

Audrey Seminara
St. Susanna

“Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.” [~Mother Teresa] It takes seventeen muscles to smile, and forty-three to frown. In every situation, no matter how bad, a smile can make things better. It’s amazing what just a simple smile can do, and how it can light up a person’s day. Everything looks brighter when you’re wearing a smile, and that smile enhances the lives of those around you in amazing ways. Some ways I have had an impact on the lives of others, smiling even when it’s hard, are volunteering at Vacation Bible School, serving funeral Masses, and spending time with my sick grandma.

When I was younger, I went to Vacation Bible School and one of the main things I always remembered was the teen helpers. Some of them made it so much fun talking to my friends and me, smiling and having a great time with us. When I got old enough to become a teen helper, I wanted to make it just as exciting of a time as I had for the kids in my group. At the beginning of the week there were kids who wouldn’t let go of their moms, scared to be without them all day and not knowing what to expect. Understanding their anxiety, I’d just smile, take their hand, and tell them they would have a great time. By the end of the week, they didn’t want to leave. Just having a smile on my face put one on theirs and that changed the whole environment.

Another way I impact other’s lives is by being a server at funeral Masses. The first time I served a funeral I was scared and didn’t know what to expect. Everyone was crying and gathered for their loved one and I didn’t feel right being there. The other servers with me had experience; they told me it would be alright and offered a smile. As I served the funeral, I would try to give a comforting smile to the people there. With all the sadness in the room, there was love, knowing everyone felt the same way. It made me realize just how precious life is, and now whenever I serve funerals, I try to smile at people whenever I can. At one recent funeral, the family gave each of us a card in thanks for serving their family. I felt like I made a difference to that family by helping them on a sad day. I knew how they felt, having just recently lost my grandma; everyone that helped us said something kind to our family or even just offered a smile and that made me feel better. I knew someone understood how I felt and cared about me. I wanted to thank them a million times just for that. I remember that feeling whenever I serve a funeral Mass and pay forward that feeling of comfort and care.

I impacted another person’s life by spending time with my grandma as she was dying. The whole family, even people I had never met or seen before from other states, came in town to be with my grandma. Making my grandma smile made her feel better and made me feel good too. I went over to her house with my dad one morning and painted her nails. She always had a manicure on her nails, and when she got too sick to

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do it for herself, I wanted to do it for her. I could see the happiness in her smile and I knew it brightened her day. My family visited another day and brought my grandma her favorite food. It made her smile knowing we were thinking about her, and that ended up being one of the last things she could eat. On the day she died, all the family members were there. As everyone cried, an older family member that I didn't even know would smile at me. That smile said, "Everything is okay, we are all going through it together and I know how you feel." I would then smile at my sister and she'd smile at my grandpa. We all knew we did what we could to make my grandma happy when she was with us.

Vacation Bible School, serving funeral Masses, and spending time with my sick grandma are just a few ways I make, or have made, an impact on people's lives. All this smiling makes me think of Aubrey Rose and the first time I heard her incredible story. I got the wonderful opportunity to be in the Aubrey Rose/American Girl Fashion Show for three years when I was younger. I kept going back because it was such a positive experience that did so much good and was also so much fun! I always think of Aubrey and how even in the worst of times she always smiled. She brightened the lives of those around her, which I hope I can do too. The brightest of smiles is when you smile from your heart, and it can bring light to the darkest of situations. Making a difference in people's lives can be as easy as smiling and it can turn someone's day around. I know I will use this thought for the rest of my life and in every situation. Just look at the amazing gifts Aubrey's smile has brought to the world. I hope that when I share a smile with someone it will make an impact on their life, and that person will turn around and make an impact on someone else's, maybe just by sharing a smile too.