



STARS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FROM FISHERS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

By



Fishers Junior High 7th grade English teacher, Michael Jansen (pictured on far left of third row,) is seen with his 3rd Period Advanced English Class. This is one of his six classes representing "Stars Making a Difference" for their class project.

If you walked into Fishers Junior High School and made your way to room F101, you would enter into a space where many excited students are swarming in front of their very enthusiastic seventh grade English teacher, Michael Jansen.

At the beginning of the school year, Mr. Jansen presented his students with a mission posing this question, "I am just a kid ... what can I do to change the world?" They were provided a motivational hint: "The STARS Make a Difference ..." which happens to be the title of their current project spanning for most of the entire school year. Students are to decide their answer of how they will change the world.

This project reflects the "goodwill-toward-others-without-expecting-anything-in-return" doctrine as seen in the 2000 movie, *Pay it Forward*. Seventh grader Trevor McKinney (Haley Joel Osment) offered a homeless man a place to stay in his garage and asked him to mimic this generosity to three more people, which branched out to many acts of kindness through many characters. This all started from a class assignment given by his social studies teacher, Eugene Simonet (Kevin Spacey).

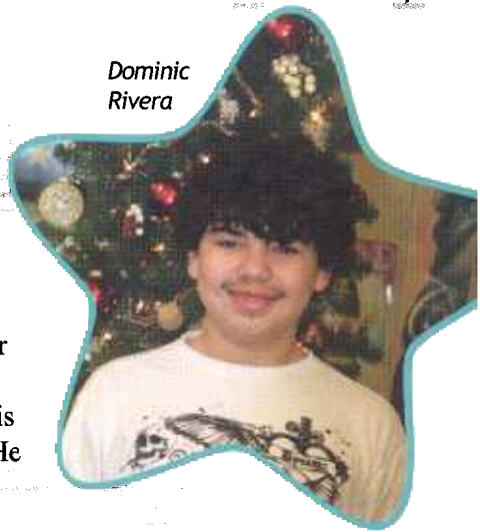
In Michael Jansen's class, students are free to choose how they wish to make a difference. They may either volunteer their time or help raise money for a worthy cause.

"The most important factor to keep in mind is finding something that you care or are passionate about," says Mr. Jansen. He further advises, "Students who choose a cause based on something of interest always enjoy the project."

His students surely must have taken his advice. They are moving forward in high gear with wonderful projects designed to touch the lives of so many. Let's take a look at some of these hardworking students.

DOMINIC RIVERA

Dominic is collecting toys for the "Toys for Tots" program. He set up eighteen stations throughout Fishers, including six to eight within his school. He managed to collect over 300 toys from Fishers Junior High alone. He works closely with his dad, Ramon Rivera, who is very instrumental in serving the Toys for Tots organization. Dominic says that they have somewhere around 20,000 kids getting a toy this year. Their goal is to gather over 40,000 gifts. He is proud and excited about how he and his dad have made a commercial on X103.3 which still airs them from time to time. Dominic leaves us with this astute comment



Dominic
Rivera

"Many people say that kids can't make a difference or change the world. But some kids have to stand up and prove them wrong. Kids can make just as big of a difference as adults can."

GILLIAN GRAY AND JADE FENNER

Together, Gillian and Jade have joined forces to make tie-dye shirts, shorts, headbands and socks. They plan to make these tie-dye products over winter break and sell them to raise money for breast cancer.

Luke Ingram:

Helping Custodians with Setting up Basketball Games

"... It has impacted my life in several ways. It is nice to know that when you are done with setting up the gym that you helped to do that. It is also good to see that the custodians love to watch you help finish their responsibilities. The best thing of all is to hear them say, 'thank you' for what you have done for them."

Meera Patel:

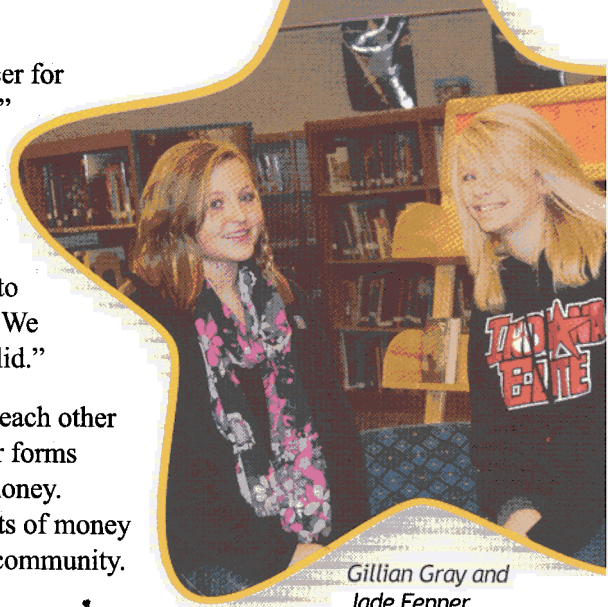
Tutoring 3rd Graders at Cumberland Road Elementary

"It's great to help the 3rd graders read and learn. Giving other people the ability to read and learn about new topics and seeing the happiness in their eyes is an amazing feeling. I take about five or six kids out to the hallway to help them finish homework quicker. Making a difference is great. I love it."



