



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Question: How do I go about finding a school to work with?

The best match for a school is one that serves children who never really get an opportunity to “shop” for their mom/grandmother/caregiver. Typically, these elementary schools are located in lower income areas. When investigating a potential school, call the school and ask for the principal or someone else in authority. Ask what percentage of the students are on the “school lunch” program. If over 80% of the children have their lunches provided, you know you are in the right district. If many children are also on the school breakfast program, then you are really on the right trail.

Question: How much jewelry should we collect for a school of 350 children?

We always want to make sure that we have plenty of jewelry and plenty of choices – particularly for the children that come to the shop at the end of the day. So, the general rule of thumb is to have somewhere between 25% to 50% more pieces of jewelry than you have students.

Question: We already have enough jewelry for this year’s shop. Should we keep collecting?

Absolutely yes! Always keep the momentum going. Many of our shops now collect jewelry all through the year. We always want to collect more than we need so that we can expand into other school districts!

Question: I have a friend who said she doesn’t have any extra jewelry but wanted to make a small cash donation. How do I handle this?

Say “yes and thank you”. You can always use small monetary donations for tissue and gift bags.

Question: Where do we get the little gift bags and the ribbon and tissue paper?

Remember that friend who wanted to make a cash donation? This is where to rely on their generosity. Also, throughout the year, keep an eye out for tissue paper. A couple of weeks after the Christmas holidays is always a good bet. On the bags, remember cheap and cheerful is all that you need. Check out the following Web site that will send bags directly to your front yard – www.papermart.com. Transparent bags are great. You can store the individual gift cards in baggies. Place the jewelry in a bag, place a gift card on the outside and staple it shut. You run less risk of children playing with the item and seeing it broken or lost.

Question: My local TV/radio/newspaper wants to do a story on our Mother's Day Jewelry Shop program. What do I do?

First, seek approval from the school's principal. Even better, get the approval in writing. Then say "Yes! We would love the coverage". Remember, good media coverage can help us build out more shops, more children served, an increased volunteer network, and a feeling that we did something important.

Question: Do you have any tips for setting up the shop?

Make it easy. Set up separate tables. One for necklaces, one for pins, one for bracelets, one for pierced earrings and one for clip earrings. Put little signs on each table identifying the jewelry category (i.e. necklaces). Ask the school to provide tables. Bring inexpensive, solid-colored tablecloths — patterned cloths distract the children from making buying decisions. Don't put all the jewelry out at once. Pace yourself. You can replenish the supply all day. Remember the rule of 20: it is much easier to keep all jewelry categories in baggies organized in batches of 20.

Question: How do we keep the earrings from getting separated? Is there an easy way to store them?

Earrings can be a challenge. When organizing the donated jewelry we find that, from the start, separating the jewelry into big, well-marked plastic bins works best. Mark them: necklaces, pins, bracelets, pierced earrings and clip earrings. For the earrings, use bright neon index cards. Cut them in half or in thirds. For pierced earrings, using an ice pick, pierce the card with two holes and attach the pierced earrings to the card. For clip earrings, take a sharp knife or box cutter, make two small slices in the index card, then thread the back of the earrings through the card. Secure the earrings to the card using a piece of scotch tape on the back.

Question: How long does the Jewelry Shop day usually run?

Typically we arrive at 8 a.m., set up for an hour, and open the first shop at 9 a.m. Depending on the size of the school, the day usually wraps up at 3 p.m. Remember packing up the jewelry in bags at the end of the day is a lot easier than counting up your inventory months later!

Question: Where should volunteers park their cars on the day of the shops?

Working with the school authorities, the volunteer coordinator should negotiate the best options for parking. In some areas, cars might need to be moved during the day if they are on streets that have zone parking. In terms of safety, if the school is in a neighborhood known for higher crime rates, volunteers should travel in groups. Park close to the school, and keep your personal valuables to a minimum. We want everyone to have a safe and rewarding experience. Be very careful of your purses and wallets. Leave as much as you can at home. Generally, we put the volunteers' purses under one of the tables in the busiest part of the "shop" to avoid any unpleasant instances. Remember: be smart about your personal belongings.

Question: What should volunteers wear?

The key is being comfortable. Volunteers will be on their feet for a good portion of the day. Some of the “shops” ask volunteers to wear a bit of a uniform – i.e. pink blouses/tee shirts and khaki colored skirts or pants. The children tend to like the “official” nature of the volunteers in uniform. Most important — wear comfortable shoes. Please keep your own personal jewelry to a minimum. You may want to “model” something for a shopper. Plus it is safer to keep your own jewelry at home.

Question: What should the volunteers do about lunch?

The answer is just make it easy: pack a simple lunch with a couple bottles of water. We want to make it easy on the school – and not be a burden – so bring a lunch with you. Many schools won’t have a deli nearby and most school cafeterias find it a challenge just taking care of the children, so we try to be low key and take care of ourselves.

Question: Do volunteers need to stay the entire day?

It would be great if volunteers can stay for the entire day. If your shop decides to do shifts, we find it’s best to do one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Stick to your plan. You really don’t want volunteers showing up for an hour or so, it is too disruptive and you run the risk of no one being there at the end of the day.

Question: When we finish the shop for the day, is there an easy way to pack up the extra jewelry and get ready for next time?

Baggies are your best friends. When organizing the jewelry into the category bin, pack the pieces into baggies with 20 pieces per baggie then use a Sharpie to mark each bag with “20”. When you put out the jewelry for display, always put out an entire baggie of 20. As you replenish the supply during the day, always put out jewelry in batches of 20. At the end of the day – once the children are gone – ask the volunteers to help you get ready for next year. Put the remaining jewelry back in baggies of 20 and COUNT how many baggies are in each bin. Tape an index card to the top of the bin and mark the top of the bin with the total number of pieces inside (e.g. 10 baggies of 20 pins each = 200 total necklaces.) At the end of the day, you’ll know how many pieces you have ready for next year!

Question: How do we thank the volunteers?

The best way to thank a volunteer (those who donated jewelry and those who worked the shop on site) is to send a nice thank you email from the volunteer coordinator. It should be a heartfelt thank you and attaching a couple photos from the day is great. Remember – a picture is worth a thousand words!

Question: Is there something I forgot to ask?

Probably, but don’t worry – just have fun. The day will be incredibly enjoyable for everyone. Trust us, the volunteers get as much out of the day as *the children!*