

Mitzvah Project Ideas

When choosing a *mitzvah* project, we recommend that you look for something about which you are passionate. You will then find the project enjoyable, rewarding and successful. Brainstorming as a family as to what those passions are will often lead to a meaningful choice for a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* project. It can also allow the family to embark upon the project together, adding more meaning to the entire *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* process. These are some ideas of projects done by WHC families:

General Ideas

- ✧ Volunteer to spend time with residents of a local retirement home
- ✧ Record books and donate recordings and books to a school or library
- ✧ Make blankets and donate them to various organizations, i.e. people living with ALS or Children's Hospital
- ✧ Create and perform a socio drama, teaching kids about the economics of poverty in America
- ✧ Toiletry Collection – collect hotel-size items to be donated to shelters, camps or areas affected by natural disasters
- ✧ Collect money or toys to be donated to a children's hospital or local shelter
- ✧ Organize a Mini-Mitzvah Day
- ✧ Organize a food drive for a local food distribution program
- ✧ Raise money for a medical foundation
- ✧ Donate time, money or needed items to an animal hospital or shelter
- ✧ Create scholarships at a university or community college
- ✧ Organize a team and walk for a specific cause
- ✧ Feeding your local fire station dinner
- ✧ Collect and donate various items to a school or shelter, i.e. sports equipment/helmets or musical instruments
- ✧ Raise money for a specific cause through a bake sale or read-a-thon

Local Organizations

✧ **Washington Hebrew Congregation's Mitzvah Day:** Collect items that will be used for projects on Mitzvah Day

✧ **WHC Hunger Project:** Organize a food packing event at Temple or JBSC. The food is delivered to local shelters and feeds hundreds of local adults and children in the Metro-DC area.

✧ **Tzedek B'nai Mitzvah Fellowship- Center for Social Responsibility at the Edlavitch DC Jewish Community Center**

A Fellowship which provides hands-on volunteering and learning about systems of inequality in the DC area. After 5 Sunday sessions, your teen will walk away with a greater understanding of equity issues in our community, Jewish teachings around service and social justice, and how they can use their own personal strengths and passions to engage in change-making beyond their bar/bat mitzvahs.

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✧ **Abram Simon Elementary School** (an inner-city DC school Washington Hebrew Congregation has a special relationship with)

Donate items, such as a collection of books, backpacks with school supplies, teacher requested school supplies, Simon Closet with clothing basics and school uniforms, art room decorations, or musical instruments.

✧ **Camp Moss Hollow:** a summer camp located in Markham, VA
Send children from the Abram Simon Elementary School to camp.

Camp Moss Hollow c/o Regina Scheure

929 L Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20001

✧ **Martha's Table:** Prepare sandwiches for the Martha's Table Sandwich Brigade, cut vegetables for soup, donate clothing or diapers, or help with birthday parties for low income and homeless children.

marthastable.org

✧ **Jewish Foundation for Group Homes - Jfgh.org**

✧ **Just Tryan It:** kids' triathlon for kids ages 6-14 which supports families dealing with childhood cancer

Justtryanit.com

✧ **Morris Cafritz Center** for Community Service

www.washingtondcjcc.org/volunteer

✧ **DC Scores:** Donate soccer equipment to DC Scores to raise a child's self-worth through soccer, poetry and service-learning

✧ **Chesapeake Bay Foundation:** plant trees to stop erosion

- ✧ **Casey Trees:** restores, enhances and protects the tree canopy of the nation's capital
202-833-4010, volunteer@caseytrees.org
- ✧ **Groundwork Anacostia River DC:** utilizes environmental restoration goals as a vehicle for community development in and around the Anacostia River
202-650-5651, groundworkdc.org
- ✧ **Anacostia Watershed Society:** protects and restores the Anacostia River and its watershed
301-699-6204, anacostiaws.org
- ✧ **Jewish Social Service Agency - Jssa.org**
- ✧ **Walk to End Genocide:** Organize a group for this annual walk in D.C. or donate to their Change for Change program
Walktoendgenocide.org
- ✧ **S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat):** Donate to S.O.M.E. or collect toiletries, gloves, hat/scarves and donate in decorated shoeboxes
some.org
- ✧ **Charlie's Place:** Provides food, clothing, toiletries, transportation, and health care to DC's homeless population
<http://charliesplacedc.org/>
- ✧ **Real Food for Kids – Montgomery:** Help advocate to work for healthier food in the Montgomery County Public Schools
703.232.1425, <http://www.realfoodforkidsmontgomery.org>

