



## **PARENTS ARE THE FIRST, BEST MODELS IN TEACHING THEIR CHILDREN GOOD CITIZENSHIP**

*Adapted from materials by Catalyst for Action Consultants*

Parents model good behavior to their children every day. Citizenship is no different. Citizenship takes many forms and can be taught to children in many ways.

### **WHY MODEL GOOD CITIZENSHIP?**

1. Children learn by what they see, not by what they hear. Parents who exhibit responsible behavior teach their children on a daily basis about the behavior that is expected of them.
2. Citizenship is something that needs to be nurtured to become a habit. Children who see parents demonstrate concern for others in society learn that this is a positive activity which is of value to their family. Repeated exposure to positive, caring behavior teaches a child compassion and concern for society, near and far.
3. Citizenship is something that crosses cultural and economic boundaries. Helping our neighbors, participating in charitable acts, caring for the environment, and voting are concrete habits which families can practice without spending much more than time and effort.

### **HOW CAN PARENTS MODEL GOOD CITIZENSHIP?**

1. **Be a good neighbor.** Take walks in your neighborhood, sit on your front steps, learn the names of the people who live in your area. Show your children that you enjoy being neighborly by extending friendship and help when possible.
2. **Volunteer in your community.** Join and become active in your school's parent/teacher group. Help out at the community center. Work in the community garden. Participate in activities that help less fortunate people. Involve your children in these activities so that they can see the ways in which community is important to your life.
3. **Take care of the environment.** Involve your children in curbside recycling. Participate in neighborhood or park clean-ups. Use trash containers in your

vehicle, and don't throw any trash out your windows. Teach your children that we all have to take care of the world in which we live, as citizens of one large community.

4. **Obey laws.** Drive carefully and within the speed limit. Keep your temper when driving with children in your car. Use your turn signals. Use receptacles instead of littering. Don't try to get away with something around your children. Kids learn by watching, not listening. Model law abiding behavior, with a clear sense of right and wrong.

5. **Participate in government.** Have fun with the election process, and turn it into a learning experience for your family. Learn about elections together, using issues as current affairs conversation starters. Have family votes on household issues, such as favorite places to eat or bedtimes. Take your children with you to the polls, let them watch the process, and let them see YOU vote. Teach your children that it is part of your civic responsibility to partake in the privilege of voting.



Do two things for children in Michigan . . .

**Vote & Volunteer!**

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