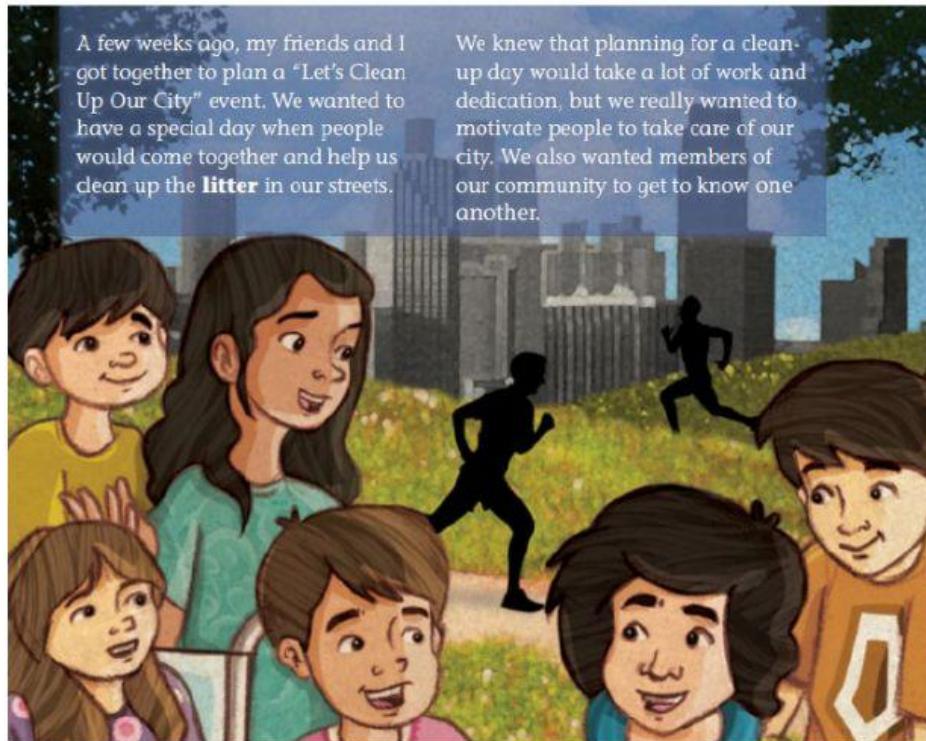


Written by
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Illustrated by
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My friends and I love to help out! Every week, we set **aside** some time to volunteer. Sometimes, we volunteer together. Other times, we volunteer by ourselves. No matter how we do it, we always find ways to help others in our community.

A few weeks ago, my friends and I got together to plan a "Let's Clean Up Our City" event. We wanted to have a special day when people would come together and help us clean up the **litter** in our streets.

We knew that planning for a clean-up day would take a lot of work and dedication, but we really wanted to motivate people to take care of our city. We also wanted members of our community to get to know one another.



"How are we going to get people to volunteer, Julian?" Lisa asked me.

"I don't know," I said. "Maybe we could use our talents to convince them."

"How do we know what our talents are?" asked John.

"I guess we'll have to think about the things that we do best," said Lisa. "Maybe we can do some of those things to bring people together and help clean up our city."

The very **next** day, I had a plan.



Every Friday afternoon, my mom and I volunteer to help out at a soup kitchen. There, I help my mom serve food to the **homeless** and other people in need. My favorite task is helping them carry their food to the table. I love doing that because it gives me a chance to talk to them and listen to their stories. I also enjoy telling them my own stories and making them laugh.

One day, while we were there, my mom asked me, "What did you say to those guys? They were laughing so hard they almost spilled their soup!"

"I just told them an old joke," I said.

Mom smiled. "Julian, I'm so proud of you," she said. "I love the way you make people laugh. I think you know exactly how to talk to people to make them feel good!"

"Thanks," I said, as I felt my cheeks turning red. "Do you really think so?"

She **nodded**.

After recalling the soup kitchen, I knew what to do. "Maybe, I could talk to some people and **encourage** them to volunteer," I said. "I think I could make them feel good about helping us clean up the city."

"I think that's a great idea!" Mom said.

