

**Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

## *Sharing Our Gifts with Others*

“We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.”

~ *Winston Churchill*

“**H**OW CAN YOU LEAVE FOOD on your plate, when children in other countries are starving?” my parents would ask if I didn’t finish my dinner. I wondered how my leftovers could travel across the sea to feed those hungry children. Recently the children’s picture book *My Heart Will Not Sit Down*, the true story of a little African girl determined to feed people she had never seen, reminded me of my childhood image.

In 1931 an American teacher told his class in Cameroon about the Depression, which was leaving many New Yorkers wandering the streets with no home or food. Having gone hungry herself, the little girl pleaded with people in her village to donate what few coins they had to this cause. The village mailed \$3.77 in cash to the city government of New York to feed “the hungry people.” Today many parents are increasingly aware of the importance of awakening this kind of concern for others in their own children—a challenge in our consumer-oriented society.

Here are some ideas to encourage children to develop caring values and learn ways to contribute their gifts for the benefit of others.

**Have open-ended conversations.** Children don’t have to eat more because foreign youngsters are hungry. Interesting discussions, rather than lectures, raise consciousness. You might try making a list with your children of all the privileged aspects of your family life that you take for granted (having enough food, having a home and a safe place to sleep). When you’re driving, ask your child how he thinks families who don’t have cars get places. Ask older children if all students get the same educational opportunities.

**Set up family chores.** Research shows that children who do chores care more about family members. To extend that caring, have children do chores for a sick neighbor or earn money doing extra chores to help someone in need. One seven-year-old boy heard about people in Africa walking for hours to get water (that was often unclean). As a first grader, he began collecting money by doing additional chores to create a well for the village. His efforts developed into an organization called Ryan’s Wells. So far they have created 713 wells and 911 latrines.

**Have your child give generously to others.** Children learn caring attitudes through doing things for others. Set up times for your child to put toys and clothes aside for other children and deliver them together to the Toy & Clothing Boutique or another venue for families.

**Learn about child philanthropists online.** Talk about situations that kindled feelings of empathy and a desire to help others.

**Talk about school activities that support other people.** On March 28 fifth graders delivered the books that your children purchased in the Office to their destinations—two schools in San Francisco whose libraries lacked books. On Saturday and Sunday, fifth graders served spaghetti dinners to help send every classmate who wants to go on the class’s trip to Washington, D.C.

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