

Making An Impact Through Wish Lists



Project Guide

Project Overview

Modern Woodmen of America is pleased to offer adult chapters and youth clubs this Making An Impact Through Wish Lists Project Guide, which features tools to plan an easy, worthwhile and successful service project in your community.

What is a wish list?

A wish list is a written record of things needed or wanted by an individual or organization.

How can fulfilling a wish list make an impact?

Fulfilling wish lists provides what recipients want and need, but more importantly makes them feel heard and cared about. It also recognizes and supports the benefiting organizations.

By carrying out this project *in a group setting*, members:

- Have opportunities to meet fellow members who also want to make a difference.
- Develop stronger bonds with those they already know through team effort.
- Feel joint pride in being part of something bigger than themselves.
- Experience a shared “helper’s high” they will remember time and again.

What’s included in the Making An Impact Through Wish Lists Project Guide?

In addition to this project planner, the project guide features a:

- Wish list template.
- Thinking of You note card template to customize and distribute to participants.
- Photo release form template.

What other supplies do I need to carry out this service project?

- One prepaid gift card per participant.
- Bags or boxes to hold and organize wish list items.
- Copies of the cards to address to wish list recipients.
- Crayons, markers, pencils and pens to decorate and address the cards.

Optional items you might want to have on hand include:

- Modern Woodmen-branded repositionable vinyl signs (available under Supplies at imakeanimpact.org) to help promote this service project to your community.
- Donated By stickers for bags/boxes (available under Supplies at imakeanimpact.org).
- Simple refreshments for volunteers, like bottles of water, granola bars or fresh fruit.

Keep receipts for any purchases to attach to your activity report form.

When should I start planning a Making An Impact Through Wish Lists service project?

A wish-list service project takes some planning. *Research organizations and obtain their wish lists well ahead of scheduling your project.*

Before the project

Step 1. Research organizations. Check out the websites of homeless shelters, food pantries, veterans outreach centers, youth organizations and other local agencies providing assistance to those in need.

Step 2. Reach out. Contact an organization and explain your group would like to obtain individual wish lists from those especially in need. Unlike general wish lists (often found on an organization's website under the "Donate" tab), individual wish lists specify desired clothing, outerwear, shoes, school supplies, toys/recreational items and household necessities, including sizes, colors, styles and brands. You'll find sample wish lists below.

Girl, age 9	Boy, age 8	Girl, age 15
Pant size: 8 slim	Big box of cars	Jeans, size 34/36
Shirt size: 7-8 youth	Hot Wheels	Shirts, size 3XL
Barbie dolls	Legos	Uptown sneakers, size 9 ½
"Frozen" doll	Gumball machine	Digital camera
"High School Musical" items	Whiteboard	Book bag
Toy dog that walks	Football cards	Queen bed sheets/blankets

Step 3. Select a store offering a wide variety of items at reasonable cost. Notify the store manager you'd like to hold a service project there, with members shopping for needy individuals. Some stores may even be willing to offer a charitable shoppers' discount.

Ask the manager if attendees can gather before and after shopping in the snack bar or another area of the store. There, participants can sign in and you can introduce the activity. After shopping, they can bag or box their purchases and address notecards to wish-list recipients.

Step 4. Complete an activity request at imakeanimpact.org well in advance of the service project and no later than seven days prior. **If the activity is to count toward premier status, it must be held before Oct. 31.** *Always obtain approval from the Fraternal Department before making any binding commitments.*

Chapters and clubs can use service project funds or premier achievement dollars to fund a service project. *No additional funding will be provided by the Fraternal Department or home office.*

When filing your activity request:

- Determine chapter/club funds to be used by estimating the cost of all wish list items (including applicable local and state sales tax) and other supplies.
- Order signage and other supplies on imakeanimpact.org.

Step 5. Promote your service project and extend invitations to members.

Postcards are not available for service projects, so promote your activity at least 30 days ahead of time to ensure as many members as possible attend. Consider:

- Posting an invitation/announcement on your chapter/club's closed-group Facebook page.
- Emailing members.
- Completing and emailing a pre-event release to media outlets.

