

Community Service Ideas  
By Eller Shipman

The CWL Danz Squad began its 2001-2002 year with a great weekend at MA Dance Camp in Newton, IA. We were so fired up we couldn't stop talking about ideas on the two hour trip home. It was a goal of mine to get the girls involved with community service, so when it was discussed at a directors meeting, I was really encouraged. The girls agreed and added ideas to some of my suggestions.

Our first activity was planned as a response to the events of September 11th. We decided to use a "fund raising" idea discussed at camp, but give the money to the American Red Cross. We called it "Change for America". We decorated ice cream buckets with red, white and blue paint and ribbons. During various activities of homecoming week, the Danz Squad members passed the buckets to collect pocket change. Our principal called a principal from another school to inform him that we would be taking a collection during the Friday football game, and asked if his school would like to help. The response from both sides of the field was overwhelming! People called out to us and stopped us when they saw the buckets coming. We collected more than pocket change. There were checks and large bills with all the quarters and dimes. When the money was counted at the bank, we had raised over eight hundred dollars!

We planned a patriotic assembly and presented the check to a member of the Mason City (IA) chapter of the Red Cross. Each of the seven members of the squad had a part in the assembly, whether it was reading a poem, or leading the Pledge of Allegiance. It was a great experience and inspired us to continue more community service.

Our second project was a clothing drive. We contacted the Ft. Dodge (IA) Outreach center to tell them of our idea. We focused on warm winter clothing and held the drive during the entire month of October. We called the project "Keep Kids Warm". It was a coincidence when we found out that October is domestic abuse awareness month! Boxes were placed in each of our three school buildings. We advertised on the radio and in newspapers. People called us to make arrangements to donate items. We collected nine large boxes (over 200 items) of snow pants, mittens, boots, sweaters, etc. One day after school, we loaded up a school van and delivered the boxes to Ft. Dodge. It was really an easy project that didn't take much time or planning. Again, we were amazed at the response from our communities. People are willing to give, they just need someone get it started!

Our next project was again fairly simple. Many communities have a "Giving Tree" or "Angel Tree" at Christmas time. I called the Kossuth County Outreach Center and asked if we could sponsor someone. She called back and gave me the age and size of a young boy and explained that the mother had to return his presents to pay the bills. (This stuff makes you cry!) Each Danz member gave five dollars, and we were given other donations. We bought clothes, toys, candy, and a disposable camera. We put together a make-up sample bag for the mother. The items were delivered to the lady from the outreach center in a large gift bag. (We left them unwrapped so the mother of the boy could see them and wrap them herself.) We never met the woman or the boy, but we knew we had made a difference in their

Christmas, and we received a nice thank you card from them.

We had one more project idea that we have not yet completed. We are planning to visit one of our area nursing homes and do some make-overs. We get a lot of Mary Kay samples of make-up. We may as well use the extra to make someone happy. Plus it will be a good chance to talk with the older ladies. Some of the girls don't feel comfortable doing someone else's make-up, but we discussed that they could paint their fingernails, or read to them, play cards or a game or some other activity.

The girls and I are very proud of what we were able to accomplish with only seven members on the squad. We were surprised and thrilled when we won the Community Service Award at the Iowa State Drill Team Association State Championship last December. I think that they will long remember the feelings we had as we presented the check to the Red Cross, the boxes of clothes, and the Christmas presents to the outreach centers. When you "give" you get back more in return. It is true that if you believe in something, only a few people can make a big difference.