



## Giving Stories

Choose giving stories from the following categories to share with your family based on their interests. Keep a conversation going by asking some of these questions:

- What do you think of when you hear this story?
- Do you know of any similar stories?
- What would you do in this situation?
- If you were going to write a letter to the giver in the story what would you say?

### HOLIDAYS

The Kelner family of Muskegon, Michigan, decided to give something back to the good folks in their community who must work on Christmas. So for the past several years they've gathered holiday cookies and other treats to bring to the local fire station on Christmas Eve. The first year, they were surprised to find only one firefighter on duty; he was so thrilled to see them, he invited them in to share the feast. For the Kelners, that one small act of generosity turned out to be the highlight of the Christmas season.

### SPORTS

#### *Turn 2 Foundation*

Baseball star, Derek Jeter, New York Yankees' shortstop decided when he was ten years-old that if he ever made it to the major leagues, he would set up a foundation to help others. He made good on that decision when he founded his Turn 2 Foundation to support and create activities and programs designed to motivate youth to "turn to" a healthy lifestyle, academic achievement and leadership development and "turn away" from substances like drugs and alcohol.

## ANIMALS

### *Freekibble.com*

Mimi Ausland, a 12 year-old girl from Bend, Oregon, wanted to help feed the hungry dogs at her local animal shelter. "There are 10's of thousands of dogs in animal shelters across the country, all needing to be fed a good meal." So Mimi started freekibble.com, a website that hosts the "Bow Wow Trivia Game." Users answer a new trivia question each day and in return, freekibble.com, with the help of Zootoo.com, provides good, healthy food to dogs and cats in shelters that need help to adequately feed their animals. Today freekibble.com provides kibble to 10 shelters from Oregon to Florida and plan to expand the program to many more! Just since April 1, 2008, 31,329,130 pieces of kibble have been donated – every piece counts!

### *Pennies for Police Dogs*

In February 2000, 10-year-old Stacey Hillman was reading a magazine about Police Dogs needing bulletproof (and stab-resistant) vests. She thought that someone should start raising money for the Police Dogs. So she went to her local Police Department and asked Chief LaBrusciano if she could collect money there for the Police Dogs. He agreed to let her raise money.

Then she went to the County Sheriff Don Eslinger, and he helped, too. While the grown-ups were busy with the legal things, she got busy visiting all the Police Dogs and telling the departments about her new charity. She made collection jugs out of bottles and put a picture of her with a police dog on it. She put these bottles in vet's offices and pet stores.

The Chief from her hometown police department had a friend who helped make Stacey's idea an official charity -- called Pennies to Protect Police Dogs. The more money she collected, the more press events she had, and the more people offered to donate and help her with her goal of giving every Police Dog a bulletproof vest.

Stacey travels all around her state to raise money and tell people how important the Police Dogs are. She speaks at schools, and they donate to her charity, too. Since Stacey started her charity, she has raised over \$140,000 and purchased 180 bulletproof vests. She has many more K-9 friends that still need to be protected and promises to keep doing her charity until every Police Dog in the whole country has a bulletproof vest.

## CIVIL RIGHTS

### *Loose Change to Loosen Chains*

At 15, Zach Hunter of Atlanta, Georgia, looks like an average teenager, but he has personally raised more than \$20,000 to help free slaves around the world. Inspired by abolitionists like Fredrick Douglas and Harriet Tubman, Zach launched his campaign, *Loose Change to Loosen Chains*, to encourage students to donate spare change to groups working to end the widespread slavery that still exists worldwide. More than 30 schools now support his cause. Zach's goal: to end modern-day slavery in his lifetime.'

## PEACE

### *Youth Action International*

Kimie Weeks has worked to alleviate poverty and human suffering in Africa and around the world since he was fourteen years old. Kimie was born in Liberia, West Africa in 1981. At the young age of nine he came face to face with civil war, human suffering, and death. Weeks can still vividly recall eating roots and wild leaves when his family did not have access to food, drinking infested water when national water supply was shut off, and nearly being buried alive after epidemics had wrecked his emaciated body.

These experiences would have broken the souls of most people. However, they encouraged Kimie to follow a path where he could make a difference and work to ensure a world where all children have access to food, medicine, and shelter. It is a vision that he has pursued ever since.

Over the years, Kimie has formed partnerships and led organizations that have provided education to thousands of students in West Africa, lobbied the disarmament of over 20,000 child soldiers, and provided health care and recreation supplies to children.

Kimie has faced many obstacles in pursuit of his dream. The biggest was when the Liberian government attempted to assassinate him for a report he issued on its involvement in the training of child soldiers. As a result, Kimie was forced to flee Liberia when he was seventeen and has since been granted political asylum in the United States.

