

Community Activity Ideas

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Knights of Columbus throughout the world conduct service programs in the areas of church, council, community, family and youth. Annually, councils endeavor to complete four (4) activities within each of these five (5) categories. In doing so, they qualify for the Knights of Columbus **Columbian Award** presented annually after the end of the fraternal year. Winning this award is an indication of the council's resolve in attaining a high standard of excellence in furthering the cause of our founder, Father Michael J. McGivney.

On the following pages, I have assembled a group of activities for the community portion of the Columbian Award. Councils may utilize these examples in completing their programs.

TITLE: SPAGHETTI DINNER FUND RAISER

OBJECTIVE: To raise funds for community wide programs such the South Manchester Little League baseball team.

DESCRIPTION: My council has sponsored a team here in Manchester for the past 50 years. There have been times when the funds were not readily available and a fund raiser was needed. All Knights have at one time or another purchased tickets to a meal sponsored by an organization for the purpose of raising funds for some noteworthy cause. Most if not all councils have at one time or another sponsored a meal as a fund raiser. Whether it is for the renovation project at our local parish or the raising of funds to send the local high school band to participate in the annual Rose Bowl Parade, the general public will support the effort. The council may not necessarily have to be the sponsor of the dinner, but instead they could be the recipients of the meal. Of importance here is the fact that proper prior planning is paramount in successfully conducting this activity. Over the course of a year, several dinners could be sponsored thereby allowing the charitable donation to grow. After all, the more funds you raise; the less you have to take out of the council's funds.

RESOURCES: Not much more than three or four members with the ability to prepare the meal and then serve it are required. A standard roll of tickets and a ticket salesman will be needed to collect the price of the meal in exchange for a ticket to present at the serving counter for your meal.

IMPORTANCE: 8

TIP: Naturally, the more frequently you do this type of program, the larger it becomes. A meal of this kind, done on a monthly basis, with the proceeds going to a charitable cause will draw a steady group of participants. However, you must ensure that you publicize the fact that the proceeds are going to a charitable cause.

TITLE: KIDNEY FUND CAN DRIVE

OBJECTIVE: To raise funds to help support the New Hampshire State Council's State Kidney Program.

DESCRIPTION: Knights throughout the State of New Hampshire have for many years collected aluminum cans for the purpose of raising funds for the kidney program. The costs of medications have steadily increased over the years and for those with a limited income at times is far greater than they could afford. This program was established to help relieve the burden of purchasing medications for those patients requiring financial assistance. A quarterly allotment of \$250.00 was set in 1975 and it has not been increased since that time. Through this program the New Hampshire State Council currently supports approximately 20 patients. At the May 2007 convention the State Council approved a recommendation to increase the quarterly allotment to \$300.00. This increase will help to eliminate patient worries in receiving their needed medications.

RESOURCES: Not much more is required than a collection point for the donated cans and a brother knight with the ability to transport them to a recycling center. Good record keeping is essential so that the monies received for the cans recycled can be tracked and reported annually to the membership.

IMPORTANCE: 9

TIP: Make sure that the contact information for your chairman and the collection point is well publicized.

TITLE: COUNCIL PARTICIPATION IN CHRISTMAS PARADE

OBJECTIVE: To participate in a community wide activity and establish your council as a member of the civic minded organization.

DESCRIPTION: Communities throughout the region sponsor a Christmas parade. Many knights have traditionally participated in these by either building a float or marching as a group in the parade. Coordinating the council's efforts in participating with those of the local Fourth Degree Assembly, a large contingent of brother knights could participate both on a float and marching. Some communities have tried to change the event from a "Christmas Parade" to a "Holiday Parade"; but through the efforts of Knights of Columbus, the plan failed. A banner proclaiming "Keep Christ in Christmas" on the sides of the float emphasizes "the reason for the season". In addition, the handing out of candy to the children along the parade route is a must. Of course, the candy of choice is tootsie rolls, and to pass them out, the local members of the Columbian Squires. The camaraderie established during the different phases of the planning, organizing and executing of this project could very well enhance the recruiting efforts of all groups. Working together for a common goal also helps to bond these organizations into a single brotherhood.

