



# Introduction

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

Anne Frank

Saving the planet, saving lives, saving the animals, inventing new products, duplicating results. Sounds pretty IMPOSSIBLE, doesn't it??

Well, it's not. Not if we start small. Really, really small. Just help one animal. One bullied middle schooler. One lonely grandfather. One hungry family. One homeless vet.

Still sound impossible?!? Then just do what's necessary. And what's necessary is just to start. To begin. It's time to gather with our friends and get to work!

“Start by doing what's necessary, then do what's possible and suddenly you are doing the impossible”.

Pythagoras

How many times have we seen a heartbreaking story of a disabled vet or a drunk driving accident or a homeless family in the winter or hundreds of other social issues that are seen, but then forgotten on social media or on the news? I think a lot of us read about a terrible social injustice or tragedy and then scroll past because “there’s nothing we can do”.

Well, there IS something we can do. In fact, we want to build a *community* of people who will grab hold of an issue and not let go until solutions are found. Scrolling through is NOT an option for us, nor is ignoring subtle or obvious cries for help.

“At the end of the day it’s not about what you have or even what you’ve accomplished....it’s about who you’ve lifted up, who you’ve made better. It’s about what you’ve given back.”

Denzel Washington

Community action projects are a very important part of living on this planet and I don’t think we spend anywhere near enough time or energy doing the work that we have been called to do. But that changes now! Providing you with the opportunity to brainstorm and discuss the issues that tug at the heartstrings of your community will result in real, workable solutions to problems that might have been left behind in our fast-paced world of instant gratification and boredom.

Compassion in a community is nurtured when we take the time to think about others and care enough to play a part in their healing and problem resolution. Not only that, but helping others and learning to “give” has been shown to have a profound impact on the well-being and mental health of participants, which in turn has a positive impact on our communities and society as a whole.

It has also been shown that when young people become the leaders of social action projects, they develop a habit of volunteering that stays with them for life. Because of this, we encourage young people to lead workshops and projects in their communities that will not only give them a sense of accomplishment for leading the project, but will also provide a profound benefit to the other people participating in it as well.

But for now, let’s talk about bringing this all together and making a difference in something that you care about.

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

Leo Buscaglia

So we’re looking for ideas. We all see things on the news or in real life that get to us. But that is usually where our involvement stops.... It bothers us for a day or an hour or maybe even just a few minutes and then the news moves on to the next big story or we scroll through to the next post on social media and our thoughts get redirected. So here’s the difference....

We have to stop getting distracted. We need to take action when we see a problem or an issue. We can’t just go back to what we were doing when something bothered us! We have to **do** something about the homeless and the hungry and the poor. We need to make a difference in someone’s life.

And then who knows what happens next? We really don't know where the simple act of kindness and compassion will lead, or whose lives will be changed, but we DO know that it will be a change for the better.

So there are 4 steps necessary to make a real difference in your community - You've already done the first step by answering our questions and discovering your passion/purpose, which then allows you to:

1. Identify a problem or issue that means something to you or someone you know. Who or what needs your help? What keeps you up at night? What is the problem that you are here to solve? (Refer to your answers in "Your Life Direction").
2. Brainstorm by yourself or with your friends for possible solutions to these issues, making sure that what you come up with can actually be accomplished with the people and resources that are available to you.
3. Come up with a plan! Work with your team to write an actionable plan. We have a project guide worksheet that will help you get organized and share what you are doing with other communities who will want to duplicate **your** results in **their** communities (More on this later)... The Project Guide worksheet is available under the "Community Action" tab.
4. Document your plan every step of the way by creating a working video or a written summary that we can share with other communities via the Changemaker Communities website AND the Community Action mobile App (coming soon)! The goal is to make your solutions duplicatable with any other individual or group that shares your compassion toward a certain issue.

Once you implement your great idea, sharing your solution is an essential part of the changemaker process. When solutions to universal problems are found, the ability to duplicate is absolutely critical. Problems like loneliness, depression, hunger, abuse, and other social issues do not have borders. They appear in communities all over the country, and around the world. What works to solve an issue in one neighborhood will work in another and another and so on until the issue isn't an issue anymore, or at least its effect is minimized. Our goal is to make your solutions go viral so that people everywhere can see what compassion does to improve our communities and our planet!

“Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness.”

Senecas

Here's an example of what it means to create a solution that is duplicatable:

I heard a sad story the other day. More like a mad story... And I don't want it to ever happen again so I'm looking for some changemakers to take this and run with it.

I have a friend who loves animals more than he likes people. Seriously. I think we all have moments like that, but this guy is way over the top! He's a shelter dog freak and I think that's fantastic. Honestly, the world needs to clone him to save all the strays out there. He's one of those people who says his shelter dogs saved him as much as he saved the dogs and I totally get that.

But because he can't adopt all the animals, he decided to support his local shelter financially. He was going to provide food, beds, blankets, toys, medical care – you name it, he was willing to support it. He set it all up with the shelter and only requested one thing in return. ONE THING!!!!!! (And it was easy for them to provide). My friend wanted pictures of the animals. Pictures of them in their beds or snuggled up in a blanket or eating the food. He wanted pictures, just to see that he was really helping, you know? Not to check up on them, but to see the dogs benefitting from his support.

I think that's brilliant. And so easy to do. It's kind of like those "support a child" organizations around the world that get people to "adopt" a child from some third world country and then they track their progress through pictures and letters. He wanted to "adopt" a dog (or 20) in the same way.

My friend kept sending the shelter money and they kept sending him.... wait for it.... Nothing. They couldn't be bothered to take some simple pictures on their simple cell phones to keep the desperately needed support coming in. NOT ONE PICTURE! Are you kidding me????!????

So guess what? After numerous attempts to get them to send a single picture, he stopped sending money. The support for the shelter ended. They couldn't be bothered.

But his idea was awesome. And I think it's duplicatable everywhere. So who wants to reach out to a local shelter and ask them to set up a “virtual pet adoption” program? Offer to give them help with the picture taking and the letters of progress if they will agree to give this a try!

## Project Guide Example

**The problem:** Too many animals in shelters. Not enough money to care for them all

**The Solution:** Get more donations, raise awareness,

**Our Solution:** Start a “virtual pet adoption” program

**Why am I (we) uniquely qualified to offer this solution?** I (we) love animals and want to help them get the care and support they need while waiting for their forever homes.

**What exactly will we do to implement this idea?**

1. We will contact a local shelter to explain our idea
2. Assist in advertising or social media awareness to get the word out.
3. Add the program to the shelter website and use the already provided pictures of the animals so people can virtually pick a pet for adoption
4. Have the address for donations available on all of our social media choices.
5. Have a form that the supporters use to give you their email and contact info.
6. Take pictures of the happy animals and send to supporters via email. (IMPORTANT!!!)
7. Write updates on their virtual pet – how they are doing, what adorable things they do and let them know when they get adopted for real.



**What resources do we need to implement our solution?** Social media, fliers, posters, cameras, time to visit the shelter, funds available for initial supplies of blankets, toys, food etc. until the program gets rolling.

**How many people do we need to make this happen?** A minimum of one animal lover could pull this off at each shelter, but more would be awesome

**How will we know that it's working?** Donations will increase, animals will get what they need, shelters will be able to document the success of our program.

**How can we spread the word to other communities?** social media, emails to other shelters, school clubs, community newsletters.

That's it! See how easy that is? Now someone from another community can look at what your group did and make the decision to do the same thing! Dogs and cats will be rejoicing everywhere!

Simply click on the "Community Action" tab on the Changemaker Communities website to get the project guide worksheet that will help you share your solutions with clarity and laser focus. We will post your Changemaker Project on the website and on our mobile app, including your Project Guide and your exclusive video (or written summary) documenting the process.

You can complete the form as a group or by yourself, but go into as much detail as you possibly can. People from all over the country (and world) will be able to implement YOUR solutions in their communities, and you can track how well your solution is working elsewhere!

Life's most persistent and urgent question is,  
What are you doing for others?"

Martin Luther King, Jr.

It is my sincere hope that those of you reading this and taking action will benefit tenfold from the good that you do to help the less fortunate in this world. Thank you for your participation....I can't wait to see what the changemakers can do as they work together to help others and make our planet a better place to live.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose  
yourself in the service of others.”

Mahatma Gandhi