

# Mazel Tov!

You are ready to start your Mitzvah Project!

## Mitzvah/Tikkun Olam Project Guide

**“A mitzvah occurs when, by acting on our Jewish values, something good happens for ourselves or others.”**

Mitzvah Cards by Rabbi Goldie Milgram, copyright 2002

A wonderful quote from Rabbi Milgram to introduce the concept of “Mitzvah Projects”. Ideally, however, a Mitzvah/Tikkun Olam project when carefully planned and executed, will provide something good to happen for both the giver and the recipient.

Congregation Agudas Achim requires all students to participate in a Mitzvah Project during their Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparations. We STRONGLY suggest that these projects at least begin (we won't say one should stop doing a mitzvah ☺) in 6th grade before regular meetings with the tutor, sponsor and rabbis become more regular occurrences on the student's schedule. These projects are intended to provide an opportunity for each student to experience the importance of doing a mitzvah “ben adam l'chavayroh”, that is, a sacred obligation between one person and another. There are two key guidelines to structure the planning of your mitzvah project:

- 1) Projects should involve some direct connection with an organization or other beneficiary, beyond simply collecting and donating, although this may certainly be one aspect of the project. Although animals may be a part of the project, working directly with people in some way must also be a component.
- 2) Although there is no required number of hours that one must dedicate to the project, the expectation is that this is an opportunity to engage with a particular part of our world that needs repair in a deep way. Therefore, we ask that the project be something with which the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is engaged for at least 6 months.

These requirements show the importance of these mitzvot to Judaism. Such projects can also offer an important opportunity for families to work together, creating a meaningful experience while serving the community.

Please note that although CAA does not generally publicize mitzvah projects in the congregational emails or bulletin, information may be distributed through CAARS.

**The Mitzvah Project Planning Sheet should be turned into Morah Stacey Glazer during class.**

**If you have questions, please do not hesitate to reach out:**

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## How to choose a Mitzvah/Tikkun Olam Project and some examples

Fill out the 6 Questions to Ask Yourself to Find Your Personal Mitzvah Project form handed out at the Mitzvah Project meeting. This will allow the family to determine not only the child's interests and strengths in terms of what they can contribute to the world, but also the particular social issue that they would like to address. Please submit this and be ready to present on \_\_\_\_\_.

**Example #1:** if your child likes to cook and is troubled by the number of homeless people they've seen begging in Austin, Agudas Achim has been partnering with University Baptist Church downtown in their efforts to feed and clothe the poor. As part of Micah 6, a food pantry is open two days a week. Their "God's Family Dinner" on Thursday nights provides a hot meal for anyone who walks in the door, from the working poor to the homeless. There is also a clothing closet to provide clean, used clothing for the needy.

To support the food pantry, a neighborhood food collection drive where a child can distribute grocery bags with a message attached telling about the food drive, collecting the food, then personally delivering it and working in the food pantry the day their collected items are distributed. A child learns to communicate the need to the neighborhood, use his/her personal time and efforts to collect and deliver, and then gets the personal experience of seeing the result of their hard work.

Likewise, working on one of the two Thursday nights each month that Agudas volunteers help with God's Family Dinner. If it's during the summer, the child could actually go in the kitchen and help cook the meal that will be served that evening. During the school year, shifts are from 4:30 until 6, when there are opportunities to serve, bus tables, and wash dishes. If the child is interested, there is a member of the congregation that can introduce them to a few of the people to put a face on the problem.

**Example #2:** If your child is a nature buff, perhaps a project linked to saving the environment, preserving an endangered species, or perhaps organizing and executing a project to clean up the banks of Shoal Creek several times a year with friends would be a good project.

**Example #3:** Is there something that has touched your family that may be suitable? For instance, if a relative or friend has had a serious disease such as cancer. To plan a project that supports a cure, a treatment phase, or even Hospice for caring in the final stages if the illness was terminal and Hospice was used. Perhaps sewing or purchasing caps for chemo patients and helping distribute them to patient. Maybe soliciting caps signed by celebrities and having an auction whose proceeds are donated? Taking Hospice training and learning how to be a support person for someone terminally ill.