National Organizations

- ✧ **My Chemo Bag Inc.:** Create bags of necessary items for local patients who are starting chemotherapy
<https://www.thechemobagproject.com/>
- ✧ **KaBoom!:** volunteer or raise money to build playgrounds in underserved communities.
kaboom.org
- ✧ **K.E.E.N. - Kids Enjoy Exercise Now:** Volunteer to play and provide recreational opportunities for children with developmental and physical disabilities (13 & older w/parent)
keengreaterdc.org
- ✧ **Pennies for Patients:** a program through the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Collect change to help children with cancer.
Schoolandyouth.org
- ✧ **Locks of Love:** Donate hair to provide hairpieces to children with long term medical hair loss.

locksoflove.org

✧ **Habitat for Humanity Youth United:** raise money to help build homes for people in need

dchabitat.org

✧ **Race for Hope Brain Tumor Walk** - *braintumor.org*

✧ **Race for the Cure** - *raceforthecure.org*

✧ **Special Olympics** - *Specialolympics.org*

✧ **Back on My Feet**, an organization that uses running to help those experiencing homelessness change the way they see themselves so they can make real change in their lives that results in employment and independent living

www.backonmyfeet.org

✧ **Birthday Cakes 4 Free:** bake cakes and cupcakes for homeless shelters and senior centers - *bc4f.org*; *team@bc4f.org* (Montgomery County chapter)

Supporting Israel

✧ **Ethan H. Freed Learning Center** in Ramle, Israel: raise money to support learning opportunities for disadvantaged youth in Israel. Visit and share a high tech English and Hebrew learning experiences. *darca.org.il/en*

✧ **The Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC)**, an organization that advances pluralism in Israeli society and defends the freedoms of conscience, faith, and religion

Irac.org

✧ **Kids 4 Peace**, a global movement of Jewish, Christian & Muslim youth, dedicated to ending conflict and inspiring hope in divided societies around the world

k4p.org

✧ **Susan's House in Israel**, a home that provides a last chance for wayward youth in Jerusalem. Sponsor a teen to learn a craft that will allow them to provide for themselves.

susanshouse.org.il

✧ **Israel Guide Dog**, trains dogs for the visually impaired in Israel

israelguidedog.org/your-mitzvah-project/

✧ **United Hatzalah**, a network of more than 6,200 volunteer medics help save thousands of lives each year across Israel by providing medical treatment in an average response time of 3 minutes or less. Their humanitarian services are free, universal, and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. *israelrescue.org*

✧ **Matnat Chaim** is an organization in Israel that is dedicated to encouraging individuals found suitable for making a life-saving kidney donation, and focuses exclusively on altruistic i.e. voluntary donations. The organization functions on a voluntary, not-for-profit basis. The sole motive that drives the volunteers of the organization is the desire and willingness to help others and save lives.

kilya.org.il/en/

- ✧ **Magen David Adom**: Raise money for an ambulance or rescue vehicle in Israel
afmda.org

Supporting Areas Around the World

- ✧ Raising money for areas affected by natural disasters
- ✧ **American Jewish World Service** - ajws.org
- ✧ **American Red Cross** - redcross.org
- ✧ **Jewish World Watch**, an organization that fights genocide around the world
jewishworldwatch.org

Remembering the Holocaust

- ✧ **Remember Us: The Holocaust B'nai Mitzvah Project**
www.remember-us.org
- ✧ **Remember a Child Project: Holocaust Twinning** through the Holocaust Museum
<https://www.genafterdc.com/remember-a-child/overview/>
- ✧ **Jewish Historical Institute** is spreading knowledge about the heritage of the thousand years of Jewish presence on the Polish lands. The mission of the Jewish Historical Institute is to care for the Jewish legacy preserved in the archives of our Institute. Their collections consist of seven million pages of varied documents. The most significant part of the collections is the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, also known as the **Ringelblum Archive**.
- ✧ **Stumbling Stones**, an organization in Germany that creates a small, cobblestone-sized memorial for a single victim of Nazism: Research for and raise money to create a memorial. stolpersteine-berlin.de/en

Supporting Soldiers

- ✧ Write letters to Israeli or American Soldiers or support organizations that help wounded soldiers and their families
 - The Yellow Ribbon Fund** - www.yellowribbonfund.org
 - Wounded Warrior Project** - www.woundedwarriorproject.org

Other ideas can be found at themitzvahbowl.com and in [The Mitzvah Project Book](#) by Liz Suneby and WHC member Diane Heiman