RESOURCES: The appointment of a knowledgeable, enthusiastic and resourceful individual as chairman is paramount to accomplishing these goals. The importance of starting early, even six (06) months to plan and organize is essential. The coordination and cooperation required between the Columbian Squires Circle, the local assembly and your council needed to bring this task to a successful conclusion may be demanding, but rewarding in the long term. The building of a float will require a flatbed trailer and a vehicle to tow it. A generator for the sound system and the lighting for the float will also be needed. For the tootsie rolls that will be given out, have a wagon to cart them down the parade route. Aprons for the Squires handing out the candy could be the ones used for the Tootsie Roll drive.

IMPORTANCE: 4

Tip: Proper planning of this program cannot be over emphasized. Coordinating the planning, keeping the lines of communications open and working together is essential. Nurturing civilian contacts in the community through the use of Certificates of Appreciation or in some other recognized manner could simplify future voluntary participation.

TITLE: COUNCIL ADOPT A HIGHWAY/ROAD PROGRAM

OBJECTIVE: To support the environment by accepting the responsibility for a short stretch of highway and agree to keep the roadside clean of litter.

DESCRIPTION: All too often while driving the highways and byways, we see the accumulated trash strewn from passing vehicles. We see the Styrofoam cups, wrappers from the hamburgers, beer bottles and cans, the newspapers and assorted trash carelessly thrown from our cars and trucks. The lit cigarette thrown from the car lands next to a piece of paper and ignites. Thus starts another wild fire, the possible destruction of an ecosystem, our homes and even the lives of wildlife. Organizations volunteering to help clean up the environment need to contact the state or local highway department for guidance. Typically, once a section of roadway is assigned, (usually a half mile to two (02) miles), a sign is posted on the roadside identifying the group or organization responsible for its cleanliness.

RESOURCES: Not much is required other than volunteers, (six to eight members) to clean up the roadside is needed. Supplies of bags are provided by the state or local highway department. If not provided reflective orange safety vests should be purchased and worn.

IMPORTANCE: 4

TIP: Make sure that once on the roadway, safety is observed. At least one individual should be assigned to monitor traffic. When picking up trash, gloves should be worn to avoid contamination and if possible

TITLE: CANNED FOOD DRIVE FOR FOOD PANTRY

OBJECTIVE: To raise food supplies for the local food kitchen/pantry.

DESCRIPTION: Regardless of the name, whether it is called the food pantry of the food kitchen, most cities have one located therein. Every day meal is provided gratis to the poor, homeless or to the destitute in the area. Since they operate as a charitable organization, funding is not available through the local government. They are totally reliant on the generosity of the community to fund and provide the necessities for their program. Through the collection of canned goods and dry goods a council can help support this worthwhile group. The collection can be a one time or a continuous on going project with deliveries monthly, quarterly or as often as needed or practical. When coordinated with the staff of the food pantry, the collection can be specific, such as for holidays like Thanksgiving or Christmas.

RESOURCES: Not much more than having a chairman and a collection point is required. Eventually though, a means of transporting the collected food stuffs will be needed. You will also need the assistance of a few brother knights to help in the delivery of the donated food.

IMPORTANCE: 6

TIP: Check with the local food pantry as to what specific needs they may have. Maintain a close liaison with them in order to update requirements as needed. Ensure that information on the program is well publicized.

TITLE: MEAL SERVERS AT THE FOOD KITCHEN

OBJECTIVE: To assist the local soup kitchen in providing a meal to the poor, homeless or destitute persons in the community.

DESCRIPTION: Members of a council only need to serve a prepared meal at the local soup kitchen. The kitchen already has a dedicated staff to prepare the meal but can always use assistance in serving it. Six to eight members are required. The continuous need for volunteers to assist in providing meals makes this a much desired activity.

RESOURCES: The only requirement is for volunteers to assist in serving the meal. Several brother knights and their spouses could be formed into teams thereby reducing the actual number of knights needed for any one meal. This would allow for the opportunity to help more often without utilizing the same individuals every time.

