



**American
Red Cross**

Youth Engagement

ACTIVITY GUIDE

Impact Starts Here

The American Red Cross has developed fun activity guides for youth volunteers to use to help spread the word about the Red Cross and its mission: to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies, by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.

Activity Guides can be used by Red Cross Clubs, general youth groups or any other students who want to organize Red Cross mission-related activities. No matter which activity you choose, get in touch with your local Red Cross region or Service to the Armed Forces (SAF) station.

With these helpful resources and guidelines, you can definitely make your activity a success!

TOTES OF HOPE





TOTES OF HOPE

About

Totes of Hope is a donation drive in which personal care items are collected, assembled in tote bags and distributed with a personal note of thanks or encouragement to veterans.

Purpose

Totes of Hope provides personal care items that are essential, but often inaccessible, to veterans who are undergoing personal adversities.

Time Required

This activity takes an estimated 3–4 weeks to complete. The first 1–2 weeks should be allotted for contacting local businesses to serve as collection sites. The next 2 weeks should then be used to host the collection drive and packaging event.



Volunteer Services Contact

Before you begin, contact your Regional Volunteer Services Officer (RVSO), who will guide you to resources that will help make this an impactful and successful event! You can search for your regional Volunteer Services contact info by ZIP code [here](#).

TOTES OF HOPE PLAN

Here is a detailed checklist to help you plan your Totes of Hope event:

Step 1: Contact a veterans program

- ☐ Connect with your Red Cross contact about working with your local Service to the Armed Forces (SAF) team. Speak with an SAF representative to let them know you would like to donate personal care kits to veterans and make sure you are collecting the items they need. Alternatively, with the support of the SAF team, you may also contact a veterans hospital or homeless veterans program in your community.
- ☐ Consider planning the drive during the holiday season, Veterans Day or Memorial Day. You can also ask your regional contact about any annual events the Veterans Affairs might have and offer to distribute the totes then.
- ☐ If you are working with SAF, ask your local Red Cross region for pamphlets or other materials with information about the SAF program to share with potential partners and volunteers.



Step 2: Time and location

- ☐ Find a spacious venue and secure a date to host the packaging event, where all care kit items will be assembled into totes. You can do this in your school gym or cafeteria, or ask your local region or SAF unit to use a meeting room.

Step 3: Recruit volunteers

- ☐ Recruit Club members, friends and family to help with collection drive outreach and packaging the totes. Make sure to share the packaging event time and location with volunteers. Consider emailing Club members and asking your regional contact to share the collection drive and packaging event information in your regional communications.

Step 4: Collection sites

- ☐ Check with your region for guidance on collecting care kit items.
- ☐ In addition to asking your region, you may ask local schools, stores or businesses if they are willing to be a Totes of Hope collection site. Determine a timeframe for the collection drive and provide them information about the specific veterans program being supported and the Red Cross' SAF program.

TOTES OF HOPE PLAN

Step 5: Collection boxes

- ☐ Visit grocery stores to ask for empty boxes. Tape the official Red Cross logo and list of items on the boxes before dropping them off at the collection sites.
- ☐ Check the collection sites regularly to pick up any full boxes. Consider making a schedule for members to take turns visiting sites.

Step 6: Promotion

- ☐ Get permission to put up flyers in your school, local library and other places in your community to publicize the drive.
- ☐ Ask your Red Cross contact and Red Cross Club members to promote the event on their communications and social media networks.

Step 7: Collecting donations

- ☐ At the end of the decided time period, pick up all collected items at the collection sites.
- ☐ Ask local grocery stores for reusable bag donations and ask local companies if they have drawstring bags to spare to package the personal care kits.



