

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL ACTION

Tzedek, Tzedek tirdof. Justice, Justice shall you pursue.

—Deuteronomy 16:20



■ SOCIAL ACTION TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND

When initiating a Social Action project, remember that you have many resources. Some of them include your rabbi, your temple's Social Action Committee, your temple's religious school principal, your regional social action vice president, your NFTY social action vice president, local organizations, the phone book and the Internet, just to name a few.

Remember that in NFTY, when we perform acts of *tikkun olam*, we are following Jewish traditions which command us to act in ways which better our world. Therefore, incorporate some Judaism into social action projects whenever possible. For example, when visiting a hospital, you may want to teach about the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*, visiting the sick. Ask your Rabbi to help you.

If you decide to visit and help people in your community, you may want to prepare participants. For example, if you are visiting patients in a hospital, discuss the possible ways to start a conversation and appropriate and inappropriate topics to discuss.

While social action is about helping to make our world a better place, it can also be about having fun! Enjoy the work that you do and realize that no matter how large or small a social action project you initiate, you are making a difference!

■ SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS FOR TYG'S

They're quick and simple—just right for any TYG.

1. NIGHT SHELTER LUNCHESES

Supplies:

- Cold cuts (buy in packages in frozen section of grocery store)*
- Bread—several loaves
- Jar of mayonnaise*
- Knife for spreading mayonnaise
- Large bags of chips*
- Small plastic bags
- Large boxes of cookies*
- Small boxes of juice or cans of soda

*Note: Not all of these supplies are necessary. You may cater the lunches to whatever supplies your TYG can afford. You can use mustard instead of mayonnaise, for example, or leave out the cookies. Tailor the project to your TYG.

Procedure:

Speak to the Director of Volunteer Services at a local night shelter. Tell him/her that you are part of a youth group (give the name of your temple) in the North American Federation of Temple Youth and are interested in making lunches for the night shelter. If you want to make this an ongoing project, decide with the advice of the night shelter, on one day each month that your TYG will make lunches.

Your TYG should set aside one hour to make the lunches (assuming approximately eight people make lunches). Small plastic bags should be stuffed with chips. Sandwiches should be made. Two cookies should be added to every bag. Add one box of juice or can of soda per bag.

2. HOSPITAL CARD MAKING

Supplies:

Construction paper

Markers, crayons, pens, pencils, stickers, or other decorations

Procedure:

Speak to the Director of Volunteer Services at a local hospital. Tell him/her that you are part of a youth group (give the name of your temple) in the North American Federation of Temple Youth and that you are interested in making cards for patients in the hospital. Discuss this idea with him/her. When you have received permission to initiate this social action project, bring the supplies to a TYG event. Have the participants create cards for the patients. Set up a time with the hospital for you to bring over the cards.

You could do this seasonally (for the holidays, 4th of July, etc.), or you could do the cards as “Get Well” cards. You could even make this an ongoing once-a-month or every-other-month project.

3. FOOD/CLOTHING/WINTER ACCESSORIES/BOOK/TOY DRIVE

Supplies:

Flyers

Items Collected in Drive

Procedure:

Contact the place to which you wish to donate the items that you plan to collect. For example, you may want to collect toys for children in a hospital, clothing for people in a homeless shelter, or canned/nonperishable food for a soup kitchen. Explain that you are part of a youth group (give the name of your temple). Once you have been told that this collection will be worthwhile for the organization, begin advertising the drive. Publicize, publicize, publicize! The drive will be most efficient if not only your TYG, but your Temple, and your community also get involved in it. Ask people to bring in the items that you are collecting by a certain date. Once all of the items have been collected, deliver the items to the organization.

SOME ADDITIONAL SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS THAT ROCK...

Hospital/Nursing Home/Homeless Shelter—Visit/Talent Show—Your TYG can brighten up many people’s day by visiting one of these places.

Letter Writing Campaign—Your TYG can choose an issue that speaks strongly to its members. After you further educate your TYG about this issue, members of the TYG can write letters to government officials expressing their views. Some issues that may interest your TYG include the separation of church and state, environmental issues, and social justice.

Neighborhood/Temple Area/Public Park Garbage Clean-up—Your TYG can make a big difference by taking a walk around a neighborhood, Temple area, or public park and throwing away any trash that is on the ground.

Collection of *Tzedakah*—Your TYG can initiate a fund-raiser in order to help to benefit a charity of your choice. See “Quick and Easy: Five Effective Fund-raisers For Making Money Fast”.

Interfaith/Intra-religious Activities—Your TYG can have an event in which you join with a youth group of another religion or Jewish movement. Together the youth groups can discuss similarities and differences in their beliefs. This also provides an opportunity for socializing.