Today, a graduate of Amherst College, Kimmie is working through Youth Action International towards building a movement to positively change the face of Africa. His goal and emphasis focus on empowering the people, providing new opportunities, creating strategic development partnerships with Africa and the west, and using technology to link Africa with the rest of the world. This year, the BBC released the documentary *Kimmie Weeks: Back to the Front*, which is now airing in the UK. Kimmie is also featured in the new book *Peace in Our Lifetime* as an international peacemaker, along with Nelson Mandela, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

### *Children's Movement for Peace*

Mayerly Sanchez, 23, lives in Soacha, a poor, high-crime suburb outside Bogotá, Columbia. She stands in front of the house where her best friend, Milton, once lived. Eleven years ago, 15-year-old Milton was stabbed to death around the corner from his home—another casualty of Soacha's rampant violence. "So many friends were being killed for such insignificant reasons," says Mayerly.

Now Mayerly is a leader of the Children's Movement for Peace in Colombia, a group that has been nominated four times for the Nobel Peace Prize. For over 40 years, civil conflict has besieged Colombia, leaving the country in chaos and allowing drug cartels and gangs to flourish. Instability, poverty and violence reigned. Ironically, before Milton died, he and Mayerly were working to end violence in their community. Tired of the death all around them and the abuse many of their friends were experiencing at home, Milton, Mayerly and a few others started a children's peace club. Their goal was to keep kids they knew away from crime and drugs, and safe from domestic abuse. They met in a park near a quarry where child laborers worked for a few cents a day. They began with "conversation contests," in which players were disqualified for insulting each other; then they persuaded some gang members to join their soccer games, and even put on plays about tolerance and courage. "We planted the seeds and watched them grow," Mayerly says.

In 1996, the year Milton died, 12-year-old Mayerly was invited to a UNICEF workshop for 25 child leaders from all over Colombia to strategize about spreading peace across the country. From that meeting, the Children's

Movement for Peace was born. Its first goal was to launch a nationwide children's "vote" to give kids ages seven to 18 a chance to assert their rights and tell adults what kind of country they wanted to live in. The organizers received death threats, Mayerly says, but continued their get-out-the-vote campaign anyway. "They can kill some of us," she remembers thinking, "but they can't kill us all." On October 25, 1996, close to 3 million kids went to public places like schools and churches and, using pencils and paper ballots, voted overwhelmingly for their right to peace, among other issues. Many children wore their best clothes and carried flowers to the polls. "It was a day of celebration," Mayerly recalls.

For the first time in decades, almost all violence ceased on a voting day. The kids' action wasn't just symbolic. The following year, 10 million adult Colombians voted to support the children's referendum and demand an end to war. In 1998 the Children's Movement for Peace, with Mayerly as one of the leaders, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, the first of four consecutive nominations, and the first ever for children.

While violence still plagues Colombia, progress has been made as nearly 100,000 children are now part of Mayerly's movement. Among the kids' achievements so far: getting the Colombian government to stop recruiting boys younger than 18 for mandatory military service, and helping to increase the number of kids in school, especially girls. "Young people are still trying to solve the problems that adults created," Mayerly says.

Mayerly graduated from college in October 2006 and now travels to poor communities throughout Colombia, teaching kids how to try to live free from abuse and violence. She also represents Colombian children in a government-run program that seeks to rid the country of land mines. Her dream is to take the children's peace movement worldwide. "I will be there for these kids until I die."

## ENVIRONMENT

*Kids F.A.C.E.*

Melissa Poe was 9 years old when she began a campaign for a cleaner environment by writing a letter to then President Bush. Through her own efforts,

her letter was reproduced on over 250 donated billboards across the country. The response to her plea for help was so overwhelming that Poe established Kids For A Cleaner Environment (Kids F.A.C.E.) in 1989. There are now 300,000 members of Kids FACE worldwide and is the world's largest youth environmental organization.

Poe has also petitioned the National Park Service to implement a "Children's Forest" project in every national park. In 1992, she was invited as one of only six children in the world to speak at the Earth Summit in Brazil as part of the Voices of the Future Program. In 1993, she was given a Caring Award for her efforts by the Caring Institute.

Since the organization started, Kids F.A.C.E. members have distributed and planted over 1 million trees! Ongoing tree-planting projects include the creation of Kid's Yards - backyard wildlife habitats.

"Starting the club turned out to be a way to help people get involved with the environment. Club members started doing things like recycling, picking up litter and planting trees as well as inviting other kids to join their club." "We try to tell kids that it's not OK to be a slacker," she explains. "You need to start being a responsible, environmentally friendly person now, pronto, before you become a resource-sucking adult."

### *Hometown Heroes*

While on a family canoe trip on the Fox River a few years ago, Grant and Colton Shepard were disturbed by what they saw in the water. "We were there to enjoy the beauty," says Grant, 11, "but we saw a lot of litter."