IMPORTANCE: 4

TIP: Selecting a chairman to coordinate with the director of the soup kitchen will simplify your commitment. Appointing team captains will also simplify communications between the members and prevent possible confusion as to their date of participation

TITLE: BINGO AT THE VETERANS HOSPITAL/HOME

OBJECTIVE: To provide an hour or two of entertainment to the residents/patients in the local VA Hospital or Veterans home.

DESCRIPTION: The Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) coordinates volunteer efforts at all Veterans facilities in the United States. Members of the Fourth Degree of the Knights of Columbus are primarily responsible for providing support to veterans. Councils located within the local area of a veteran's facility may also provide support by sponsoring bingo games. If not specifically sponsoring an evening themselves, a council may support an assembly by assisting them. Patients/residents look forward to these games and are very appreciative of the efforts made to provide this entertainment. In some instances, some patients/residents rarely have visitors and the interactions they have with visitors such as the knights are the only ones have. It is not unusual to find brother knights and their spouses working side by side in providing an evening of entertainment.

RESOURCES: The amount of support varies from place to place. When scheduling an evening, the social director at the hospital/home can help in determining requirements. Traditionally, six (06) to twelve (12) members are needed. Refreshments and snacks which are provided either during or after the games are also needed. Snacks could be packages of crackers and cheese or crackers and peanut butter or even ice cream cups. Bottles of soda, such as cola, root beer, grape or orange flavored served in an 8 ounce cup are acceptable. The cost of refreshments and snacks would vary depending on the amount of players and visitors but \$15.00 should be sufficient for most. Game winners receive \$1.00 and the final black out game is usually worth about \$10.00.

IMPORTANCE: 3

TIP: An experienced bingo caller, in addition to volunteers to verify winners and some to actually assist veterans in playing their cards would be needed. Diet drinks would also be preferable due to potential medical (diabetic) reactions.

TITLE: WINTER CLOTHING DRIVE FOR NEEDY

OBJECTIVE: To collect winter clothing for the poor or needy within the area.

DESCRIPTION: Every year we tend to keep an eye on the styles of the day and buy clothing accordingly. During this annual renewal of clothing, we find ourselves over burdened with an accumulation of clothing we could consider excess. This is the clothing that we will not wear for various reasons; whether it is because of style or preference or even because we have outgrown it. Rather than keeping it and cluttering our closets why not give it to a charitable organization who can give it to someone in need. The need for warm, serviceable winter clothing is forever present and organizations such as Goodwill, Salvation Army and St. Vincent de Paul are always looking for some. The collection could be done over a weekend or in conjunction with monthly meetings.

RESOURCES: Without saying, a chairman is should be appointed and with the help of a few members this could be accomplished without too much difficulty. A place to temporarily store the collected items will be needed, as will boxes to transport the donated clothing to the charitable organization. All items received will have to be checked for cleanliness and serviceability before packing. Sorting items by size and sex is not required but items needing repairs should only be given after the repairs have been made.

IMPORTANCE: 8

TIP: Requests for clothing should specify that the items be cleaned and serviceable. That is to say, no holes, no buttons missing or broken zippers in the items collected.

TITLE: BATTERED WOMEN SUPPORT DRIVE

OBJECTIVE: To help provide necessary or needed health and comfort items and possibly other items as requested by the local Social Services Director in support of a battered women shelter.

DESCRIPTION: The local community Social Services Program sponsors a battered women shelter program. This program assists these victims of abuse by providing them with a secure living space and aids them in restarting their lives. These women sometimes with children are provided a secure living environment in order to protect them from an abusing spouse or partner. More often than not, they arrive at the shelter without funds and maybe with nothing more than the clothes they are wearing. Through the director of the shelter, a list of needed supplies can be obtained and councils can sponsor a drive to collect as much as they can. Once collected, a phone call to the director can be made to coordinate the delivery.

RESOURCES: As with any other collection drive, a place to store the received donations, boxes to pack them up and finally transport to deliver them. Publicize your program and have sufficient members maybe four or five to handle the program. The collection could be done in conjunction with your regular monthly meeting or as an all out collection drive.

