

# Citizenship Character Connection

Participation, involvement and contribution are traits of character. Good citizenship is not doing what “looks good.” It means helping others, knowing more than how the government works and working to make our community, country and world a better place to live.

A good citizen:

- Does their share
- Cooperates
- Stays informed and votes
- Is a good neighbor
- Obeys laws and rules
- Respects authority
- Protects the environment

## ***Infants and Toddlers***

Even infants and toddlers can learn about citizenship. Not only is taking them for walks in the neighborhood healthy it also shows them a larger world than home and CYS. As your infant becomes a toddler, talk to them about what you see on your walks. Toddlers may not understand all that you explain but the more you talk, the more they will understand and will want to become a part of the community.

## ***Preschoolers***

Preschoolers can start learning about citizenship by being a citizen of their family and their CYS classroom. Help them understand the importance of getting along with others. They can also show good citizenship by doing chores around the house – picking up their toys – or by feeding animals.

## ***Birdfeeders Activity***

Supplies: pine cones, string, yarn or pipe cleaners, peanut butter and bird seed

Help your child make a bird feeder by attaching string, yarn or a pipe cleaner to a pine cone. Then smear peanut butter on it and roll it in bird seed. Hang it by the string. Explain how important it is for us to take care of our feathered friends.

## **School Age**

Help your school-ager (6 to 10 years) understand that a community can be defined in many ways. The entire town is a community; the installation is a community; even the CYS program is a type of community. An important part of citizenship is taking pride in your community by helping keep it clean, by following the rules and doing your part to see that everyone is safe.

### ***Chore List Activity***

Have everyone in your family brainstorm a list of chores that need to be done to keep your family “community” running smoothly. Assign each family member specific chores on the list. Talk about why these chores are important and what will happen to the “community” if someone decides not to do their chores.

## ***Middle School and Teens***

As your child becomes older, he should take an even more active role in citizenship. Middle schoolers and teens in CYS programs do an amazing job of giving back to their community through service. Whether planting flowers, cleaning up a playground or baking holiday cookies for the MP’s at the gates, encourage your child to take an active role in service projects.

### ***Who, What, When Activity***

Help your child to learn more about the community or installation. Find out how it got its name and some of the early history that makes it a special and unique place to live and work. This could be a great family activity. When you have completed the project, share it with others so they can learn what you found out about the community.

### ***Practicing Citizenship 1***

True citizenship means participation, involvement and contribution. No one can make a difference without being involved. Good citizenship is not just doing the thing that “looks good.” Good citizenship means helping others and knowing more than how the government works. It means working to make our community, country and world a better place to live. A good citizen:

- Obeys the laws
- Helps others/volunteers
- Protects the environment
- Votes
- Respects the national symbols that protect them
- Paying attention to government policies, and holds them accountable



How can you address community problems? Ask your children to think about problems they might find in their neighborhood, school, or 4-H club. Discuss what causes these problems, how problems affect members of the community and how concerned citizens can solve the problems. A list of concerns might include

- Litter and other forms of pollution
- Shoplifting
- Outdoor play equipment that is broken
- Wildlife that is dying
- 4-H members not attending meetings and scheduled activities

### ***Practicing Citizenship 2***

Citizenship is not passive. It demands participation, involvement and contribution. Good citizenship in practice is understanding, appreciating, and doing things that make life better for yourself and others. Citizenship includes both rights and duties. My rights depend on you fulfilling your responsibilities and my responsibility includes the duty to see that you are free to exercise your rights.

4-H'ers have shown good citizenship through community service activities and projects.

### ***Exercise***

This month take the time to learn more about your community. Study its history and share that information with others through a program at a 4-H club meeting or an article for the local newspaper.

It doesn't take lots of people to complete a community service projects; in fact, one person is enough. This month think of 1-2 activities you can do by yourself to help your community. Some ideas might include attending a city county meeting to learn more about issues, help with voter registration or drive someone to the polls to vote or organize a bingo party or costume party at a local nursing home.

