A Tribute To First Responders

Students pay tribute by engaging in service

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Learn! Questions to investigate before getting started

Every year on the 9/11 Day of Service, schools and communities pay tribute to first responders, the brave men and women who played such a crucial role in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, and in the weeks and months that followed. The COVID-19 crisis has once again reminded us of the vital role these dedicated individuals play in our daily lives. This resource has been updated to include information and activities related to COVID-19 recovery.

This year, as the nation prepares to mark the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, teachers have the opportunity to lead a discussion about how first responders support local communities in all kinds of situations.

- **Ask students to identify the roles** and responsibilities first responders play in their own community.
- **Reflect** on how first responders made a crucial difference on 9/11 and during and the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Talk about** the everyday role first responders play in a community.
- **For younger students**, consider inviting them to draw pictures that illustrate the different things first responders do to help others, and how they support the local community.
- **For older grades**, consider also talking about the role first responders played on September 11, 2001, and how that situation was uniquely challenging for even the most experienced first responders.
- **Have students research or interview local firefighters**, police officers, and EMT personnel to discover the full range of activities they perform, the training they need, and skills their jobs require.
- **Students can research** and summarize local news articles featuring first responders.
- **Challenge students** to find out how many firefighters, police officers, and EMT personnel work to protect your community.
- **Invite representatives** from your local fire and/or police department, hospital, EMT and other emergency support groups (National Guard, Red Cross, etc.) to speak with students about their jobs, their training, and the safety issues they deal with every day. For younger students, consider arranging a class visit to a firehouse or arranging for an in-class presentation.

Review all presentation topics with the first responders to ensure that the information is appropriate for your group.
This year, for the 20th anniversary of 9/11, brainstorm with your students to identify a special service-oriented tribute to first responders.

- **Write thank you notes** to local first responders, expressing appreciation to first responders for providing for the health and safety of the local community.

- **Host a bake sale** and donate the proceeds to a local firehouse to purchase needed supplies or to purchase smoke alarms and batteries for the first responders to distribute to families in need during Fire Prevention Week in October.

- **Host a “special dress day” or “hat day”** in which students pay $1.00 to dress down or wear a hat. The proceeds can be donated to the local police station, or firehouse for needed supplies.

- **Host a food drive** to collect canned goods and treats for local police stations or firehouses.

- **Write poems**, or write and perform a short thank you song for first responders and send it to them for inspiration.

- **Host a social media tribute** to first responders by viewing a selection of the many You Tube videos that were created during the COVID-19 crisis to thank first responders.

Make sure you clear all activities with school leaders and also reach out to the first responders you seek to honor. Find out whether the people and organization you’re serving will accept donations. If so, what logistics need to be worked out? Do they have any restrictions on donations that can be accepted or when and how they can be delivered?

### Plan! Helpful hints to prepare for your 9/11 Day Project

- **Build a team.** In addition to students, invite parent volunteers to assist you in developing your tribute.

- **Organize logistics.** Brainstorm the best way to organize your event. Determine date options, supplies you’ll need, and how to get the word out.

- **Collect the supplies needed** for students to use to create thank you notes. Arrange to have the cards mailed or dropped off at the local firehouse or police station or research where mail can be received.

- **Bake sale:** Determine the types and quantity of baked goods you’ll sell. Following your school’s protocol, send out a letter requesting baked good donations for your tribute.

- **Create an online sign-up sheet** to track the baked goods. As an alternative, have families make a cash donation and work with a local bakery to order special cupcakes for the bake sale. Plan to have tables, napkins, plates, cash, and a cash box.

- **Special dress/hat day:** Determine the fee and how to collect the cash donations.
- **Food drive:** Ask the first responders for a list of suggested non-perishable food items they can use and include these items on your food drive communication.

- **Thank you poems or songs:** Have students work in groups or as a class to write poems or songs. If you create songs, arrange rehearsal times, and then coordinate the equipment and resources you will need to perform and record the songs.

- **Spread the word using social media** or traditional flyers and signs.

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**Do! Ready, set, go!**

**Share your Good Deed** on Twitter, #911Day and #911DayTeacher, and other social media channels. Let the world know what your class did to pay tribute on 9/11 by sharing your good deed and pics on Twitter or Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or other social media channels, using the tag #911Day. The 9/11 Day organization will look for the best and feature them on its website throughout the week of 9/11 and beyond.

**Keep it Going!** Ideas to continue your 9/11 Day Project or to prompt others to get started.

**Explore volunteer opportunities.** Speak to your local firefighters, police officers, and EMTs to find out how students can support their work and be active in their local community. For example, students might work with first responders to create emails, flyers and posters with approved safety messages, such as reminders to test smoke alarms monthly and change smoke alarm batteries at least once a year, or tips for creating disaster supplies kits.