## 6 Questions to Ask Yourself To Find Your Personal Mitzvah Project

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Mahatma Ghandi

An opportunity, once again, to teach our children what is even more important than the tastiest caterer, the most eloquent dvar torah, and the most beautiful floral arrangements. That becoming a bat/bar mitzvah is to become a blessing, not only within one's family, but for all.

1. What am I *really* good at? (Or what are you *really* bad at but might try if you knew it was a way to make a certain mitzvah happen?)

2. What do I *really* like to do?

3. What bothers me so much about what is wrong in the world that I get angry, *really* angry and want to do something about it?

4. What can I do *right now*, today, in the next week, in the period leading up to my Bar/Bat Mitzvah to make a difference?

5. Whom do I know?

6. Why not?!

## Putting Thoughts Into Action

Once you've decided what you're passionate about and good at, it's time to get this mitzvah started. Use the worksheet below to help you in planning how you're going to make your vision a reality.

<b>Bar/Bat Mitzvah Name:</b>			
<b>Project will benefit:</b>			
<b>I have confirmed that I (as a 12/13 year old can volunteer here)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>Contact Person at organization (if working with different organizations, please list contact info - name, phone #, email - for each one):</b>	<b>Organization 1:</b>	<b>Organization 2:</b>	<b>Organization 3:</b>
<b>Dates/Times the organization accepts volunteers:</b>			
<b>Dates I plan to volunteer (either specific dates or how often):</b>			
<b>Supplies Needed (if any):</b>			
<b>The way I will raise \$/collect items for supplies (if any) is:</b>			
<b>The way I will get the supplies where I need them to be is:</b>			
<b>If advertising is needed to inform others of my project, the way I will let people know about it is:</b>			
<b>Contact info for people I may need to get in touch with to help me advertise:</b>	<b>Person 1:</b>	<b>Person 2:</b>	<b>Person 3:</b>
<b>This Mitzvah Project Embodies the Middah (Value) of: (See chart on next page for examples)</b>			

## List of Jewish Values (Middot) to Consider for Mitzvah Projects

Don't Place a Stumbling Block  
לא תתן מכשל

Gratitude  
הכרת הטוב

Generosity  
נדיבות

Hope  
תקווה

Taking Care of One's Body  
שמירת הגוף

In the image of God  
בצלם אלוהים

Being a Good Listener  
שמיעת האזן

Learning  
תלמוד תורה

Welcoming Guests  
הכנסת אורחים

Love of all God's creations  
אהבת הבריות

Not Destroying  
בל תשחית

Love your neighbor as yourself  
ואהבת לרעך כמוך

Guarding the Earth  
שומרי אדמה

Redemption of captives  
פדיון שוויים

Not Embarrassing  
לא לביש

Repairing the world  
תקון עולם

Being Kind to Animals  
צער בעלי חיים

Saving a life  
פקוח נפש

Don't Stand Idly By  
לא תעמוד על-דם רעך

Visiting the sick  
בקור חולים

Acts of Loving Kindness  
חסדים גמילות

Courage  
אמץ לב

Compassion  
רחמים

Do not be passive in the face of  
violence  
לא תעמוד על דם רעך

# Mitzvah Project Ideas

On the following pages we have listed some ideas from organizations that could really use your help. We hope that this will help you get started on your Mitzvah Project. Most have website addresses as well as contact information to give you more information.

The ideas and organizations listed here are only suggestions. If you have other ideas, we would love to include them for next year's B'nai Mitzvah students; please share these with Rabbi Swedroe. Once you know what you might like to do, it is important to make sure your project is manageable, making sure you have the time, resources, effort, and commitment available to making your mitzvah project work. Talk with your parents, Rabbi Swedroe, Dr. Raben, and your teachers to see if your mitzvah project idea can be completed.

