

Pint-Size Heroes

Turn the nightly news on and you're inundated with seemingly unsolvable problems. The issues of poverty, war, disease, homelessness, and crime loom large. It's unlikely that we'll ever solve all the world's problems, yet small acts of kindness can make a difference in individual lives. Children, with their goodness, innocence, and hope, can be active participants. In this article, we highlight a few young philanthropists and offer suggestions on encouraging volunteerism in your family.

Consider Julie Hunter and her five children, who gather and distribute basic supplies, such as water, snacks, toothbrushes, and tissues for the homeless in Cincinnati, Ohio. Or Alex Scott, the inspiration behind Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, a nonprofit organization that has raised more than \$60 million dollars for the research and treatment of childhood cancer. Alex, who was diagnosed with childhood cancer as a baby, decided to host a lemonade stand to raise money for cancer research. She was only 4 years old at the time, and amazingly, raised more than \$2,000. Alex made the lemonade stand an annual event. At her death in 2004, she had raised more than \$1 million. Since then, Alex's parents and brother have continued her work.

Or Zach Bonner, the 12-year-old who started Little Red Wagon Foundation to help homeless and underprivileged youth. Since 2004, Zach has delivered more than 400 backpacks filled with toys, school supplies, and food to needy children. In 2006, President George W. Bush awarded him with the Presidential Service Award.

Children are natural philanthropists because they often have more energy, time, and focus than most adults. They don't see the barriers and challenges that adults perceive, nor are they hindered by cynicism. Give them an idea and a bit of support, and they're off and running. To encourage your pint-sized hero, we offer the following suggestions:

- Start small. Host a bake sale, gather school supplies, or work at a food bank. As you and your children gain experience, you can organize larger events.
- Talk with your children about world events at a level that is age-appropriate for them. Don't inundate children with more information than they can handle, but help them understand that others need compassion.
- Choose projects that complement your family's interests and values. For example, a young soccer player gathered more than 1,200 soccer balls for children in Africa.
- Piggyback your efforts with those of local schools, child care centers, and nonprofit organizations. Our Bright Horizons centers, for example, are helping to make volunteering easy and personal for center families. Ask your center about the Brightening Lives Activities where families come together to do an activity to benefit children and families in crisis.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Bright Horizons® is committed to giving back to the communities where we live and work in partnership with the *Bright Horizons Foundation for Children®*. Our mission carries into our centers and schools where building empathy and compassion is infused into the *World at Their Fingertips®* curriculum for children. Together, with our committed teachers, caring parents and Bright Horizons clients and partners, we are raising compassionate children, growing givers and creating a better world. For more information about the Bright Horizons Foundation for Children visit www.brighthorizonsfoundation.org

© 2015 Bright Horizons Family Solutions LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Match your efforts with your family's time and resources. Giving should feel pleasurable, not overwhelming. Even small efforts, such as shoveling a neighbor's walk or taking a meal to a sick friend teach children valuable lessons in giving.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