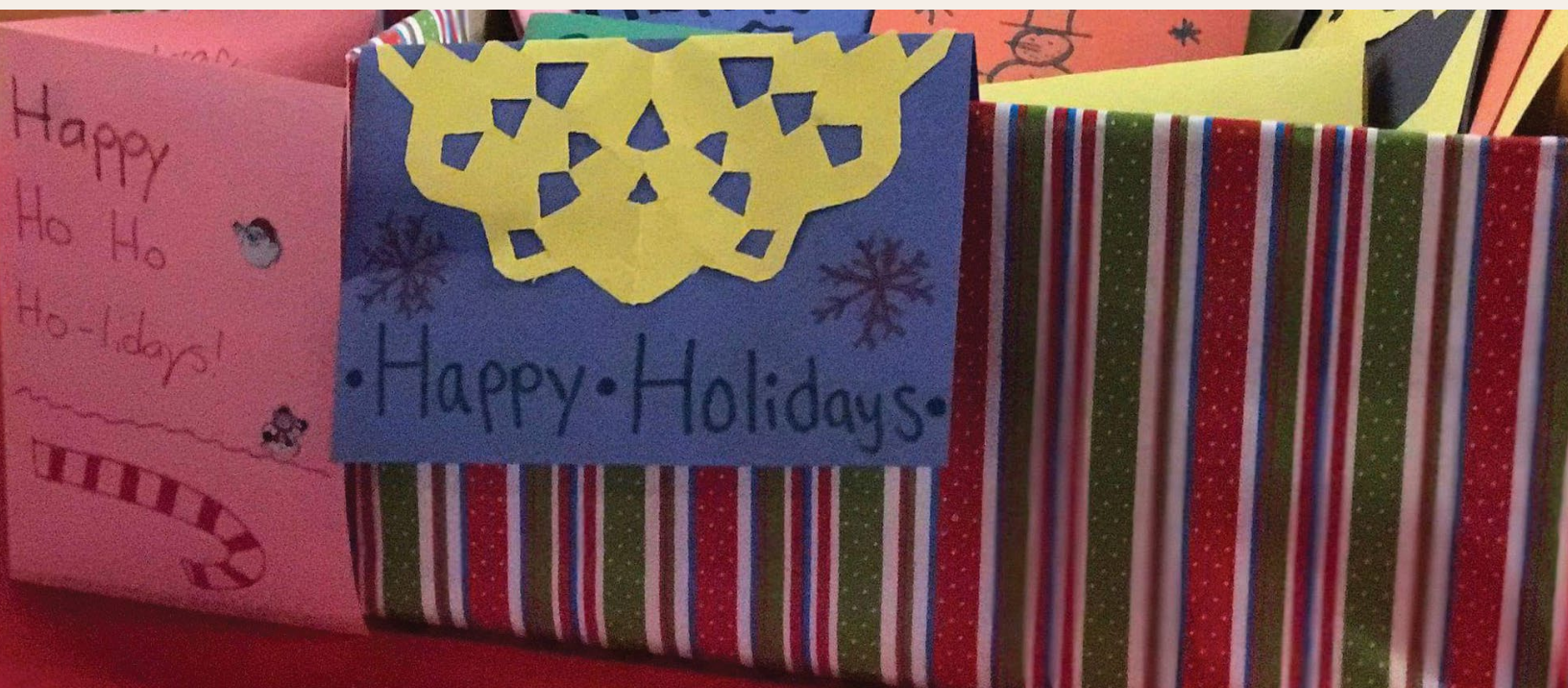
Step 8: Packaging event

- ☐ Group similar items and make an assembly line so volunteers can easily package the totes.
- ☐ Provide paper and pens so people can write thank you cards to include in the totes. You could also make this a separate service project during a Club meeting.
- ☐ Have information about SAF and Red Cross volunteering during the packaging event for people to read.

Step 9: Distribution

- ☐ Work with the veterans program or veterans hospital to determine the best way to deliver the totes. Be sure to send thank you notes to all the local schools, stores or businesses that participated and to thank all of your volunteers.

TOTES OF HOPE RESOURCES



Resources Included In This Package:

- Suggested Care Kit Items
- Sample Messages for Thank You Notes

Red Cross Club Toolkits

Review youth volunteer resources on [RedCrossYouth.org](https://www.redcrossyouth.org). Share the Red Cross Club Toolkits with students at the event who may be interested in learning about Red Cross Clubs.

Share With Us

Share pictures and videos of your Totes of Hope event activity by posting them in the [American Red Cross Youth Network Facebook Group](#) or posting on Instagram and tagging [@americanredcrossyouth](#).



Looking For More Information?

If you're interested in organizing another activity, visit our Activity Guides Archive [here](#)!

Have more questions about volunteering with the American Red Cross as a youth volunteer? Email youthinvolvement@redcross.org!

TOTES OF HOPE RESOURCES

Suggested Care Kit Items:

Before you start your collection drive, share this list with the local veterans hospital or veteran outreach program to make sure you are collecting items they need.

Please **do not** include items that contain glitter—it may cause respiratory distress in patients with compromised respiratory systems. Please **do not** include any items that are open, used or are near or past their expiration dates. Remember to also include a note of thanks in each Tote of Hope!

Suggested items:

- Socks
- Toothpaste
- Tooth brushes
- Hand sanitizer
- Travel size shaving cream
- Baby wipes
- Disinfectant wipes
- Soap or travel size body wash
- Dental floss
- Deodorant
- Hair brush/comb
- Travel size shampoo and conditioner
- Travel size baby powder
- Travel size petroleum jelly
- Men's or women's underwear
- Shower shoes or flip flops
- Winter hats/ear muffs
- Gloves
- Phone cards
- Crossword puzzles or activity books
- Magazines or books
- Pocket calendar
- Prescription caddy
- Restaurant gift card
- Rain poncho
- Drawstring bag or backpack



Sample Messages for Thank You Notes:



When you send a note of encouragement or thanks along with your kit, please keep in mind that the recipient may be active duty or veteran status, from any branch of the Armed Forces, male or female, almost any age and of any or no religion. Write your note as if any service member might receive it.

Remember **not** to use any glitter in the messages. Glitter may cause respiratory distress in patients with compromised respiratory systems. Some ideas include:

- Thanks for your service!
- Happy holidays, thanks for your service!
- We greatly appreciate your service, thank you.
- Thank you for serving our country.
- You are a true hero. Thanks for your service!