

JUSTSERVE

JustServe.org and the JustServe mobile app are provided by the Church to connect individuals—members and nonmembers alike—with service opportunities in their communities.

By Amy Conway Guan
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When Jon Anderson, president of the Powder Springs Georgia Stake, USA, was first introduced to an initiative sponsored by the Church called JustServe, he was skeptical. “I saw it as simply another program to manage,” he says. Then he remembered the talk “Good, Better, Best” given by President Dallin H. Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, in the October 2007 general conference.¹ “I decided to find out for myself where JustServe fit—was it good, better, or best?”

As President Anderson learned more about the JustServe initiative, he found that it was just that—an initiative for communities to work together on service projects, not a mandate or a duty. Information on JustServe.org explains that “JustServe is a service to help link community volunteer needs with volunteers.”² Members and nonmembers

alike can go to JustServe.org or the JustServe mobile app to either post their own projects or volunteer for projects that fit their schedules, means, and interests.

President Anderson quickly recognized how important having a central location is for people who want to serve but don’t know where to start. He saw this firsthand by participating with his family in many of the service projects posted on JustServe.org.

“As everyone reaches out to help people in need,” he says, “we create a spirit of love and cooperation that transcends differences and connects us. Members of the community work side by side with people they would not have otherwise met. When they do, they build mutual understanding and we all become a little more like Jesus Christ.”

Standing Together as a Family

“If we all stand close together in the place the Lord has appointed and lift where we stand, nothing can keep this divine work from moving upward and forward.”³—Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

With five boys ranging in age from 7 to 18, Nate and Jenny Miller of Cedar Hills, Utah, USA, wanted to teach their sons how to serve and wanted something they could do together locally.

Jenny found the answer on JustServe.org—an ongoing volunteer opportunity with Meals on Wheels, a fresh-meal delivery service for homebound individuals. From 7-year-old Jett, who sorts cans into the right buckets, to 18-year-old Oakley, who drives his brothers on their delivery routes, all can contribute.

Mason, age 10, likes seeing the happy faces of the people when he drops off their meals. “Sometimes they’re just waiting at the door for us.”

Adds 13-year-old Trey, “The people we help remember who we are. They like to see us and we like

to talk with them about their lives. They care about each of us and we care about them too.”

Preston, age 15, says, “I love service because it helps me have a greater perspective of life. It helps me realize I’m not the only one. And when you’re doing it for them, it’s like you’re doing it for the Savior.”

The boys have loved serving together while serving others. “Getting with all my brothers and serving makes our relationship stronger,” says Oakley. “It just really brings the Spirit when we are able to serve others. It’s cool to see each other in that type of environment.”

“We are glad we can serve together as a family,” says Jenny. “The fact that the service we do is ongoing and in our community makes it much more powerful for us.”

As a dad, Nate loves seeing all his boys pitch in to help someone else. “Service brings joy that you can’t get in any other way,” he says. “I’ve seen service change the lives of my boys and our family.”

The Miller boys visiting with an elderly couple during their deliveries for Meals on Wheels, Cedar Hills, Utah





Judi and George Manning, Prosper, Texas

Embodying Kindness

“Kindness is the essence of greatness. . . . It softens hearts and molds relationships that can last lifetimes.”⁴—Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

George and Judi Manning were retired and had more than 40 years of medical experience behind them, he as a doctor and she as a medical assistant. When they returned home to Prosper, Texas, USA, after serving as area medical advisers for 13 Pacific Northwest missions, they began looking for something else to do that would utilize their skills. That was when they turned to JustServe.org and discovered a nearby health clinic that needed volunteer doctors. They leapt at the chance to serve.

The executive director of the clinic had posted the service opportunity just one week earlier when she heard about JustServe.org from the daughter of a Latter-day Saint nurse at the clinic. Her clinic provides free services to at-risk, high-need patients who can't afford health care, and she needed help.

“Dr. Manning emailed me a few days later,” she says. “We desperately needed a family practitioner, and it was a blessing that Dr. Manning contacted us. I’ve learned that sometimes when you need something, you pray and the answers come—just as it did for us with the Mannings. They were 100 percent committed from the moment they stepped through the door.”

“The people we help remember who we are. They like to see us and we like to talk with them about their lives. They care about each of us and we care about them too.”

—Trey Miller, age 13

Emilee H. helping refugee families in Little Elm, Texas, USA





On March 17, 2018, approximately 70 volunteers from the San Bernardino California Stake and the Highland Improvement Team worked together with the community to clean up the Highland Historic District.

Within a month, Brother Manning became the medical director of the clinic. “There were a number of opportunities listed on JustServe,” says Brother Manning, “but serving at the clinic gave us the opportunity to use skills that Sister Manning and I developed over the years.”

Sister Manning is impressed with the selflessness of the volunteers she works with. “We just do what we can,” she says. “Some volunteers are still students, but everyone is grateful for the opportunity to serve and give back to the community.”

Having Christlike Love

“We have a heaven-sent opportunity . . . to minister to the widows and the fatherless, the married and the single, the strong and the distraught, the downtrodden and the robust, the happy and the sad—in short, all of us, every one of us, because we all need to feel the warm hand of friendship.”⁵—Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

After hearing about the plight of refugees in her community during a Relief Society meeting, Kristi Park of Wilsonville, Oregon, USA, knew she had to do something. “Hearing about the refugees really touched my heart,” she says. “I wanted to help as much as I could.”