The next morning, I met Manny at the park. Manny is great at playing sports, so every Saturday he volunteers to help his aunt coach a community baseball team. There, he helps younger kids learn how to bat and throw the ball. He also teaches them to work hard and to be nice to one another.

"You look worried today," I said, noticing the frown on Manny's forehead.

"I'm just a little sad because I still don't know how I can motivate families to participate in our clean-up day," Manny said.

"I'm sure you'll find something you can do. If I were you, I'd think about the things I enjoy," I told him.

Then, I noticed several kids looking at Manny as if he were the world's greatest ball player.

"We can talk about it after the game. Those kids really want you to go play baseball with them," I said.

"And I can't wait to start a game with them!" he said, heading back to the baseball diamond.

I was surprised by the way all the kids looked up to Manny. He had a talent for sports, but what Manny did best was inspiring people around him. When the game was over, we both knew exactly what Manny could do to motivate some families to participate in our clean-up day: just be himself.



While Manny was talking to families and playing ball with the kids, Lisa was busy **rehearsing** with her choir. Lisa has a beautiful voice, so she spends a lot of her free time singing in a choir. Lisa's choir is very special because they sing in places where people don't get many visitors or have much entertainment.

On Sunday afternoon, I watched Lisa's choir sing at a local nursing home. The elderly people who were living at the home were delighted to listen to the choir. After the choir finished singing, one woman took Lisa's hand and thanked her for visiting their home.

"You've brought so much happiness to our hearts," said the

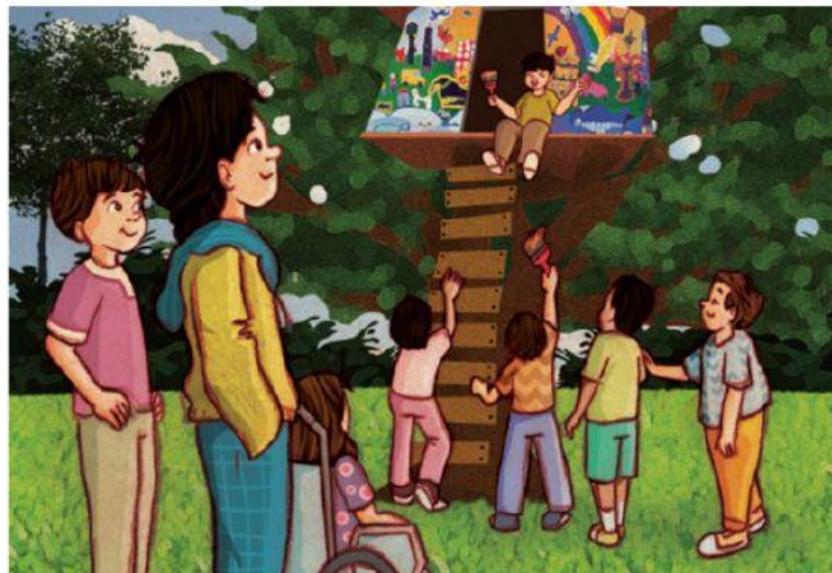
woman. "We enjoyed listening to your sweet voices. You girls have a lot of talent!"

"Thanks," Lisa said. Then, she looked curiously at the woman. "Do you think I could inspire people with my voice?"

"Of course, dear," the woman said. "You can inspire anyone with a voice like yours!"

"Thank you," Lisa said, and she gave the woman a big hug.

The next day, Lisa handed me a CD. She had **recorded** a song inviting families to participate in our clean-up day.



On Tuesday, my friends and I got together to play soccer after school, but our friend Lang didn't show up for practice. We were worried about him, because he never misses our games. When practice was over, we decided to go visit him.

On our way to Lang's home, we heard him call our names from a distance. We looked around us, but we couldn't find him. Then, we looked up, and there he was! Lang was painting a mural on a tree house across the street. Four boys were standing on the ground and tossing him brushes and tubes of paint.

"What are you doing?" asked Lisa, "we missed you at soccer practice."

"I'm so sorry, guys! I forgot to tell you that I couldn't play today,"

John was very excited about the posters Lang had painted. He told us that his favorite was a drawing of a park full of trees and beautiful plants.

"I'm glad you like it," Lang said with a big smile on his face. "I painted it in your honor."

"What do you mean?" asked John.

