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Our school is a member of CHARACTER^{plus}[®], an initiative of Cooperating School Districts, which advances the cause and importance of character education. CHARACTER^{plus} provides high quality training, resources, and leadership to help educators and parents accomplish one of their most important responsibilities – the character development of the next generation.

A New Spirit of Service

By Cynthia Georges

Wouldn't it be wonderful if every child were tucked in bed each night wearing a new pair of warm pajamas and hugging a good book?

Genevieve Piturro thought so, and with her friend Alice Quirk, started The Pajama Program out of her New York home in 2001 to serve children in need and children hoping to find permanent homes.

The Pajama Program is catching on and gaining lots of local support. This is not surprising when considering St. Louisans' passion for helping others. The rate of volunteerism in our city exceeds the national average and has turned the heads of many in organizations that seek support.

Volunteer opportunities abound in our town and cater to a wide range of interests and abilities. You can care for your favorite, furry creatures at Open Door Animal Sanctuary, package food for the hungry at St. Louis Area Foodbank, build trails at St. Louis County Parks, or help the foster children at Angels' Arms. It's never too early—or too late-- to make a commitment to community.

Research conducted by the Washington, D.C.-based Corporation for National & Community Service has shown that when youth participate in service projects, however, they are more likely to regularly engage in their communities throughout their lives. What better reason to promote more community service projects at home and at school?

Just why do people volunteer? Many will say it feels good to help others. Volunteering opens our eyes to others' needs, and it deepens our capacity to care.

It also gives us a sense of shared purpose in a wider world than the one we traverse as we go about our daily routines. It empowers and moves us to want to do good. It invites us to impact others' lives.

Soon, larger voices will beckon. Recently, President-elect Barack Obama issued a national call to service by announcing a new initiative —“Renew America Together”—that promotes community service for all. And the launch of a new web site, USAservice.org, is fast connecting individuals and organizations at lightning speed.

Other initiatives are in the works. There is talk of a Presidential Advisory Board on Non-Profits and a White House Office of Social Innovation and Impact.

What a splendid time for new beginnings.

“A warm pair of pajamas can turn any kind of day into a hopeful tomorrow,” offered one Pajama Project volunteer.

Just think what kind of tomorrows our children might create through a commitment to community today.

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