Helping others is a great feeling and an important Jewish value. We hope that some of these suggestions will start you on your way to finding the perfect Mitzvah Project that's right for you.

## Little Helping Hands

[www.littlehelpinghands.org](http://www.littlehelpinghands.org)

Phone: 512-358-6943

Little Helping Hands is a nonprofit organization that facilitates family volunteering by creating and organizing monthly volunteer opportunities suitable for children as young as 3 years of age.

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** Through their website, families can view a wide variety of hands-on volunteer opportunities supporting numerous nonprofits/groups and sign up for them directly, making it simple for parents/caregivers and their children to experience the value and importance of community service together in a fun and positive learning environment.

## United Way

[www.handsoncentraltexas.org](http://www.handsoncentraltexas.org)

United Way for Greater Austin is a local nonprofit & community service organization providing resources and volunteer opportunities with local Austin charities since 1924

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** To get involved, individuals can sign up through Hands On Central Texas ([www.handsoncentraltexas.org](http://www.handsoncentraltexas.org)).

## Nursing Homes

[www.yellowpages.com/austin-tx/nursing-homes-skilled-nursing-facility](http://www.yellowpages.com/austin-tx/nursing-homes-skilled-nursing-facility)

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** Visit, play musical instrument, sing, act, serve meals, help with craft projects. Usually residents in a retirement home or nursing home love attention from others, as do their visiting families.

## Angel House Soup Kitchen

[www.angelhouse-abc.com](http://www.angelhouse-abc.com)

Frank Deutsch

chief61@juno.com or 512-474-2666

The Soup Kitchen serves the poor who suffer from the lack of basic human needs: material needs, such as food, clothing, and household necessities; psychological needs, such as motivation, self-esteem, and rehabilitation; and social needs, such as support systems and meaningful relationships.

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** Volunteers are needed to serve lunch on a daily basis from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Please call/email to schedule a time to serve.

## Austin Yellow Bike Project

[www.austinyellowbike.org](http://www.austinyellowbike.org)

512-524-5299 or [austinyellowbike@gmail.com](mailto:austinyellowbike@gmail.com)

Yellow Bike Project is a volunteer-powered initiative to put bicycles on the streets of Austin and Central Texas by operating community bike shops, teaching bike mechanics and maintenance, and acting as a local bike advocacy group.

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** Volunteer tasks include fixing up adult and kid bikes, sorting parts, organizing and cleaning the shop, and more. You don't have to know anything about bikes to volunteer! If you are interested in volunteering to learn or generally contribute, simply show up during open hours and talk to a shop coordinator to get started. No need to commit to a set schedule—just come in whenever you can and we'll put you to work.

## Jeremiah Program

[www.jeremiahprogram.org/austin](http://www.jeremiahprogram.org/austin)

Elizabeth Breston

[EBreston@jeremiahprogram.org](mailto:EBreston@jeremiahprogram.org)

Jeremiah Program offers one of the nation's most successful strategies for transforming families from poverty to prosperity two generations at a time. Our two-generation programming provides the support necessary for low-income single mothers and their children to move into a life of economic independence.

Our proven, holistic approach begins with establishing a supportive community for determined young women to pursue a career-track college education. Through a combination of quality early childhood education, a safe and affordable place to live, and empowerment and life skills training, families find stability and a path out of poverty.

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** Volunteer to "Cook For Kids" - Purchase, prepare, and serve a meal for families on the evenings when mothers attend Life Skills programming. Also, sign up to help at Special Events. You can volunteer for the Epic Battle or other special events to support Jeremiah Program in Austin. No experience necessary, just a willingness to dive in, work with others and have fun!

