

Holiday Family Philanthropy Guide



At the Community Foundation, we have the privilege of working with individuals and families who tell us about their giving traditions and strategies for doing good in the world. These ideas inspired us to collect and share the following meaningful and fun family activities for the holiday season. We invite you to explore the ideas below as ways to engage your family in conversation, reflection, and giving back.

Convey Family Blessings

Invite each member of the family to write a note to every other member of the family, highlighting a nice thing about that person's character or remarking on an admirable gesture they made. (It can be as simple as, "You let me sleep with your teddy bear.") During the holidays, gather everyone around and read the blessings out loud, with each person reading those written to him or her.

Volunteer Together

Give back to the community by choosing a volunteer activity that your family can do together. Connect with HandsOn Greater Richmond, a service of the Community Foundation dedicated to matching volunteers with local nonprofits. You can find DIY (Do It Yourself) and holiday volunteer opportunities or search for age-appropriate activities that work with your schedule throughout the year at [HandsOnRVA](#).

Family Movie Night

A family movie night is the perfect activity when everyone's together for the holidays. Make a point of not just drinking hot chocolate and eating popcorn, but also debriefing the film, asking each family member to reflect on one example of a positive value they saw acted out by one of the characters (e.g., The value of compassion in *The Jungle Book* from when Mowgli sees the baby elephant in trouble and selflessly finds a way to help — not for a reward, but because it's the right thing to do). Discuss how your family puts its values to work during the holiday season as well as year-round.

A Family Giving Table

Set aside 20 minutes to search our [Nonprofit Directory](#), a database of 600+ local nonprofits. Search on keywords important to your family (e.g. homeless services) and print the summary of 3-5 organizations that best relate to your family's interests. Place the organization summaries on a table for everyone to read and discuss. Give each family member an equal number of \$20 bills and invite them to place their money next to the organization(s) they wish to support. Once selected, enjoy a conversation about which organizations were selected and ask questions to help your family determine why certain causes received more support. Depending on age, you may also wish to encourage children to use their personal funds to contribute to the "giving table." Parents may choose to match their child's gift to incentivize personal giving.

Give the Gift of "Giving"

In place of a traditional present this year, consider giving a [Grant Certificate](#) to your friends and loved ones. They can give a grant to a nonprofit that is important to them or one that your family decides on together. The minimum certificate amount is \$100 and is available during the holidays and throughout the year. Please contact your [Philanthropic Advisor](#) for more details.

Express Gratitude

Like any habit, gratitude can be cultivated. Ask family members to share one to three things they are grateful for each day or during special gatherings. The goal of this exercise is to shift the emphasis away from receiving presents and to witness how parents, aunts and uncles model their expressions of gratitude. Build this practice into a time of day that works best for your family, whether at the dinner table, at bedtime or when you wake up. Over time, you'll notice that you and your family will start to wear "gratitude glasses," and seek out things each day to be grateful for.

Build a Philanthropy Library

Each year, give your children an age-appropriate book that relates to philanthropy or is mission-specific. Include a letter to your child or discuss how the books relate to your family values in philanthropy. Soon you children will have a personal philanthropic library. Suggestions of books are below.

Ages 1 – 6: *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein
The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister
Alexander, Who Used to be Rich Last Sunday by Judith Viorst and Ray Cruz

Ages 7-12: *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
Wonderful Nature, Wonderful You by Karin Ireland
The Ultimate Gift by Jim Stovall

Ages 13 – 18: *Making Kind Choices* by Ingrid Newkirk
A Kid's Guide to Giving by Freddi Zeiler
Classified: How to Stop Hiding Your Privilege & Use it for Social Change! By Karen Pittelman and the Resource Generation Group

Adult: *The Opposite of Spoiled* by Ron Lieber
Raising Charitable Children by Carol Weisman
Silver Spoon Kids by Eileen Gallo, Ph.D. and Jon Gallo, J.D.
The Art of Giving: Where the Soul Meets a Business Plan by Jeffrey Solomon and Charles Bronfman