"My grandma had breast cancer for one year. It scared our family," says Gillian Gray. She continues, "This is why I wanted to donate money for this cause. We are also collecting Yoplait yogurt lids to help those with breast cancer. We can receive 10 cents for each lid."

Gillian and Jade complement each other well. Gillian collects the order forms while Jade takes care of the money. Together they hope to raise lots of money and make a difference in our community.



Gillian Gray and Jade Fenner

ANNA WHITE

Anna exemplifies a highly driven girl who stands up for what she believes in and is actually doing two projects. First, Anna was not happy to hear that the Girl Scouts of Central Indiana decided to sell Camp Windigo in Upland due to the cost of needed renovations.

"I revolted and wrote the CEO of Girl Scouts of Central Indiana a letter telling her that I would refuse to sell cookies," says Anna who definitely got attention. She met with the CEO and was told it was too late, that Windigo had already sold to a hunter. However, the Girl Scouts will still have access to Camp Ada in Spiceland. Anna was active in helping to preserve a campsite for the Girl Scouts.

Secondly, Anna hosts a book club with a group of kids in Mr. Stage's class at Cumberland Road Elementary School. She reads a book called Magic Tree House #6: Afternoon on the Amazon.

"I'm really enjoying paying it forward because Mr. Stage (former teacher) 'pulled me out of the



Anna White

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ditch' in math," says Anna. "I went from struggling, to honor roll because of him ... It feels great to help his students!"

MICHAEL JESSUP

Michael's project is titled "Random Acts of Kindness." Some examples of his arbitrary and benevolent deeds include the following: helping neighbor children study for tests; assisting classmates with assignments; helping neighbors with yard work such as raking leaves and shoveling driveways.

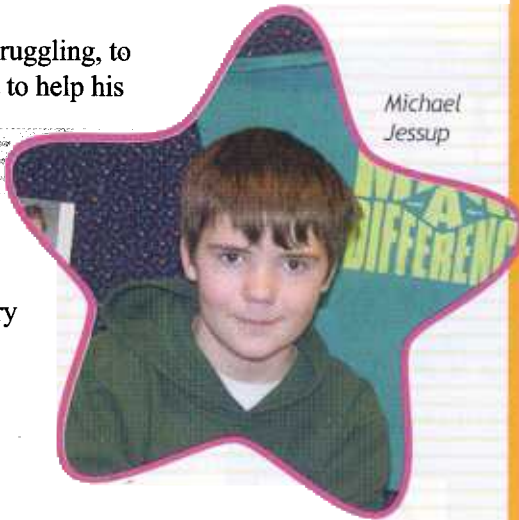
One day, Michael even traded his bountiful school lunch for a plain one. He purposely chose to buy a main entrée and sides, accompanied with a cookie and drink. He then scoped out a student who was getting ready to settle for just a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with milk. (This is the basic lunch provided to students when they have no money left in their account.) He approached this student and asked if she would like to trade. She gladly swapped lunches with him!

Michael says, "My goal is to do 200 nice things for people by the time I turn in my project, and that at least a few people decide this is a thing that they'd like to do daily."

All these kids deserve to be recognized for their efforts. Soon, they will have their chance. Mr. Jansen has teamed up with his friend, Dave Justus, author and director of motivation and public speaking for Northcoast University. Together, they will feature each of the 155 students in a book which is expected to be published in May. The children will write about their experiences in making a difference.

"I wanted to kick start this project because some of the kids seemed lackadaisical," says Mr. Jansen, who also has his own task of recycling paper, plastic and cans within the school.

The title and cover illustration for the new book will be decided on and designed by the students. As a 7th grader, the only thing better than completing this project with Mr. Jansen as your teacher, is having the opportunity of saying that you have been published! ☘



Michael Jessup

Alex Butterfield:

Donating Food, Toys and Money to Needy/Homeless Families

"The Make a Difference project has changed many people's lives and will change many more as the years go on. My sister did this same project when she was in 7th grade. She made hats for IPS students and they were very grateful for them."

Christian Bultmeyer:

Shoe Drive and Random Acts of Kindness

"The shoe drive has changed my life and will change your life forever! This is the best project and hopefully it will go around the world."

Hannah Sullivan:

Ring Bell for Salvation Army and Helping at Nursing Home

"You can become better when helping a complete stranger. This project has changed my life and I hope after you read this it will change yours too. Whether it's helping out in a homeless shelter or just putting a dinner on a family's table, you will make a difference."

"I finally have my life back thanks to Dr. Rempel. It's a miracle!"

- Vicki, a Geist resident



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