IMPORTANCE: 4

TIP: Remember that in order to protect the victims of abuse, the location of these shelters are kept confidential and chances are that you will be asked to deliver the collected items to an office or a predetermined meeting place.

TITLE: NEIGHBORHOOD SPRING CLEANING

OBJECTIVE: To participate in a community wide spring neighborhood cleanup program.

DESCRIPTION: Communities throughout the country sponsor spring cleaning programs within the city/town. These programs assist the neighborhood in getting their streets, sidewalks, parks and playgrounds cleaned from the accumulated trash and debris from the winter. Participating in such a program provides the council with the opportunity to become recognized and a part of the local community. The importance of fostering and maintaining good public relations within the community is necessary if the council intends to grow. Assisting in their cleanup activities allows you the opportunity to become known and demonstrates to the community your desire to be active within the area.

RESOURCES: The participation of the membership is imperative to the success of this program. Besides members, you will need shovels, brooms, rakes and trash barrels. Separate recyclables from the trash and dispose appropriately.

IMPORTANCE: 3

TIP: Once the cleanup program is completed it may be appropriate to continue a monthly walk through to ensure the area remains clean.

TITLE: SUPPORT FOR MARCH FOR LIFE PROGRAM

OBJECTIVE: To show our support for the Right to Life program by organizing and/or participating in the annual campaign.

DESCRIPTION: During January of every year and in conjunction with the date of the Roe v. Wade decision by the U. S. Supreme Court legalizing abortion, pro-life supporters from across the country gather in Washington, D.C. to conduct the annual March for Life. The Knights of Columbus have been a visible participant in these marches since 1973. Since everyone who would like to participate in this event cannot, why not organize a March for Life in your community.

RESOURCES: With the assistance of the Council Pro-life couple, organize a march for life or demonstration within your community. Contact your chaplain, the pastors of the local parishes and members of the clergy requesting their support. Request they advertise your actions in their parish bulletins and to make a pulpit invitation to their parishioners to participate. Contact pro-life organizations in the area and ask for their support and participation in the event. Invite Pro-Life elected officials to show their support by addressing the group and invite.

IMPORTANCE: 6

TIP: Local pro-life organizations may already have a planned activity in the works, in which case you could easily offer your support and participation. Since January is mid winter and if your activity is outside; be sure to provide someplace to warm up and possibly some hot coffee.

TITLE: BLUE MASS TO HONOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS

OBJECTIVE: To render honors to our police officers, lawyers, judges and all others involved in law enforcement in any capacity.

DESCRIPTION: This program allows us and everyone else in the community to show their support for these special individuals. Following the mass, a brief program honoring the “Officer of the Year” or “Lawyer of the Year” could be presented with an award and followed with a short reception. Annually, the Diocese of Manchester holds such a mass with the assistance of the legal profession. Coordinating with the Diocese, the Manchester area councils could assist them in their program. Other cities and towns could coordinate with others to do the same in their area.

RESOURCES: Coordinate efforts with the local police department and with legal offices in the area. Law firms could be instrumental in helping with the reception part of the program. They could also be of assistance in gaining support from others to participate. Your local parish can sponsor the mass and provide the hall for the reception. Besides a chairman you should also plan for the cleanup afterwards. This is also a good time to set up a display showing how the Knights of Columbus support and honor their “blue knights” by explaining the spiritual and material benefits of membership in the order. Who knows, you could pick up a few new members. Requesting nominations for these awards from the various police departments and from the lawyers groups could encourage their participation in the program. It would also be highly advantageous to have the Knights of Columbus Insurance Agency represented.

IMPORTANCE: 2

TIP: In order to gain acceptance and participation remind officials that this program is nondenominational and open to all. Consider inviting the governor, mayor or other elected official to make the presentation.

TITLE: RED MASS TO HONOR FIREFIGHTERS AND PARAMEDICS

OBJECTIVE: To honor the firefighters, their support crews and the paramedics in our community.

