

Making a beloved community

Elementary school

Objective

Students will write letters and make simple gifts to build and strengthen a sense of community.

■ PREPARE

Explain that students will be participating in a service activity to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Begin the session by having students relate serving others to the teachings and ideas of Dr. King.

- Contact your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate about the project and its needs before introducing the lesson to students. Visit www.habitat.org/local for contact information.
- Ask students to share what they already know about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Provide students with further information from the biography found at http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-bio.html.
- Tell students that one of Dr. King's ideas was to build a "beloved community." Write "beloved community" on the board. Have students break down the word "beloved" to understand its meaning. Ask students what they think such a community would be like. Write students' responses on the board.
- Share this quote from Coretta Scott King about the meaning of the Dr. King holiday from The King Center Web site (www.thekingcenter.org): "The King Holiday celebrates Dr. King's global vision of the world house, a world whose people and nations had triumphed over poverty, racism, war and violence." Explain that this "world house," or beloved community, is one in which people treat each other kindly and fairly. People, regardless of race or faith, come together to solve problems in their community.
- Explain that many organizations are working hard to fulfill Dr. King's dream of a "beloved community." One of those organizations is Habitat for Humanity. Tell students that Habitat for Humanity builds safe and affordable homes. Discuss how the goals and methods of Habitat for Humanity illustrate the idea of a beloved community.

■ LEARN

Part 1

- Tell students that Habitat for Humanity relies on volunteers and financial donations to build homes. Have students write general thank-you letters to volunteers and donors that express appreciation for the gifts and talents volunteers and donors provided. You can provide students with a letter template or have students draw pictures instead of writing letters.
- Collect the letters and deliver them to your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate to distribute.

Part 2

- Tell students that Habitat for Humanity strengthens communities by helping to eliminate substandard housing. Explain to students that although they are too young to build houses, they can strengthen a community by promoting the mission of Habitat for Humanity.
- Tell students that they will be making bird feeders to be given to new Habitat for Humanity homeowners.
- Have students carefully cut holes in the sides of recycled milk or orange juice cartons you've collected. The holes should be large enough for a bird but small enough to keep out other animals, like squirrels.
- Have students use a punch to make a hole in the top of the carton. Then guide a piece of string or yarn through the hole so the feeder can be hung from a tree.
- Encourage students to decorate their cartons with designs that reflect the idea of good housing for everyone. Students can look for design ideas on the Habitat for Humanity Web site at www.habitat.org.
- Have students fill the bird feeders with bird seed. Students may make more than one bird feeder.
- Collect the feeders and deliver them to your local Habitat for Humanity affiliate.

■ REFLECT

Have students complete the attached worksheet to reflect further on Dr. King's ideas and the meaning of their service activity.

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Directions: Think about what you have learned today about building and strengthening a beloved community. Answer the questions below.

1. You wrote letters to Habitat for Humanity volunteers and donors. How does writing and sending letters help to bring people together?

2. Habitat for Humanity builds houses with people who do not have safe housing. How do you think building safe, affordable houses improves a community?

3. Dr. King believed that communities should be kinder and fairer. What changes would make your community kinder and fairer?

4. In Coretta Scott King’s essay about the meaning of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, she says, “And it is the young people of all races and religions who hold the keys to fulfillment of (Dr. King’s) dream.” Why do young people “hold the keys”? What can you do to fulfill this dream today and in the future?
