

Annie Gronotte – St. Pius X – Notre Dame Academy

The value of my life will not be measured by the number of breaths that I get to take, but by how I choose to live my life in the time that I am given. Author Jarod Kintz said, "Whether you live to be 50 or 100 makes no difference, if you made no difference in the world." I have tried to make every day of my life count by making a difference to those around me in my home, at my school, at my parish, in my community, and in everything I do. When it is time for me to meet God, I want to be able to tell him that I used my talents to the best of my abilities, and in doing so I helped those around me and made the world a better place.

Making a difference does not always have to be grand gestures. It can be the small things I do everyday around my family to be the best daughter and sister that I can be. I help my younger brothers with homework and piano. I help my parents by babysitting my brothers and helping clean the house with very little complaints. There are a lot of expectations on me as the oldest child requiring maturity and it is not always easy. However, I try my hardest to make my parents proud and my mom always tells me that I am a role model for my brothers by showing them how to work hard in school, be responsible enough to get my homework done on time, and get good grades.

At school, I have tried to make a difference by being a hardworking student, getting involved with extra-curricular activities, and being a leader. In my nine years at St. Pius X in Edgewood, I have participated in multiple sports teams (soccer, basketball, volleyball, and golf), choir, drama, ski club, academic team, and Student Council. I have taken leadership roles as often as I could, and tried to be an example to others by being prepared and doing whatever is asked by our coach or instructor. For example, I have been fortunate to get lead roles in most of our school plays. By coming to rehearsals with my lines memorized and paying attention to what my directors tell me, I am hopefully making it easier for my directors and showing the newer actors what they need to do. I have also taken positions of leadership so that I could help bring about the greatest change. Last year I was the Secretary of our Student Council, and this year I was elected President. This means I am lucky enough to lead our students in a number of fundraisers each month for different charities and other events to raise school spirit. Outside of school, I also work to make a difference to my church by volunteering in different ways. I am a server and a lector. I also volunteer at our school's Vacation Bible School in the summer. This year I used my talent for dancing to help choreograph all the dances that we taught to the kids.

I have also worked to make a difference in the community, both through volunteer work and in paid jobs. When I was seven years old, I participated as a model in my first American Girl Fashion Show for the Aubrey Rose Foundation. It was so much fun to get up on stage and be a part of such a fun event, but the real impact from

my fashion show experience was that it introduced me to the Hollenkamps and the work of the foundation, which is so much bigger than the fashion shows. I was inspired to always look for ways to help others in need and find ways to serve my community. Even when I became too old to be a model in the fashion shows, I still found ways to be involved with the Aubrey Rose Foundation by volunteering at dinners at the Ronald McDonald House and making paracord bracelets that were sold at foundation events to raise money for the foundation. The Hollenkamps taught me that I am never too young to contribute and make a difference. In addition to the work I have done with the Aubrey Rose Foundation, I also volunteer every year to help with the Down Syndrome Society of Greater Cincinnati's Buddy Walk. For several years, I participated in an acting group called KIDS (Kids in Difficult Situations) that taught kids how to handle difficult situations through skits and songs. Additionally, on the weekends, I frequently babysit and I am a licensed soccer referee. I also teach two dance classes each week at Mary Riesenbergs Studio of Dance. In all of these encounters, I try to work hard with a smile on my face. Sometimes just being a positive, happy person will make those around you kinder, gentler, and more positive too. As author Mandy Hale said: "Always show kindness and love to others. Your words might be filling the empty places in someone's heart."

So far in my fourteen years, I think I have made a difference, but I am only just starting. I am extremely blessed by God with so many things, and I need to make sure that I always strive to use my talents to help others. Next year, I plan to attend Notre Dame Academy in Park, Hills, Kentucky. Notre Dame's motto is "educating women to make a difference in the world," and I hope it does just that for me. No matter what I do in life, I will always try to give a hundred percent so that I know when my life is done, I have left a mark. As poet Mary Hale said, "I don't want to end up simply having visited this world." I want the world and those around me to be a little better because of my efforts.