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## LEND A HAND

**Grades:** 2 and up

**Time:** 5-10 minutes

**Materials:** Supplies for playacting scenario (see below); a sample, age-appropriate “helping” story (see below); paper and writing utensils for each participant.

**Relevant Subjects:** Social Studies, Civics, and Language Arts

***Pertinent Information:*** This activity makes an excellent icebreaker for inspiring others to get involved in their community and to realize that they can make a difference every day.

**Preparation:** Make sure that participants have paper and writing utensils available to them before this activity begins.

1. Begin by playacting a scenario in which you get participants to help you, without them really realizing what they’re doing (for example, you may rush in with your hands full of materials, greet the class, ask them to please do something – such as put the chairs in a circle – and “accidentally” drop your materials, thanking those who help you pick up the scattered items.
2. After a short period of time of participants helping, stop and point out to them what they did – helping without thinking about it. “The point is that we’re all volunteers (or helpers, if you prefer) at heart.”
3. “But, not everyone steps up to help.” Share with participants a story that exemplifies a time when many people did NOT step up to help, but one person did. (It could be a story of your own, or one that you’ve discovered elsewhere.) See a sample story below.
4. Lead a brief discussion about concepts such as:
  - “Volunteering needs to become a way of life, so that when something needs done, someone steps up.”
  - The difference between people’s willingness to immediately help out without question during the scenario, and their ability/willingness to go outside their comfort zone during their daily lives.

- The fact that we don't have to always "sign up" at some organization to volunteer; it's a way of life to pitch in when someone needs help.
- 5. Ask participants to each write down 2-5 ways that they can make a difference today. Have them share their responses with a neighbor, and then ask volunteers to share with the entire group.
- 6. Leave participants with the following quote: "If not me, who? If not now, when?" (source unknown)

### Activity by April Norgaard (M.Ed. Student)

#### April's Sample Story:

One very hot day in Arizona, I noticed a cat on a neighbor's roof. The cat had climbed up there, using a tree next to the building. The building's owner decided to cut the tree down, but did nothing about the cat on his roof. I decided that something needed to be done. I asked the neighbor to help, but he said that it wasn't his problem. I called the police, the fire department, the people who cut down the tree. No one would get the cat down because they said "it's not my job." By this time, the cat had been up on top of this tall building for several days, during temperatures breaking 110 degrees, with no food, water, or protection from the sun. My friend and I finally decided that we had to get the cat down ourselves. So we did. My friend took off work early and brought a ladder, and we climbed up and rescued the cat, who, after a visit to the vet, ended up being okay. We did it, not because it was our jobs, but because **someone** needed to do it.