



Help our Veterans

Learning Targets

- Identify how to use time, talent and treasure to serve veterans in your community and around the country
- Collaborate with peers to determine how to help

Standards

- NFTE Mindsets – Critical Thinking & Problem Solving; Future Orientation
- CASEL: Social Awareness

Age Range

- 4th grade and up

Time Commitment

- 30-45 minutes



Today, there are more than 18 million living veterans in the United States, making up roughly 6% of our country's adult population. Countless men and women who have served our country are left with not only visible wounds, but invisible wounds as well, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress.

Nearly 1 in 3 veterans from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a condition of persistent mental and emotional stress caused by injury or severe psychological shock. PTSD rates among female veterans are more than double those of male veterans.

In 2023, 35,574 veterans were experiencing homelessness – an increase of over 50% from 2010-2022. This is caused by a number of factors, including low income, mental illness, lack of support, etc.

1 in 9 working-age veterans are food insecure. Food insecurity means that you do not have access to sufficient food, or food of an adequate quality to meet one's basic needs.

Communities come together for our veterans to collect food, clothing and hygiene products, to build homes for struggling veterans in need of a warm, safe shelter, and to offer training and education for a future career path.

Get Inspired

A nonprofit called Veterans Community Project provides housing solutions to veterans in a number of locations across the United States. In addition to housing solutions, in 2023 Veterans Community Project provided 2,171 new coats, boots, and other articles of clothing to veterans in need, while also providing 6,552 pantry boxes, hygiene kits and snack bags to veterans and their families.

Middle school students in Colorado were inspired by the work Veterans Community Project was doing. They decided to host a collection drive at their school, where they presented to classrooms about why they should get involved. Their goal was to collect 180 food items and 55 hygiene products (soap, deodorant, toothpaste, etc.) from school families to put into care packages for residents. After assembling the care packages, they shipped them off to Veterans Community project to be distributed. Imagine the impact they made!!

Your Challenge

Determine how you can take action to make a difference.

First you must decide what need you want to impact. Does anyone in your school or neighborhood have a family member or friend who has served our country? Are there any local organizations in your community serving veterans that you can partner with? Do you have any special talents that you can use to help veterans in need?

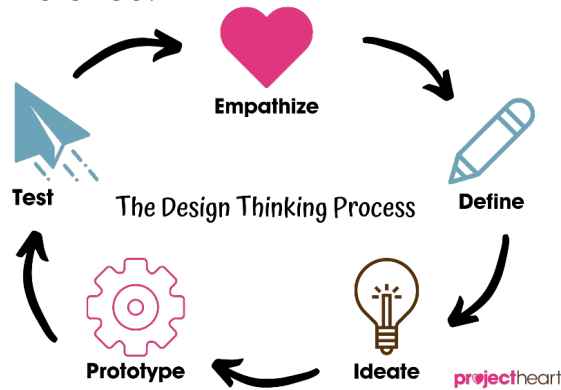
How will you use your 3Ts (time, talent and treasure) to make a difference? Are there items you can make or collect to send to someone in need? Is there a service or product you can sell to raise money for a cause that speaks to your heart related to helping veterans? Are there lawmakers in your town or state who you can write to and ask them for help? Can you and your friends devise a campaign to encourage others to care about this cause and join in your efforts? No idea is too small!

Websites you might find useful:

- <https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>
- <https://www.charliehealth.com/research/veteran-mental-health-statistics>
- <https://www.veteranscommunityproject.org/>
- <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/food-insecurity-in-veterans>

Getting Started

To effectively create change, you need to follow a plan of action. We use the Design Thinking Process to help us better understand the problem we see and walk us through steps to creating a plan to make a difference!



The Design Thinking Process



Empathize

To **empathize** means to understand and share the feelings of another. As it relates to the design thinking process and [Project Heart](#), to empathize specifically means to learn about the audience or group that you wish to impact.



Define

Define means to share your problem statement with others. As it relates to Project Heart, the define stage of design thinking means you've thought about your personal passions and how to apply the 3Ts of your group to make a greater social impact. The define stage helps you clearly state the need or problem so others can understand.



Ideate

To **ideate** means to form an idea, thought or concept. As it relates to the design thinking process, to ideate specifically means to brainstorm ideas based on what you have learned about your target audience and the point of view or problem statement you have defined. Related to Project Heart, your ideas should also incorporate the specific time, talent and/or treasure that you wish to contribute.



Prototype

To **prototype** means to model or create an example. As it relates to Project Heart, to prototype specifically means to plan out in detail one of your impact project ideas.



Test

To **test** means to check the quality, reliability or performance of something. As it relates to the design thinking process, to test specifically means to gain feedback on your prototype from your target population. As it relates to Project Heart, testing means implementing your plan and reflecting on your success and failures.

Activity

Use the spaces below to work through the design thinking process.

Tips: To build empathy, do some research and interview experts in this area (which can include your peers!). Find out what people impacted by the fires really need. Find out who is already helping and learn from them.

When you decide on your prototype idea, remember to access the Illumination Fund for materials funding or a matching donation to a U.S. based non-profit

<https://myprojectheart.org/illumination-fund>



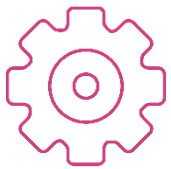
Empathize



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Ideate



Prototype



Test

Reflect