## Caritas of Austin

[www.caritasofaustin.org](http://www.caritasofaustin.org)

Grace Alrutz

[galrutz@caritasofaustin.org](mailto:galrutz@caritasofaustin.org)

Caritas of Austin is a non-profit organization that currently serves 20,000 homeless, working poor and documented refugees in Travis County.

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** Serve in our community kitchen. Every week day, our kitchen staff and dedicated volunteers serve lunch to our neighbors in need.

Community Kitchen volunteers help prepare and serve lunch for over 300 people. Must be 12 years or older to volunteer.

## Foundation for the Homeless

[www.foundationhomeless.org](http://www.foundationhomeless.org)

Ari Pettigrew

512-615-6810 or [apettigrew@foundationforthehomeless.org](mailto:apettigrew@foundationforthehomeless.org)

FFH restores hope and aspiration through transformative opportunities that prevent or end homelessness and nurture a more caring, sustaining community.

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** The Feed My People Program is a collaboration of 15 religious congregations in the Austin community that serve the homeless and working poor population at First United Methodist Church's Family Life Center in downtown Austin. The volunteers serve a filling, hot breakfast along with other limited services on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There are also occasional events you can volunteer at as well.

## Mobile Loaves & Fishes

[www.mlf.org](http://www.mlf.org)

Contact: Miranda Roberts

[miranda@mlf.org](mailto:miranda@mlf.org) or 512-328-7299 ext. 108

MLF empowers communities into a lifestyle of service with the homeless. We provide food, clothing, and promote dignity for our homeless brothers and sisters.

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** Prepare & deliver meals to homeless in their communities.

## Ronald McDonald House

[www.rmhc-ctx.org](http://www.rmhc-ctx.org)

Rene Carlin

[rcarlin@rmhc-austin.org](mailto:rcarlin@rmhc-austin.org)

The Central Texas Ronald McDonald House and Ronald McDonald Family Rooms provide a comforting “home-away-from-home” for families to stay so they can fight their child’s illness or injury together. RMHC CTX also supports families who have lost a child through the Healing Hearts program, which provides burial assistance and bereavement support.

**B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** Volunteers under 18 years can volunteer with us as part of a volunteer group. A great opportunity is providing a meal for the families who stay with us. Groups of up to 15 provide breakfast, lunch or dinner for the families. Please see our Meal Provider page on our website for more details about this program and the guidelines that must be followed.

## Special Olympics of Texas

[www.sotx.org](http://www.sotx.org)

Davis Johnson

512-491-2937

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

**B’nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** Volunteer at different competitions: Help set-up and breakdown the facility, scorekeepers, skill officials, athlete escort, runners, awards. Sign up at: [www.sotx.org/news-events/calendar](http://www.sotx.org/news-events/calendar). No experience required; however,

you must be at least 15 years of age, unless accompanied by an adult. Volunteers participate in an orientation prior to working with our athletes.

## Texas Baptist Children's Home

[www.childrenatheartministries.org](http://www.childrenatheartministries.org)

Brenda Gilbert

512-246-4244

We provide a haven of hope for children and families in crisis through residential programs for children and single-mother families, as well as community-based outreach and prevention programs.

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** Make and deliver meals to the cottages, yard work, and house cleaning are a just a few ways you can help out. Visit [www.tbch.cahgift.volunteerhub.com](http://www.tbch.cahgift.volunteerhub.com) to sign up for volunteer opportunities.

## Urban Roots

[www.urbanrootsatx.org](http://www.urbanrootsatx.org)

512-750-8019 or [volunteer@urbanrootsatx.org](mailto:volunteer@urbanrootsatx.org)

Urban Roots is a youth development organization that uses food and farming to transform the lives of young people and inspire, engage, and nourish the community.

**B'nai Mitzvah Project Opportunities:** We rely on volunteer support to help us maintain our farm. Volunteers help us with planting, harvesting, preparing produce for market, and whatever else needs to be done. All volunteers must be 10 years of age or older. For volunteers under the age of 14, we ask that they are accompanied by an adult.