

Reif Richardson – St. Gabriel Consolidated School – St. Xavier High School

I have affected the people around me in many positive ways. One of those ways is that I attempt to make everyone feel better. Every day I try to give someone a compliment or if I see someone being bullied I try to tell them to ignore them. Just the other day I saw someone saying mean things to people on social media and I immediately reported the comments and told the person that those people were just trying to make themselves feel good. I try to help people become smarter people and if they ask me for help on their work at school I will help them find the answer but not give them the answer. This way they will learn the topic and help prepare them for their future. If they think that they are not smart enough to figure out the problem I tell them that everybody has their own talents and try to cheer them up. I would tell them that they are smart and, if they work hard, they will reach their goal in life. Another way I try to make others feel better is telling them a joke to turn their frown upside down. That's why lots of people are more happy than sad when they get to sit by me as they always tell me that I make their day. Every day I try to boost somebody's self-respect and make sure every day is having a good day.

Another way I have affected the people of the lives around me is by always taking part in Ashley's walk every June. Ashley Steingraeber is my cousin who was born in 2008 but was diagnosed with Metachromatic leukodystrophy in 2010. Metachromatic leukodystrophy, or MLD for short, is a genetic disease that damages the central nervous system. I used to go over to her house and help her try to walk when she was two and play with her. After they took her to the doctor wondering why she still couldn't walk, they found out she had MLD. The worst part about MLD is that they haven't found a cure for it yet. In her case, the disease progress to where she couldn't walk or talk or really move and she had to eat from a feeding tube. We prayed and prayed for a miracle and from then it became one of my dreams to find a cure for MLD. After a couple months of having MLD she was given under a month to survive. That made me want to see her even more and I would go over to their house and talk to her and play with her in the pool and even help her draw pictures. On her birthday I would try to help her open her presents and every time I saw her it put a smile on my face. I would still pray every day and although her condition wasn't improving by much she hung in there. So that made it my goal to help her and in 2009 I helped start the MLD walk. This was a fundraiser to raise money for Ashley and the whole MLD foundation. Every summer I would help right a speech to tell everyone, who was at the annual run, about my time spent with her. By the end I started to help her make scarves and pictures to help sell at an auction at the annual 5k at Glenwood Gardens. This past summer her condition got worse and I made a wise purchase of buying one of her scarves at the auction. I then encouraged others to buy some of the art and if they didn't they missed out because in the next month she entered Heaven. The worst part about it was

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that Ashley's brother, Nicky, was over at my house when she passed. I tried to cheer him up by telling him she was now in a better place but both Nicky and I couldn't reach around the fact that she was gone and neither of us got to say goodbye. This June I still plan on having the walk to raise money for the MLD foundation and will continue tell others the story of Ashley and how she never gave up. I know that I have then helped others and have helped them become better people by helping them to remember to always keep your time with others and never give up. I know I have helped others in this way because of how many times my aunt and uncle thanked me and that is why they asked me to say a reading at her funeral mass and be a pallbearer. That is how I have and will continue to spread awareness for the MLD foundation and remind people to stay strong and keep fighting.

I, Reif Richardson, try to help others be more religious and tell them the Good News. Ever since fourth grade I have been an alter attendant at my Church. I would also take part in the play of Jesus' birth at Christmas Eve Mass to teach others the Good News. I also lector at masses at school and this past year I even got invited to speak at a meeting to help encourage people to join and be a liturgical minister at Church. I have helped at the festivals as well by either working a booth to raise money or picking up trash. Another thing my family takes part in is every Christmas we pick a needy family as well as participate in the shoebox for kids. We actually didn't start this tradition until a couple of years when I asked my mom, "Why don't we ever do one of those families? It looks like fun and everybody else is." She couldn't say no to that so we picked up the supplies. We filled the shoebox with toys and goodies for a child. We turned that back into the Church to give to the families and then started to collect the supplies for the other family such as toys, clothes and food non-perishables. It was pretty much the same thing and we packed up the food and the goodies and sent it off for the family to open on Christmas/Christmas Eve. I also wrote each of the families a letter and wished them a Happy Holidays. We have done the same thing ever since. Not only did I encourage others to join youth ministry, I also helped my cousin, Ashley's brother Nicky and my sister to join alter serving. That's how I have helped others become closer to God.