The brothers, who live in Riverside, Illinois, went home and took action. They contacted the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and volunteered to monitor local rivers and streams. They attended training workshops to become familiar with the organisms that are found in local waters.

Ever since, they have been taking weekly samples from two rivers. They study them to make certain the underwater ecosystem is balanced. Sometimes they find strange things. "We once discovered a big picnic table that had sunk underwater!" says Grant.

It's not just rivers that these kid crusaders care about. They have dedicated themselves to keeping their environment totally balanced. "In the future, we're going to need resources, and if we don't preserve them now, they won't be there for us," says Colton, 14.

Every year, as part of their campaign for a cleaner world, the brothers go at least 100 days without using a car. Each boy has 10,000 miles under his wheels: more than the distance around the world! Their mission: to cut down on the carbon monoxide gas that cars release into the air.

The brothers have also been active in helping restore Illinois' precious prairies. For the past two years, they have spent at least one Saturday a month clearing away non-native plants from a 100-acre rare-oak savanna. "The plants and bushes threaten our heritage because they prevent the old oaks from growing properly," says Grant.

For their efforts, they were made Hometown Heroes by Time for Kids.

## KIDS HELPING KIDS

### *Suitcases for Kids*

When 11-year-old Aubyn Burnside heard about how many children in foster care programs are forced to carry their belongings in garbage bags because they cannot afford suitcases, she was shocked and saddened. "I thought they must feel like garbage themselves," she said. So, Aubyn founded Suitcases for Kids, dedicating herself to ensuring that every child in foster care would have a bag of his or her own.

In the beginning, Aubyn spent her time making posters and local speeches in her community of Hickory, North Carolina. "I expected to start seeing some donations of suitcases. I figured people would be getting new luggage as Christmas gifts, and in turn would get rid of their old luggage."

But for three weeks, she received nothing. Determined not to give up, Aubyn and her mother visited the Salvation Army, and purchased 31 suitcases for \$15. This helped launch her organization and eventually donor suitcases started arriving in mass quantities.

Six years later, Aubyn has collected over 25,000 suitcases, and her charity has chapters in every state and in over ten foreign countries. She has been recognized in the National Geographic Hall of Fame, inducted into the National Caring Institute in Washington, D.C., and received an award from Prudential for spirit in her community.

But, Aubyn is modest about her organization's overwhelming success. "It has to be a shocking experience for these kids," she says, "and I just wanted to help."

Aubyn and her mother hit the road at least once a week, speaking at churches, schools, and local community groups. Each time they leave behind a starter kit so other kids can get involved - and a message of hope. Aubyn says, "Age is no limit. Kids can do whatever they set their mind on doing. And one kid can make a difference."

### *Book Ends*

Brandon Keefe was in third grade when he decided to make a difference. One afternoon at a parent-teacher meeting to discuss the building of a library for a children's home, Brandon heard how difficult it was to get books. And he thought he might have an answer.

"Everybody had books on their shelves that they'd outgrown, why not give the ones we've already read to kids who need them?"

What began as a community service project for his class is now the grassroots nonprofit organization BookEnds, which has given away 76,000 books to children in need, has completed 23 libraries and has 19 other libraries in development. This will result in books and improved literacy opportunities for more than 33,000 underprivileged kids and their families.

"The help of the many people that supported me and the organization, and seeing the reaction of the people we were helping, kept me motivated to push farther and help more people. I never realized that some people didn't have the luxury of going into a library and getting a book! If people see that you have confidence in what you are doing, they, too, will have confidence in helping you."

## *Letters to a Bullied Girl*

In May of 2007 news emerged from the town of Novato, California that Olivia Gardner, a 14-year-old epileptic girl, was bullied mercilessly for over two years in three separate schools. Shortly thereafter, two sisters from Mill Valley, Emily (17) and Sarah (14), started a campaign to solicit letters of support from teens and others who had experienced similar traumas. Their efforts were written up in the newspaper and word quickly spread across the globe. What began as a local, small-town project has blossomed into a worldwide phenomenon that has sparked websites, other letter-writing campaigns, and a book called **LETTERS TO A BULLIED GIRL**.

## *A Museum Children's Center*

When five year-old Mitchell Clayton moved from Houston to a new town he missed the old children's museum. So he decided to donate some of his old toys, books, and puzzles along with some new ones to the Windows on the Plains Museum so that they could have a children's center. Mitchell says, "aside from the Museum, no other establishment in town, not even restaurants or car dealerships, have a place for kids to play. I am currently saving my money so we can expand the section. I know it is fun to share and help others, especially those who cannot help themselves. There are people who have less than me, and I can help them by sharing some toys." The five year-old's final message? "Anyone can make a difference."