DESCRIPTION: This program allows us and the community the opportunity to thank these hard working professionals who daily risk their lives to provide us a safe environment to live in. The risk to firefighters is constant and they live with the knowledge that their chosen profession is highly dangerous. Once again, working with our local parishes and these organizations we could put a program together of a mass with a reception following. At the reception you could honor the selected “Firefighter of the Year” and “Paramedic of the Year” with an appropriate award. Invite the local elected officials to attend and make the presentation with you.

RESOURCES: Coordinate your efforts with the local fire department and paramedic/ambulance service. Ensure they understand that this is open to all and not only Catholics. Once again, work with your parishes to plan the mass and reception. Solicit the aid and support of local businesses in providing refreshments and snacks for the reception. Request that the fire department and paramedics provide you with the names with a short bio for each candidate for the awards.

IMPORTANCE: 3

TIP: Remember to set up an information booth/table and invite the insurance program representatives. Set aside time and personnel for cleanup afterwards.

TITLE: GET OUT THE VOTE PROGRAM

OBJECTIVE: To assist voters to get to the polls to vote during an election.

DESCRIPTION: Records show that during an election, in some instances less than half of the registered voters go to the polls to vote. There are many reasons for this and for a good number of them it is that they have no means of getting there. Excuses range from working, going to school, too busy to go; it won't make a difference or didn't have a way to get there. Whatever the reason, possibly the worst is not being able to get there. We have the opportunity to help decide how our government will operate. We cannot afford to lose that right by not voting. We must do everything we can to go out and vote and to help others do the same.

RESOURCES: Contact your local election officials to provide you with the information needed to set up a transportation system for elections. People desiring to vote would call a number and a driver would be dispatched to pick them up, take them to the polls and return them home.

IMPORTANCE: 2

TIP: Attempt to pick up several people in one trip to minimize fuel expenditure.

TITLE: TOOTSIE ROLL CAMPAIGN

OBJECTIVE: To collect funds by selling tootsie rolls for handicapped children community programs.

DESCRIPTION: Every year knights across the country hold a tootsie roll campaign in order to collect funds to assist organizations working with and helping handicapped children. Knights gather at a pre-selected site, and solicit donations in exchange for a tootsie roll. This is also a time for members to socialize, have fun and meet people. Ideal locations are malls, department stores, home improvement centers and grocery stores.

RESOURCES: Unless your council has never conducted such an event, most of the required materials should already be on hand. Standard equipment includes the donation cans and aprons. If you do not have any, they maybe requisitioned at the same time that you place your order for tootsie rolls with the State Council chairman. Once you receive your supplies, select a chairman and have him organize the drive. Once completed, submit the collected funds to the state chairman and inform him to whom you wish the donation to go to. He will in turn ensure that after the cost of supplies is deducted, that a check is issued to that charitable organization and forwarded to you for delivery to them.

IMPORTANCE: 8

TIP: When organizing your drive; prepare a time schedule for member's participation. Unless members want to stay longer, the average time slot for each should be no longer than about two to three hours. Very often people will want to know who you are and why you're doing this. Try to have someone available to answer questions and talk to them. This could be a great time to recruit.

TITLE: CHRISTMAS BELL RINGING

OBJECTIVE: To assist the Salvation Army raise funds to support their Christmas assistance programs.

DESCRIPTION: Annually from Thanksgiving to Christmas the Salvation Army has bell ringers with collection pots located almost everywhere. Through these collections, they are able to fund their food basket, toys, and clothing and assorted gift donations for needy families during the holiday season. Most bell ringers are volunteers from various organizations and sometimes individuals giving of their time to help others. Councils who have participated in this activity have had an enormous great time singing and ringing and wishing others greetings of the season. What a great way to spend time with fellow knights than by wishing others a merry Christmas and a happy New Year. After all, it is a festive time and most everyone is happy to donate.

RESOURCES: Select a chairman and have him contact the local Salvation Army center. They will add you to their volunteer list and supply you with the place and time. Although they do not require a minimum amount of time, an eight hour time from would be ideal. Two or three members, filling a two hour time slot would be great.

