



A Tribute to First Responders (Grades 3–8)

Students pay tribute to firefighters and EMS personnel by engaging in charitable service while learning about first responders.

Learn! Questions to investigate before getting started

- **Discuss the role first responders** play in your community.
- **What types of things do they do?** For older grades, consider also talking about the role first responders played on **September 11, 2001**.
- **Visit 911day.org** for more information.
- **Have students research or interview** local firefighters and EMS personnel to discover the full range of activities they perform, the training they need, and skills their jobs require.
- **Students might also explore and summarize** local news articles featuring first responders. Also challenge students to find out how many firefighters and EMS personnel work to protect your community. For younger students, consider inviting them to draw pictures that illustrate the different things first responders do to help others, and how they support the local community.
- **Invite first responders to speak to students.** Reach out to your local fire department or EMS to invite representatives to speak with students about their jobs and safety issues. For younger students, consider arranging a class visit to a firehouse, or watch a film about firefighters. Review presentation topics with the first responders to ensure that the information is appropriate for your group.

Share your good deed on Twitter and Facebook using #911Day.
(Or visit 911day.org)

Select a special tribute for 9/11. With your students, choose an activity to honor and show support

- Write **thank you notes** to local first responders. (For older classes, consider letters to the community of Yarnell, Arizona, which was destroyed in a wildfire over the summer. The local Salvation Army is helping manage the relief efforts)
- Host a **bake sale** and donate the proceeds to a local firehouse or EMS facility to purchase needed supplies or to purchase smoke alarms and batteries for the first responders to distribute to families in need during Fire Prevention Week in October.
- Host a **“special dress day” or “hat day”** in which students pay \$1.00 to dress down or wear a hat. The proceeds can be donated to the local EMS or firehouse for needed supplies.
- Host a **food drive** to collect canned goods and treats for the firehouse or EMS facility.
- Write poems, or write and perform a short **thank you song** for first responders and send it to them for inspiration.
- Host a school wide musical event (a big idea) for later in the year **to honor and raise money for** local first responders. (Consider recording the concert for responders who are unable to attend.)
- **Speak to your administration.** Discuss the tribute plan with your administration and get sign-off from all the necessary people.
- **Reach out to the first responders.** Find out whether the organization you’re serving will accept donations. If so, what logistics need to be worked out? Do they have any restrictions on donations that can be accepted or when and how they can be delivered?

If you’re hosting a concert, ask for dates and times the first responders would be able to attend.

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Plan! Helpful hints to prepare for your 9/11 Day Project

- **Build a team.** In addition to students, invite parent volunteers to assist you in developing your tribute. If your group is creating a song or hosting a concert, invite members of the music department to join you.
- **Organize logistics.** Brainstorm the best way to organize your event. Determine date options, supplies you'll need, and how to get the word out. Plan arrangements to have the donations delivered or collected.
- **Thank you notes:** Collect supplies for students to use to create their notes. Arrange to have the cards mailed or dropped off at the local firehouse or EMS facility. Or research where letters to other groups could be received.
- **Bake sale:** Determine the types and quantity of baked goods you'll sell. Send out a letter requesting baked goods to your students' families—indicate any special requirements, such as “no nuts” and require a written description and label to accompany all donated baked goods. Create a sign-up sheet to track the baked goods. [As an alternative, instead of having families donate goods, work with a local bakery to order special cupcakes for the bake sale.] Plan to have tables, napkins, plates, cash, and a cash box.
- **Special dress/hat day:** Determine the fee and how to collect the cash donations.
- **Food drive:** Ask the first responders for a list of suggested non-perishable food items they can use and include these items on your food drive communication.
- **Thank you poems or songs:** Have students work in groups or as a class to write poems or songs. If you create songs, arrange rehearsal times, and then coordinate the equipment and resources you will need to perform and record the songs.
- **Tribute concert:** Reserve and decorate the auditorium. Coordinate the performances, program, and rehearsal times. Have students design invitations and a program and make copies for guests. Plan refreshments for the celebration.
- **Pick a time and location.** Decide where and when your event will be held. Seek input and approval from the school administration and custodial staff.
- **Set a goal.** Determine a target you would like to reach and track your progress.
- **Develop a plan.** Create a schedule, identify tasks, and assign roles.
- **Engage students.** Organize students into teams, and assign them roles.
- **Create flyers and signs.** Have students design flyers and signs with the details of your event, including the date and time.
- **Spread the word.** Plan the best way to distribute the flyers and signs. For example, post them in the school hallways, faculty room, cafeteria, etc. Provide each teacher in the school with flyers to send home with their students. Post a notice on the school's website. If possible, send an email to families and faculty. For a tribute concert, have students create invitations and send them to the local firehouse and EMS facility.
- **Arrange for donations to be delivered.** Make plans to have the donations delivered to the firehouse or EMS facility, or see if they can be collected. Ask for parent volunteers to help with deliveries, and get directions for drivers.

Do! Ready, set, go!

- **Post announcement signs.** Hang signs around the school announcing where and when the event is being held.
- **Set up the event and assign students roles.** For example:
- **Thank you notes:** Allow students time to create their notes.

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- **Bake Sale:** Arrange a drop-off area for the baked goods the morning of the event. Create a schedule for students and faculty to oversee the sale, including setup and cleanup. Arrange the tables and display the labeled baked goods.
- **Special dress/hat Day:** Arrange to have classroom/homeroom teachers collect the students' donations, and then have a group of students collect and count these donations.
- **Food drive:** Set up the donation boxes and signs. Empty the boxes daily and store the food items if your drive takes place over several days.
- **Thank you poems or songs:** Consider creating and "publishing" a class or school-wide book of the students' poems. Or record the final song and arrange to have an audio or video of the performance sent to the firehouse and EMS facility.
- **Tribute concert:** Assign students to serve as greeters and photographers. Organize students for the performances. Have one or more students introduce the concert and welcome the first responders. Arrange to have parent volunteers coordinate the refreshments for the celebration following the concert.
- **Post the results.** Have students create signs or posters thanking the school community for supporting the event, and announce the total amount of money raised, if applicable.
- **Deliver the donations.** Once the event is over, prepare to deliver your donation according to the guidelines of the organization you're serving. Invite students to write notes to the firefighters or EMS personnel to include with the donation. Arrange to have the donation delivered or collected.

Think! Reflect on how your 9/11 Day Project has impacted students and the community

- **Celebrate your success.** Announce how much money your group raised at the event if applicable. Thank your participants. Consider what you might do differently next time.
- **Recap with students.** Ask students how they felt about doing a good deed to help others.

Keep it Going! Ideas to continue your 9/11 Day Project or to prompt others to get started

- **Explore volunteer opportunities.** Speak to your local firefighters and EMS to find out if students might help them deliver important safety messages to the community. For example, students might work with first responders to create flyers and posters with approved safety messages, such as reminders to test smoke alarms monthly and change smoke alarm batteries at least once a year, or tips for creating disaster supplies kits.

Share your Good Deed on Twitter, #911Day

- **Let the world know** what your class did to pay tribute on 9/11 by sharing your good deed (and pics) on Twitter or Facebook (hashtag #911Day). Also visit 911day.org for more info. You can also dedicate your good deed to a person or group of inspiration, such as an individual first responder or your town's fire department and EMS.

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