Sister Park found an opportunity on JustServe.org with Catholic Charities to do just that. Her first task was to gather

supplies and furnish an apartment for a family of five coming from Iraq. She formed a committee, made a list of needed items, and solicited help from wards in the area. Items collected were stored in a donated storage unit until the refugee family arrived. On move-in day, ward members furnished the apartment while Sister Park picked up the family and brought them to their new home.

“I loved playing with the two youngest boys and teaching them to play trains,” Sister Park remembers.

“My volunteer role with Catholic Charities has expanded,” says Sister Park. “I now help connect members of the LDS community with refugees through Catholic Charities. I have seen ward members welcome families with open arms and love them. I have listened to sweet refugee girls tell of the great time they had attending LDS girls’ camp. I have watched teenage girls blossom, both those healing from the pains of leaving their home country and those serving them. And I have heard stories of heartache and anger, then watched service give hope.”

Sister Park loves sharing JustServe.org with other members of her community. “I have gained a stronger testimony of how service can affect those serving as much as it affects those we serve. My testimony of God’s love for all of His children has grown. There are so many opportunities to serve. Just find what sings to your heart and embrace it.”



Delivering Christmas food boxes to local veterans and widows, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA

“People in the community won’t care about us until we show how much we care about them. We have to know more about each other. The only way we are going to do that is if we serve next to each other.”

—Betsy Winters

Building Bridges

“We do not live alone—in our city, our nation, or our world. . . . Ours is the opportunity to build, to lift, to inspire, and indeed to lead.”⁶—President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018)

Betsy Winters, a stake Relief Society president in Prosper, Texas, never could have imagined how much JustServe would change her life and her community. She remembers, “When the stake president first asked me to help establish JustServe in our town, he saw my face and stopped to ask me if I was OK. I replied, “This will never work!” She felt that way because the small community where she lived not only had limited service opportunities but also seemed divided along religious or social lines. She had no idea where to begin to encourage these various groups of people to overcome their differences and misunderstandings to serve together.

Now Sister Winters says she has to laugh because JustServe actually is working! What made the difference?

In spite of her doubts, Sister Winters realized that the Lord’s timing was not her timing. She prayed to know how to use the JustServe initiative and JustServe.org. One evening, a group of Latter-day Saint women from the town met together to discuss the challenges their

children had been experiencing at school. Many Latter-day Saint youth faced criticism from their classmates and felt that their beliefs were being judged unfairly.

Sister Winters understood the concerns of these Latter-day Saint women; her daughter had also felt excluded at times at school. However, she was surprised to find that she wasn’t angry.

Heidi Hastings and Betsy Winters organizing donated household items, Prosper, Texas





Operation Holiday, Wichita, Kansas, USA

She says, “It’s because of JustServe and the mentality of wanting to build bridges in the community that I told them, ‘People in the community won’t care about us until we show how much we care about them. We have to know more about each other. The only way we are going to do that is if we serve next to each other.’”

With Sister Winter’s counsel in mind, the women began discussing the value of serving with their neighbors—shoulder to shoulder. Organizing service projects for themselves wouldn’t be enough; instead, they decided to go out to the other churches and work with them on

community projects, whether it was a firemen’s banquet, a Christmas parade, or the local women’s association.

As Church members began serving with their neighbors on projects found on JustServe.org, others began to see that Mormons cared about community needs too. These positive associations reverberated throughout the community, tearing down walls that had previously separated people. Even the schoolchildren felt the positive effects.

Good, Better, Best

In the end, President Anderson and many others have concluded that sincere, Christian service is the “best” choice. Service not only benefits the poor and needy but also helps people open their hearts to the gospel of Jesus Christ and especially to God’s love.

He says, “When you sit back and ask what is most important, you find it is simply serving others. It is being an example. There are many ways and opportunities to live the gospel, and service is just one thing everyone can do. We simply need to serve people, and JustServe can help us do that.” ■

NOTES

1. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 104–8.
2. “About Us,” JustServe.org.
3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Lift Where You Stand,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2008, 56.
4. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “The Virtue of Kindness,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 26.
5. Jeffrey R. Holland, “Be With and Strengthen Them,” *Ensign*, May 2018, 102.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “The Joy of Service,” *New Era*, Oct. 2009, 4.
7. “About Us,” JustServe.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Since JustServe was launched in North America in 2012, over 370,000 volunteers have registered on JustServe.org or the JustServe mobile app, and nearly 58,000 projects have been completed.
- JustServe.org is available in the United States and Canada and is being tested in Mexico, the United Kingdom, Puerto Rico, and Australia.
- While JustServe is sponsored by the Church, it is not just for members—it is for everyone. As stated on the

website, JustServe “does not discriminate based on race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation in posting projects or in encouraging volunteers to serve.”⁷ Specific project guidelines can be found on the website.

- Giving service is part of what Latter-day Saint missionaries are called to do, with time being set aside each week for that purpose. Participating in JustServe projects is a wonderful way for them to work side by side with others who desire to help those in need. Such Christlike service is the focus of JustServe.