IMPORTANCE: 4

TIP: Since it is cold out, dress warmly and have someone bring coffee or hot chocolate to refresh.

TITLE: MONTHLY ROSARY TO END ABORTION

OBJECTIVE: To pray the rosary monthly to end abortion.

DESCRIPTION: With the assistance of the parish, you could organize a monthly prayer group to pray the rosary to end abortion. Our Holy Mother has requested us to pray the rosary and this is one way to accomplish that goal. This simple act is an effective tool to combat the evils of the world. Besides praying the rosary ourselves, we could get many more people involved by doing it at our parishes.

RESOURCES: Supreme has a poster (#2073) urging the recitation of the rosary and a prayer card with the pro-life prayer by Pope John Paul II on the back (#2072) are available at no charge from the supply Department. Request the use of the church from your pastor and ask that he insert a notice in the parish bulletin explaining the program.

IMPORTANCE: 8

TIP: Ask for volunteers to lead each decade of the rosary. This could be arranged to be held on a regular schedule.

TITLE: RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE PROGRAM

OBJECTIVE: To conduct a blood drive to assist the American Red Cross in maintaining a supply of blood for emergency uses.

The Knights of Columbus Blood Drive Program has been in existence for many years. There are members who on their own donate blood every three months. There are councils who conduct blood drives at least quarterly. The need for blood is an ever present requirement. The Red Cross is always asking for blood donations and we can help in getting it for them. It may also be possible to assist another organization in conducting a blood drive. It is not necessary that you have a location to hold the drive, since the Red Cross may already have that.

RESOURCES: Contact the local Red Cross to set up a date. They will coordinate where and when to hold a drive. The drive may be held at their facility or somewhere else. If not in their facility, they would need help in setting up. A crew of eight to ten members would be ideal to assist in the setting up, serving drinks and snacks and the tear down following the drive.

IMPORTANCE: 8

TIP: The ideal location for a blood drive is one where there are no stairs involved. In addition, once the drive is completed, ensure a report is submitted to the State Council Blood Drive Chairman.

TITLE: COMMEMORATE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

OBJECTIVE: To pay tribute our Order's patron and to commemorate his accomplishments.

DESCRIPTION: In 1492 Christopher Columbus led Europe to a new world. In 1493, he first set foot in what is now Puerto Rico, and in following years explored much of what we now know as Cuba, coastal Central and South America. This is also a means of honoring the man who expanded the known world and brought Christianity to new peoples. There are many ways of accomplishing this. Councils could sponsor a youth essay or a poster contest. You could donate books, recordings or videos on Columbus to your local parishes or school library.

RESOURCES: Posters, books and videos are available from Order's supply department. Available are also coloring books (#2016) and crayons (AD 26) which could be donated to pre-schools or handed out during Columbus Day activities.

IMPORTANCE: 2

TIP: Most items are free of charge, some like the coloring books and crayons have a cost of \$.25 each. For a minor expense you could achieve much.

TITLE: VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION NIGHT

OBJECTIVE: To recognize outstanding volunteer efforts by members of the Knights of Columbus.

DESCRIPTION: There are those amongst us who are always at the front of the line when the call for assistance is made. They are the ones who consistently volunteer their time and talents to ensure things get done.

Whether it is to prepare for a function, to clean the council home or do the landscaping around it or to come forward and assist with the cooking or serving of meals for functions or to clean up afterwards.

They are the ones who are always there; at every meeting, at every function, whenever a group of knights get together. It is not only for the Knights of Columbus but they are also there for their parish and community. An appropriate way of honoring these individuals is to organize a council dinner and award presentation.

RESOURCES: In the United States, one week in April is designated as "National Volunteer Week". In 2008 it is April 27 – May 3. This is a great time to offer your volunteers some well deserved praise. Certificates may be ordered through the Financial Secretary from the supply department as well as presentation folders.

IMPORTANCE: 10

TIP: Plan this event well in advance to ensure certificates are on hand for presentation. It is also appropriate to recognize the spouses of these volunteers. If it wasn't for the blessings of the spouse, they would not be the volunteers that they are.