Step 6. Purchase gift cards, supplies and (optional) light refreshments.

- Determine gift card value by dividing service project funds requested, minus other project expenses, by the projected number of attendees. Conserve chapter/club funds – and introduce members to those they don't know – by pairing or grouping shoppers.
- Purchase gift cards from a local bank or retail establishment.

You may use service project money, chapter funds or Premier achievement dollars to purchase *light refreshments* for attendees, such as bottled water, granola bars or fresh fruit.

Keep all receipts to attach to your activity report.

Step 7. Adapt wish lists, if necessary, to available funds. Depending on the value of the gift cards and the number/value of wish-list items, you may need to add related items to some lists. For example, if an individual requests a twin comforter, you might add a coordinating twin sheet set, blanket or pillow.

Step 8. Provide a friendly reminder to members a day or two before the project.

Studies show people are more likely to volunteer if they receive a “personal ask” from the project organizer, so touch base via email, phone or face-to-face.

Doing the project

Before volunteers shop

Step 1. Arrive early. Set up the area where attendees will gather before and after shopping.

- Welcome table/sign-in area.
- Bagging/boxing area.
- Card-addressing area.
- Refreshments area.

Have on hand:

- Modern Woodmen attendance sheets (if not using the online attendance tool).
- Wish lists, one per attendee or group of attendees (depending on number of wish lists).
- Bags and boxes for recipients with multiple wish-list items.
- Donated By labels for bags and boxes.
- Copies of notecards.
- Pens, markers and crayons to decorate and address cards.
- Clear tape.
- Hand sanitizer.
- First-aid kit.

Step 2. Welcome volunteers.

Thank participants for coming and remind them to sign in on the attendance sheets (or use the attendance app available on imakeanimpact.org). Introduce members who don't know each other. Ask those arriving early to help with last-minute details, if desired.

Step 3. Present background information.

If possible, invite a representative from the beneficiary organization to speak about its mission and why these recipients need assistance.

Step 4. Provide instructions to participants.

Each volunteer should:

- Ask the cashier for 1) a traditional receipt and 2) a gift receipt. Participants will keep and turn in their traditional receipts to you. (Attach them to your activity report.) They'll enclose the gift receipt in the notecard before sealing it, in case of returns.
- Use all their gift card funds. If necessary, they may purchase items having universal appeal, like snacks, candy and gum.

After volunteers shop

Step 1. Organize wish-list items. Group wish-list items by recipient, then attach a gift tag to each bag or box for easy distribution by the organization.

Step 2. Address Thinking of You cards. Participants can write supportive and upbeat messages to wish list recipients while enjoying snacks. Have them sign the notes with first names and last initials and attach them to the recipients' gifts with tape.

Step 3. Take a group photo. Most people love a photo keepsake, so leave time at the end of the service project to gather members for a group photo. Post the photo(s) to your closed Facebook page.

Please remember to follow Modern Woodmen's photo policy!

- Only photograph participants who have checked "I Agree" to the photo policy on attendance sheets or have completed Photo Release Forms.
- Only email photos to individuals included in the photos.

After the project

Step 1. Celebrate with volunteers what has been accomplished and thank them for participating.

Step 2. Make the donation. Ask a representative from the recipient organization to attend the service project, if possible, to receive for the wish-list donations and cards, thank volunteers and speak about the organization's work.

Otherwise, arrange a day/time to deliver the donations to the organization.

Step 3. Complete an activity report online at imakeanimpact.org no more than 30 days after the activity. **If the activity is to count toward premier status, the report must be filed no later than Dec. 1.** Attach receipts and attendance sheets, and (optional) good, clear photos of volunteers.

Step 4. Promote your successful project by posting photos and project information to your closed Facebook group page. *Only post photos of participants who have signed in on attendance sheets or completed Photo Release Forms.*

Step 5. Complete and email a post-release to local media outlets to spread the word about your successful service project and show how Modern Woodmen makes an impact in communities.