 8–12: Understanding Community and Remembering Together

Focus: Empathy, remembrance, teamwork, and small acts that make a big difference.

- “Do you know what happened on September 11, 2001? Why do you think people choose to honor that day by doing good?”
- “Why do you think helping others can make people feel stronger after something hard happens?”
- “Can you think of a time someone did something kind for you? How did it make you feel?”
- “Let’s come up with a list of good deeds we could do as a family. What’s one that excites you?”

Activity Tip: Create a family “Kindness Jar” where each person writes down daily good deeds and adds them in throughout the week.

Ages 13–18: Exploring Service, Resilience, and Civic Responsibility

Focus: Historical context, social impact, and how youth can lead through kindness and action.

- “What do you know about 9/11? How do you think it changed our country and our communities?”
- “Why do you think service and remembrance go hand in hand?”
- “What do you think it means to turn tragedy into purpose? How can we do that today?”
- “If you could lead a service project for others your age, what would it be—and why?”

Activity Tip: Invite teens to document their good deed as a short reflection, photo, or post they can share to inspire others.

11 Good Deeds for Families to Do Together on 9/11 Day

1. Make Care Kits for a Local Shelter

Fill bags with hygiene items, socks, or snacks for a nearby shelter or outreach organization.

2. Deliver Treats or Thank-You Notes to First Responders

Drop off cookies or handwritten cards at your local firehouse, police station, or EMT hub.

3. Do a Neighborhood Clean-Up

Grab gloves and trash bags and pick up litter in your neighborhood or a local park.

4. Donate Gently Used Books or Toys

Sort through items at home and deliver donations to a library, school, or children's center.

5. Create Chalk Messages of Hope

Write or draw messages of kindness and unity on your sidewalk or driveway to brighten someone's walk.

6. Drop Off a Meal to Someone in Need

Prepare and deliver a home-cooked (or store-bought) meal to a senior, single parent, or neighbor facing a hard time.

7. Support a Food Pantry

Shop for and donate nonperishable items to a local food pantry—and let the kids pick some items, too.

8. Send Cards to Military Members or Veterans

Write letters or decorate cards to thank those who serve or have served.

9. Host a Book Swap or Mini Free Library

Share your favorite reads and set up a “take one, leave one” book box in your neighborhood.

10. Sponsor a Class Supply Drive

Pick a local teacher or school and collect school supplies as a family.

11. Start a Family Gratitude Jar

Each day during September, every family member adds one note about something or someone they're grateful for—then read them aloud together.

For more ideas, visit 911day.org/resources and visit our [Good Deeds Library](#) and/or Individual Engagement Toolkit!

Book List for Parents: Teaching Kids About 9/11, Kindness and Good Deeds

Preschool (Ages 3–5)

Come With Me

by Holly M. McGhee

A young girl learns how simple acts of kindness can make the world feel safer and more connected.

Be Kind

by Pat Zietlow Miller

This gentle story introduces young children to the idea of being kind in everyday life.

The Jelly Donut Difference

by Maria Dismondy

A charming tale of sibling cooperation and sweet acts of service in the neighborhood.

Early Elementary (Ages 6–8)

Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey

by Maira Kalman

True story of a retired fireboat that returned to service during 9/11 to help firefighters.

What Does It Mean to Be Kind?

by Rana DiOrio

Simple scenarios encourage kids to think about how they can show kindness at home, school, and beyond.

Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed

by Emily Pearson

One girl's small good deed triggers a global chain of kindness.

Upper Elementary (Ages 9–11)

Towers Falling

by Jewell Parker Rhodes

A fifth grader discovers the meaning and impact of 9/11 on her community and family.

14 Cows for America

by Carmen Agra Deedy

Based on the true story of a Maasai village that offered a heartfelt gift to the U.S. after 9/11.

A Long Walk to Water

by Linda Sue Park

A story of courage and service that fosters empathy through a parallel narrative of survival and hope.

Middle School (Ages 12–14)

Nine, Ten: A September 11 Story

by Nora Raleigh Baskin

Follows the lives of four diverse children in the 48 hours before 9/11, weaving together a moving prelude to the tragedy.

I Survived the Attacks of September 11, 2001

by Lauren Tarshis

An engaging introduction to 9/11 history told through the eyes of a fictional boy in the “I Survived” series.

Each Kindness

by Jacqueline Woodson

A poignant lesson about the lasting impact of missed opportunities to be kind.

High School (Ages 15+)

With Their Eyes: September 11th—The View from a High School at Ground Zero

edited by Annie Thoms

Real monologues written by students at Stuyvesant High School after 9/11.

Just a Drop of Water

by Kerry O'Malley Cerra

Tells the story of two friends—one Muslim, one not—navigating life in the aftermath of 9/11.

This Is Where It Ends (Preview for maturity)

by Marieke Nijkamp

Although not about 9/11, this novel invites conversations about responsibility, empathy, and acting in the face of crisis.

ABOUT 9/11 Day

- In 2002, a group of 9/11 family members and leaders joined together to form the nonprofit “9/11 Day,” with the goal of transforming the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 tragedy into a day of doing good.
- Today, 9/11 Day has become a National Day of Service and Remembrance, recognized under federal law, and the largest annual day of service in America.
- More than 30 million people participate each year by volunteering, supporting charities, and performing other good deeds in tribute to those impacted by the 9/11 tragedy, and in a spirit of unity and peace.

9/11 Day Programs

- 9/11 Day organizes large-scale volunteer service projects focused on hunger relief that mobilize tens of thousands of volunteers in cities across the nation. At these [9/11 Day Meal Packs](#), volunteers pack millions of nutritious, non-perishable meals for Americans at risk of hunger, in partnership with local Feeding America-affiliated food banks.
- In 2023 and 2024, 9/11 Day also collaborated with colleges and universities across the United States to help organize service projects on college campuses, in partnership with the federal agency AmeriCorps.
- In many schools across the nation, K-12 teachers are now utilizing [free lesson plans](#) and other materials provided by 9/11 Day to engage America’s younger generations in the 9/11 Day program, inspiring millions of students to plan their own good deeds in observance of the anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy, and in recognition of the national spirit of unity that arose in the aftermath of the attacks.
- Millions of other Americans participate in 9/11 Day through the organization’s annual pledge campaign, in which individuals plan their own “good deeds” for 9/11 Day and share their plans on social media using the hashtag #911day.

For more information, toolkits and other resources, visit 911day.org, or contact 9/11 Day at info@911day.org

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9/11 DAY

GOOD DEED PLEDGE



For 9/11 Day this year, I will:

My Name _____

Organization _____

State _____ Country _____

Share your pledge on social media and tag us!

✉ @911day @911day @911day 911day.org #911day



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