

**New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs of GFWC**  
**Shirley Holly, President**  
**Love, Loyalty, Friendship**  
**The Bonds of Volunteerism**

**Advocates for Children Program**

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**Project Ideas:**

**Baby Item Collection/Baby Shower:** Hold a baby shower or solicit the public in a collection for needed items to be donated to organizations that work with mothers, such as those supporting low income families, Birthright, migrant workers associations, etc.

**Birthday Bags:** Fill festive gift bags with a box of cake mix, can of frosting, small party plates, napkins and birthday candles to donate to a shelter or food pantry.

**Birthday or Holiday Party:** Hold a birthday or holiday party at a shelter, youth center or foster care event. Bring cupcakes or a cake, as well as decorations. Your party can celebrate all the birthdays in a given month, or you can expand your project by holding a party monthly. Alternately, if you can't find a location to hold a party, donate a "Party in a Box" with everything needed.

**Blanket Donations:** Knitted, crocheted or sewn blankets can be donated to Project Linus for children in need. Their website gives information and locations (see Contact/Resource list). Also, these, or no-sew fleece blankets, can be utilized by other groups working with families with children.

**Bubble Bags:** Decorate paper bags (lunch or gift bags) and fill with a bottle of bubbles, crayons, a small toy, stickers, small activity or coloring books, or whatever you choose. Attach a note to the outside with the poem, "Bubbles, bubbles, in the air, swirling, twirling everywhere. Some are big, some are small. See if you can pop them all!" These can go to any group that services children and parents, such as shelters or pre-schools in underserved areas. Note: depending on the age group you are donating to, don't include any toys small enough to be a choking hazard for small children.

**Dress a Child:** Find a child in your community through your social services department or school who could benefit from a new outfit for the first day of school or the holidays.

**Duffle Bags or Overnight Kits:** Put together duffle bags or overnight kits with personal hygiene and comfort items to provide a sense of security to children in shelters or foster care.

**Foster Care Support:** Contact foster organizations in your area, or CASA or Embrella (see Contact/Resource list) to find out what they might need. Consider helping teens aging out of foster care by providing a suitcase with sheets, towels and a blanket.

**Furnish or Decorate a Room:** If a local shelter or youth center has a dedicated room for children, consider sprucing it up and adding new toys, books, etc.

**Halloween Projects:** Hold a Halloween party at a preschool or after-school program or shelter. Collect and donate Halloween costumes to organizations working with low income families.

**Hats:** Knitted or crocheted baby and children's hats can be donated to pediatric units, shelters, or any organizations that work with mothers, such as those supporting low income families, Birthright, migrant workers associations, etc. Hat Not Hate (see Contact/Resource list) is an organization that requests blue hats to highlight their anti-bullying campaign.

**Letters to Santa:** Contact schools and school groups (PTA's, Home and School Associations, etc.) to help you publicize a project where your members answer letters to Santa for local children.

**Mitten/Glove/Hat Collection:** Collect new mittens, gloves, hats and scarves to give to your social services department, or an organization working with low-income families, during cold weather months.

**Outdoor Activities:** Partner with or provide support to youth centers or schools for an outdoor activity event or enrichment program for children. Project Learning Tree (see Contact/Resource list) provides activities by age/education level.

**Pajama/Sock Collection – 130 Challenge:** In honor of the upcoming 130th anniversary of the NJSFWC, clubs are being challenged to donate 130 pairs of children's pajamas or socks during the 2022-2024 Administration. Some ideas are to hold a pajama party for members with the theme "Wear a Pair, Bring a Pair." Or collect socks with fun or silly designs to brighten the day for shelter or pediatric unit children.

**Pediatric Unit Playtime:** Donate coloring books and crayons, small games, puzzles or small toys for hospitalized pediatric patients.

**School Supplies:** Collect supplies by way of collection boxes in various locations, or publicizing your project on social media. Before collecting items, find out what is needed from your social services department, schools, or other groups that distribute supplies. Some organizations will take just items, others ask for filled backpacks. These organizations give out supplies before the start of school, so start your collection in the summer. And consider contacting stores (or their corporate headquarters) for donations or discounts on backpacks. Some places that make personalized embroidered backpacks may have unusable returns that they might donate for your project; members would need to rip out the embroidered names.

**Snacks for Children:** Provide healthy snacks to Food Pantries or children's programs, especially over the summer when kids don't have access to school nutrition programs. Or contact schools to supply a School Nurse's Closet during the school year with these items, for those children who may come to school hungry. Items might include bottles of water, packaged snacks or other non-perishable food items (note - no nuts).

**Stuffed Animals for Police or First Responders:** Donate new small stuffed animals to police, fire departments or first responders to be given to children in traumatic situations.

**Summer Programs:** Contact local park or recreation centers to volunteer or donate supplies for summer camps or other summer events.

**Teal Pumpkin Project:** The Food Allergy Awareness and Education organization, or FARE, (see Contact/Resource list) promotes the Teal Pumpkin Project, designed to make Halloween trick-or-treating more inclusive for children living with food allergies. Placing a teal pumpkin on your porch says that, in addition (or instead of) candy, you offer non-food trinkets that are safe for all trick-or-treaters. Inform the public by posting information on social media, including your town's website.

**Trunk or Treat:** Have members participate in a town- or school-run Trunk-or-Treat, where Halloween Candy is brought to one location to be distributed in a safer manner than having children go from house to house. Or, if your town doesn't do this, your club can hold their own event, making sure the public is informed.

**Vision or Dream Boards:** Help special needs children or teens in foster care create vision or dream boards using magazine cut-outs, etc.

**Wish Trees or Holiday Gift Collection:** Place trees in various locations during the holidays with instructions for the public to take a card or ornament with a child's gift wish, and return the gift by a specific deadline. Returned gifts can be distributed where needed; to social services departments, organizations working with low-income families, shelters, etc.

**Partner with other organizations and enlist the public's help with your projects; this will make what you do have a greater impact in helping the children in your community.**