"I painted that picture not only to motivate people to clean up our parks, but also to show how much

said Lang. "I promised these kids that I'd finish painting their tree house this afternoon. They've been working very hard to fix it."

"WOW, it looks nice!" said John. "I didn't know you could paint that well."

"Thanks! Neither did I!" said Lang.

"Do you think you could paint some posters for our special clean-up day?" asked John.

"I'd love to," said Lang.

"Can we help, too?" asked one of the boys.

"That's a great idea," I told them. "Let's make some posters together."

we **appreciate** what you did to make our parks so beautiful," explained Lang.

John looked **puzzled**.

"All I did was help plant some trees," he said.

"No, John. You did more than that," said Lisa.

Linda nodded her head and said, "Come to the park and we'll show you."

When we got to the park, a family was having a picnic under a tree, and several kids were playing hide-and-seek in the bushes. Nearby, a man was sitting in the shade reading a newspaper.

"John, do you see what you did?" asked Lisa. "Every time you

volunteered to help plant a tree, you made this place better for them."

"And for us!" added Lang. "That's why we wanted to make a poster in your honor."



I knew that Linda was happy to help with the posters, but she was a little **disappointed** because she still didn't know how to use her talents to motivate people to volunteer. Linda was very good at teaching other students how to solve math problems. However, she couldn't figure out how this would help her get people to clean up our streets.

Two days later, I saw Linda in the school cafeteria. She had a huge smile on her face.

"I found a way to get students to help us clean up our city!" she exclaimed.

"That sounds great! How did you do it?" I was curious to find out.

"When I help my friends with their math skills, I always make sure that they understand the math problem before I teach them how to solve it."

"So did you do the same thing with our littering problem?" I asked.

"Exactly," she said. "First, I made sure that students understood that littering is a big problem because it pollutes our streets and can make us ill. Then, I explained that we could solve that problem by disposing of our trash properly and by working together to clean up the streets. Now, everyone wants to volunteer for our clean-up day!"

After many days of hard work, it was finally time for our “Let’s Clean Up Our City” event. People from all over the city came to help out. Students from our school picked up trash. Workers from

the local stores swept the streets. Neighbors from the area cleaned up the **sidewalks**. Men from the soup kitchen recycled cans. Younger kids from the local sports teams handed out cups of water.

By the time the event was over, the city was cleaner—and we were tired. However, none of us seemed to mind the hard work. We were pleased because we knew that we were working to improve life in our city. Also, we were happy because we got a chance to make new friends.

My friends and I knew that if we used our talents to help others, we could make a difference in our community. We never expected to have so much fun doing it!



AWESOME Reader

Story Report

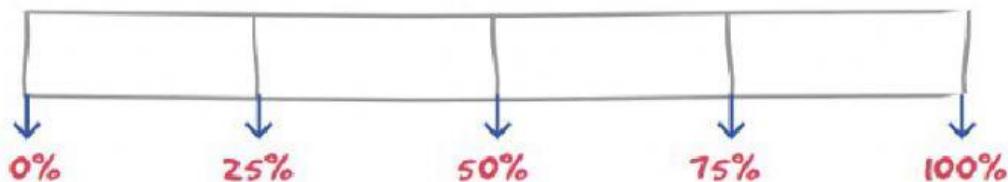
Date: _____

Genre: _____

Title: _____

Type of text: _____

1. Write the percentage that represents how much you like the story. _____



2. Write a brief summary. Use some of the key words in the box.

volunteer community help
encourage special day team work

3. Which was your favorite part? |

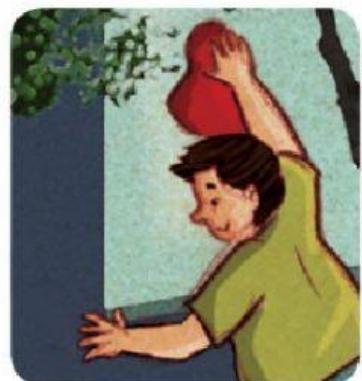
4. Do you help in your community?
What can you do to help?

Find in the Story

1. Find three moments where the children mention the things they are good at and write them.



2. Find three things that are done on the clean-up day and write them.



3. Find three people that join this special day and write them.

