

Clover Kids K-3 Service Projects

The following six lesson overviews are designed to help Clover Kids leaders (grades K–3) explore meaningful service topics with their groups. Each topic includes a brief overview, a recommended picture book, suggested project ideas, and additional resources. Complete lesson plans are available upon request from [Nicole Hanson](#), Iowa 4-H Clover Kids Specialist.

Animals & Animal Shelters

Animal shelters provide a safe haven for abandoned, neglected, or abused animals, offering food, shelter, and care until they find a loving home. Supporting shelters teaches children compassion and responsibility toward animals in their community.

Recommended Book:

The Night Before the New Pet by Natasha Wing

Project Ideas:

- Invite a speaker from a local animal shelter to share how the shelter works and how kids can help.
- Create shelter-approved blankets, pet toys, or homemade treats to donate to a local shelter.
- Host a family volunteer event at a local animal shelter.

Additional Resources:

- [Pet Treats Challenge](#)
 - [Animal Rescue League of Iowa](#)
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Hunger

Food insecurity affects millions of families, including many children, making the work of local food pantries essential to community wellbeing. Teaching children about hunger builds empathy and inspires meaningful action close to home.

Recommended Book:

Saturday at the Food Pantry by Diane O'Neill

Project Ideas:

- Invite a speaker from a local food pantry to discuss food insecurity and how kids can help.
- Assemble 'Birthday in a Box' packages (cake mix, frosting, candles, and party supplies) to donate to a local food pantry or distribute through schools or churches.
- Tour a local food pantry and drop off a donation as a group.

Additional Resources:

- [Food Bank of Iowa](#)
 - [Feeding America](#)
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Aging Adults

Older adults, especially those in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, often experience loneliness and benefit greatly from intergenerational connection. Visits and thoughtful gifts from children can brighten their day and build meaningful bonds across generations.

Recommended Book:

Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox

Project Ideas:

- Invite a speaker from a local nursing home or assisted living facility to share how children can support residents.
- Visit a local facility to play games, read together, or perform songs or a short skit for residents. Consider making treats popular during residents' childhoods.
- Assemble care packages, birthday gift bags, or welcome baskets for residents (blankets, puzzles, coloring books, stationery, greeting cards, etc.).
- Decorate and donate birdhouses or bird feeders to place outside windows at the facility.

Additional Resources:

- [Iowa Department of Health and Human Services](#)
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Caring for the Environment

Caring for the environment teaches children to be responsible stewards of the world around them. Simple, hands-on projects help young people understand how their actions can positively impact their community and the natural world.

Recommended Book:

The Curious Garden by Peter Brown

Project Ideas:

- Invite a speaker from the local Master Gardener program to talk about plants, gardening, and environmental stewardship.
- Partner with your local library, school, food bank, or childcare center to launch a seed library. Children can design the “seed library” display, stock it with prepackaged seeds, and provide gardening education materials for community members to take home.

Additional Resources:

- [Master Gardener Program](#)
 - [Ames Public Library - Seed Library](#)
 - [Urbandale Public Library – Donna Kessler Seed Library](#)
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Illness

Serious or sudden illness can be frightening at any age, and caring for those who are sick is an essential lesson in compassion, even for young children. Small acts of kindness, like a handmade card or a comfort kit, can make a real difference for patients and families.

Leader Note: *Before teaching this lesson, consider sending a note home to families. This can be a sensitive topic for children who have experienced illness firsthand. A heads-up allows parents and guardians to prepare children and share any concerns with you.*

Recommended Book:

How Do You Care for a Very Sick Bear? by Vanessa Bayer

Project Ideas:

- Partner with a local hospital, children's hospital, or Ronald McDonald House to assemble comfort care packages for patients and families. Many facilities post wish lists on their websites.

Additional Resources:

- [Unity Point Health – Blank Children’s Hospital](#)
 - [Mercy One – Children’s Hospital](#)
 - [Ronald McDonald House](#)
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Disaster Preparedness

Natural disasters can affect entire communities without warning, and teaching children about preparedness builds resilience and empowers them to help others during difficult times. Even young children can take meaningful steps to prepare their families and support their neighbors.

Recommended Book:

I Am the Storm by Jane Yolen and Heidi Stemple

Project Ideas:

- Assemble Disaster Preparedness Kits containing bottled water, first aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, and emergency blankets in clear bins or bags. Partner with a local food bank, library, or fire station to donate kits to families in need.

- Inspired by the [American Red Cross Pillowcase Project](#), have each child decorate a pillowcase and fill it with basic emergency supplies to take home. Include a family emergency plan template to complete with adults.
- Host a focused supply drive with a local partner organization. For example, work with your volunteer fire department to collect and distribute fire blankets, and invite a firefighter to speak about fire safety and community needs.

Additional Resources:

- [American Red Cross – Teaching Kids About Emergency Preparedness](#)
- [Ready Iowa](#)
- [Iowa State University Extension and Outreach – Disaster Recovery](#)