

HOW I MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By: SAMANTHA NEAL

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My name is Samantha Neal, and I am 13 ½ years old attending Mother Teresa Catholic Elementary School. I have only attended Mother Teresa for three years. My parents sent me to a private school in hopes that I would better be able to overcome my reading comprehension and test taking struggles. I can honestly say that MTCES is the best thing that ever happened to me as far as school is concerned. I learned how to organize, take notes, study, and get better at taking my tests. While at home and school, I always try to make the most of my situations.

I have had the opportunity in the past two years to help a lot of other kids and families with tragedies in their lives. I have an older brother that nearly lost his life in a car accident two years ago. He was hurt badly and in surgery after surgery and then rehab, which was even more difficult. I helped him every day when he said he couldn't do it anymore or it hurt too badly. I turned up the music and sang out loud to make him think of something other than the pain. I moved his pillows around to make him more comfortable and brought him food and drinks throughout the day so my mom could get rest as well. Then the following year almost to the day, my older sister passed away with her unborn baby in her tummy. I never got to meet my new little niece. I miss my sister every day. But with the sad comes the good. My parents always say that when God needs a new angel he has to take the best, and my big sister happened to be just what he needed on that special day when she went to heaven with her baby girl.

In all of the horrible things that have happened over the past few years there is something very special that I got to be a part of. Even though I don't have my big sister, or my baby niece to hold they were able to give life to others after they passed. My sister was an organ donor. There were hundreds of people who were able to receive tissue, bones, and organs to continue their lives in a healthier way. I have been able to talk with other people and tell them how special that is. That someone with diabetes was able to get one of her kidneys and not have to take dialysis treatments every week at the hospital. That some of the soldiers who were shot in Afghanistan, where my brother serves as a Marine, were shot and had shattered bones were able to receive the gift of a new bones so that they could walk again and use their arms again to hold their own newborn babies. That someone could receive lungs in order to live a longer and healthier life with their

family. There are so many others that were able to receive things like skin and tissue to cover their bodies after being severely burned in fires or accidents. I am able to tell these other friends and families how wonderful it is to be an organ donor. How talking with their families and telling them that if God ever decides that it is their time to come and be an angel in heaven with him, that they want others to go on with their lives by using their organs and tissues. It is amazing that research and technology that we have now can save the lives of so many other people and bring smiles to the faces of the rest of their family.

I am fortunate to be able to work with little kids that want to learn to ride horses. I have a horse of my own that I ride and show and have been riding since I was 4 years old. I have learned from my mom how to ride, jump, and show horses, which has made it possible for me to win a lot of awards over the years I have shown. We have kids who come to the barn who have diseases like MS and other things that make their lives harder to deal with. I can put them on a horse and walk them around so that they can forget that it is hard for them to walk but when they are on a horse they feel like it is so easy because the horse can do it for them. They smile and laugh and forget that they have a disability for just a little while and that makes me feel good. I like to help other kids when I can. This is just one way that they can have a good day, and I can help them learn more about the horse while they are riding. It is really nice when they send me pictures of horses that they have colored for me and it has a picture of me leading the horse with them in the saddle. It shows that I was able to make an impact on them in a good way. We have had kids at school that have been diagnosed with cancer recently too. One of them missed a lot of school because of the treatments. He was diagnosed as soon as he graduated from our school and missed the beginning of his freshman year. There was a lot of support from his family and friends, and when we wrote letters to him it made him feel like he was still part of the school. I walked in a walk-a-thon to help raise money for him and his family so that they could afford the expensive treatments he had to go through too. The walk-a-thon was fun and didn't seem like work at all. I knew in my heart I was helping out someone who really needed it. I know that when we do these kinds of things that the families are very appreciative of what we do but the prayers we say each day seem to be the most helpful, Just taking five minutes out of your day to ask the Lord to watch over our friends and families can make you smile all day long. My mom says that when you are sad that you have to remember all of the raindrops and snowflakes are kisses from heaven from those that we miss the most. We got a lot of snow this year, so I know that my big sister misses me a lot. I love to help people and to make people laugh and smile. When they are laughing they are happy and not thinking of how

bad their lives may be at the moment. One of the biggest lessons I have learned from my parents is that there really is a brighter side; we just have to make sure we work very hard to see it every day. We need to make everyday count and make sure that we touch someone's life in a good way as often as we can. Take the time to listen, make the time to help when you know someone is hurting. We have to choose words wisely when we are angry, because once you say something hurtful; it is hard to take it back.

Take time, make the time, be the one who makes the world a better place!