

## **Elizabeth Horn – John Paul II Catholic School – Ursuline Academy, page 1 of 2**

In Aubrey's three short years of life, she affected quite a few people with her will to live and her beautiful smile. She is still having a positive impact on people today through her foundation. I try to have a positive impact on people in my life as well. If I am able to reach half as many people as Aubrey did, I will be happy.

I became familiar with Aubrey Rose through my sister, Sarah. Like her, I participated in the American Girl Fashion Show as a young girl and enjoyed the experience very much. When Sarah won the Aubrey Rose Scholarship, we had the opportunity to volunteer at the fashion show by helping the models with their outfits and assisting them onto the runway. It was fun to see the girls have as much fun as I did.

The American Girl Fashion Show is one way that Aubrey Rose is affecting young girls, and in turn bringing hope to the families of sick children. I have logged many service hours during grade school through tutoring other students, serving at mass, and volunteering at Mathew 25 Ministries, Kids Against Hunger, and the Helping Hands of Hope. One of the most fulfilling ways that I help others is through the Saint Vincent de Paul Society (SVdP). My mother is the treasurer of the Saint Bartholomew conference of SVdP. Through her involvement, I have been able to volunteer in many ways. As you may know, SVdP is an organization that focuses on neighbors helping neighbors. My volunteer efforts include soliciting donations after masses, collecting canned goods at the Cincinnati Reds baseball games, and most importantly, assisting with the Advent Giving Tree.

The Advent Giving Tree is a way for parishoners to help our neighbors in need in the Winton Place community. At my house, we celebrate Christmas in July because this is when we begin making Christmas ornaments for the Advent tree. As soon as school is out for the summer, we make a page of ornaments every day. This process includes tracing an ornament stencil, cutting each one out, and stringing yarn for the hangers. This project continues all summer. Then at Thanksgiving, we receive the names of the children that we will be helping at Christmas. There are approximately 35 names on the list with each child requesting several basic clothing items and 2-3 wishes, or toys. Every year when I see this list, I realize how fortunate I am, and how many things I take for granted, like Santa delivering gifts each year. On the Friday after Thanksgiving, my sister and I begin writing the names of the children and their wishes on the ornaments. It takes nearly all day to complete the nearly 200 ornaments that need to be ready for the first Sunday of Advent. On Saturday, we go to church, set up the tree in the vestibule, and hang the ornaments for mass that evening. Then the magic begins, as the parishoners grant the wishes of the children. During the next few weeks, we return to organize and pack up the donated gifts for delivery to the SVdP center in Winton Place.

**Elizabeth Horn – John Paul II Catholic School – Ursuline Academy, page 2 of 2**

I am always amazed at the generosity of the parishoners with the quantity and quality of gifts under the tree. I have seen many very generous donations including bicycles, MP3 players, and even a hand-painted table and chairs. I wish I was able to see the faces of the children when they open the presents on Christmas morning. This would not be possible without the efforts of SVdP. After Christmas, I enjoy reading the thank you notes that the families send expressing their sincere appreciation. This is our fifth year with the Advent Giving tree, and it is a family tradition that I would like to continue through high school.

By being a part of the Advent Giving Tree program, I realize how important it is to help others who are less fortunate. Sometimes it is only a small gesture that can bring a smile, brighten a day, or change a life. I have also learned that by giving to others, we actually receive a greater gift in return.