

# X. How Towns Help Citizens with Special Needs

## WHAT?

Students will investigate how towns use programs to help citizens with special needs.

## WHY?

- To determine how various towns help citizens with special needs
- To describe programs in the students' town that help people with special needs
- To investigate the merits and positive results of volunteerism
- To identify how special programs in a town get funds to operate
- To analyze information using social studies skills
- To communicate understanding of how towns use programs to help citizens with special needs

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills addressed in this lesson:

### *Citizenship*

- Understand the characteristics of good citizenship
- Understand the impact of individual and group decisions on communities in a democratic society
- Understand how individuals and groups can improve a community
- Understand how nonprofit and/or civic organizations serve the common good
- Understand how individuals can participate voluntarily at the local level

### *Social Studies Skills:*

- Apply critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology
- Communicate effectively in a variety of forms.

## TAKS:

- Objective 4: Political Influences on Historical Issues and Events
- Objective 5: Critical-Thinking Skills

## HOW?

### Materials needed:

- A list of charities, volunteer programs, and programs that meet citizen's special needs in the students' town or in a nearby town where people of the students' town can receive services as well as donate time and money
- Letter size paper for each student
- Markers
- Colored pens
- Magazines for students to cut out pictures or use pictures as models for drawing
- If available, a computer program that has a brochure setting so that students can create brochures electronically using clip art and word processing
- A tri-fold brochure for students to use as a pattern for making their own brochures
- Wall map of Texas
- Sticky flags to mark towns on the Texas map
- If available, any of the books by Alma Powell written about the program, America's Promise:
  - *America's Promise* By Alma Powell; illustrated by Marsha Winborn  
Tr 0-06-052172-4 · Lb 0-06-052173-2
  - *America's Promise* (Spanish Edition) By Alma Powell; illustrated by Marsha Winborn Tr 0-06-052175-9
  - *My Little Wagon* By Alma Powell; illustrated by Marsha Winborn  
Fees 0-06-052193-7
  - *My Little Wagon* (Spanish Edition) By Alma Powell; illustrated by Marsha Winborn Fes 0-06-053402-8
- For teacher use, a teacher's guide for Alma Powell's books on the America's Promise web site: [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org)
- Handout titled "A Letter From Dave Smith\*"
- Handouts titled "Examples of Ways Towns Help Citizens with Special Needs" including those subtitled: "San Antonio," "Copperas Cove," "Corpus Christi," "America's Promise," "United Way"

**Note to the teacher:** This topic could be sensitive to your students because many of them could be in poverty situations and recipients of a town's charitable services. If a question about the circumstances of an individual arises, help students realize that citizens need to develop a sense of community and that there is dignity in both giving and receiving assistance. Developing a sense of caring is one of the finest contributions a teacher can make to students and, through them, to all of humanity. Caring involves the ways individuals and communities protect the rights, interests, and well-being of others and invest in their on-going development.

**Suggested teaching time:** 2 class periods

### Suggested Procedures:

1. Ask students what kind of special needs people of a town might have. Some of their ideas might include people in poverty, people who have lost their homes and belongings to fires or floods, people who need transportation, people who need shelters in times of storms and floods, and older people.
2. In pairs, students read the handout “A Letter From Dave Smith” and discuss the questions at the end of the letter.
3. Discuss the letter as a class. For question # 1, have students refer to the summary of services listed in the letter. For question # 2, discuss agencies and groups that help people. Ask students if they are aware of such agencies in their town. List places from their town or near their town on the board. For question # 3, lead students to understand that much of the money and goods to help people through agencies come through contributions of a town’s citizens. Other sources include money obtained through grants from certain foundations created for the purpose of helping people. Occasionally businesses and large companies give money for specific needs. In these cases, the money goes to the town, and the town sets up a program for helping those who need particular services.
4. Tell students that they are going to examine some examples of ways towns in Texas help some of their citizens with special needs. Divide the class into five groups. Assign each group an example from the handouts titled “Examples of Ways Towns Help Citizens with Special Needs” including those subtitled: “San Antonio,” “Copperas Cove,” “Corpus Christi,” “America’s Promise,” “United Way”
5. Students use the handouts to prepare their presentations to the class.
6. Students report to the class about their examples. Have the group presenting “America’s Promise” report last if you plan to read one of the books by Alma Powell and/or conduct any of the activities on the America’s Promise website that accompany the books.
7. Students create brochures about the services in their own town. If their town does not have services, they can make a brochure about a town nearby.
8. Display brochures in the classroom. Ask students if they would like to distribute their brochures to a group that might like to know more about community services. Possible recipients of the brochure might include the Chamber of Commerce, City Hall, or an Agency in the town that helps people with special needs.

Evaluation: Students write a paragraph “How and Why Towns Help People with Special Needs.”

\* “Letters From Our Readers.” *The Huntsville Item*, August 25, 2003