



The world needs
empathetic leaders
and changemakers who
want to help others and make
the world better.

Guess what? That's YOU!

But changing the world is a big task.
How do you get started? Dive into fifteen
inspiring stories of kids and classrooms doing just that—
changing the world right where they are.

Learn how kids of all ages are using their 3Ts—their time, talent,
and treasure—to turn acorn-sized ideas into lifegiving projects
that create a big impact in their communities.

Philanthropy is a superpower we all have. Let's use that power
so that, together, we can change the world.



You have time, talent, and treasure to share, no
matter who you are. And you should know
you can make a really big difference!

—Nancy Richardson,
founder of OtterCares

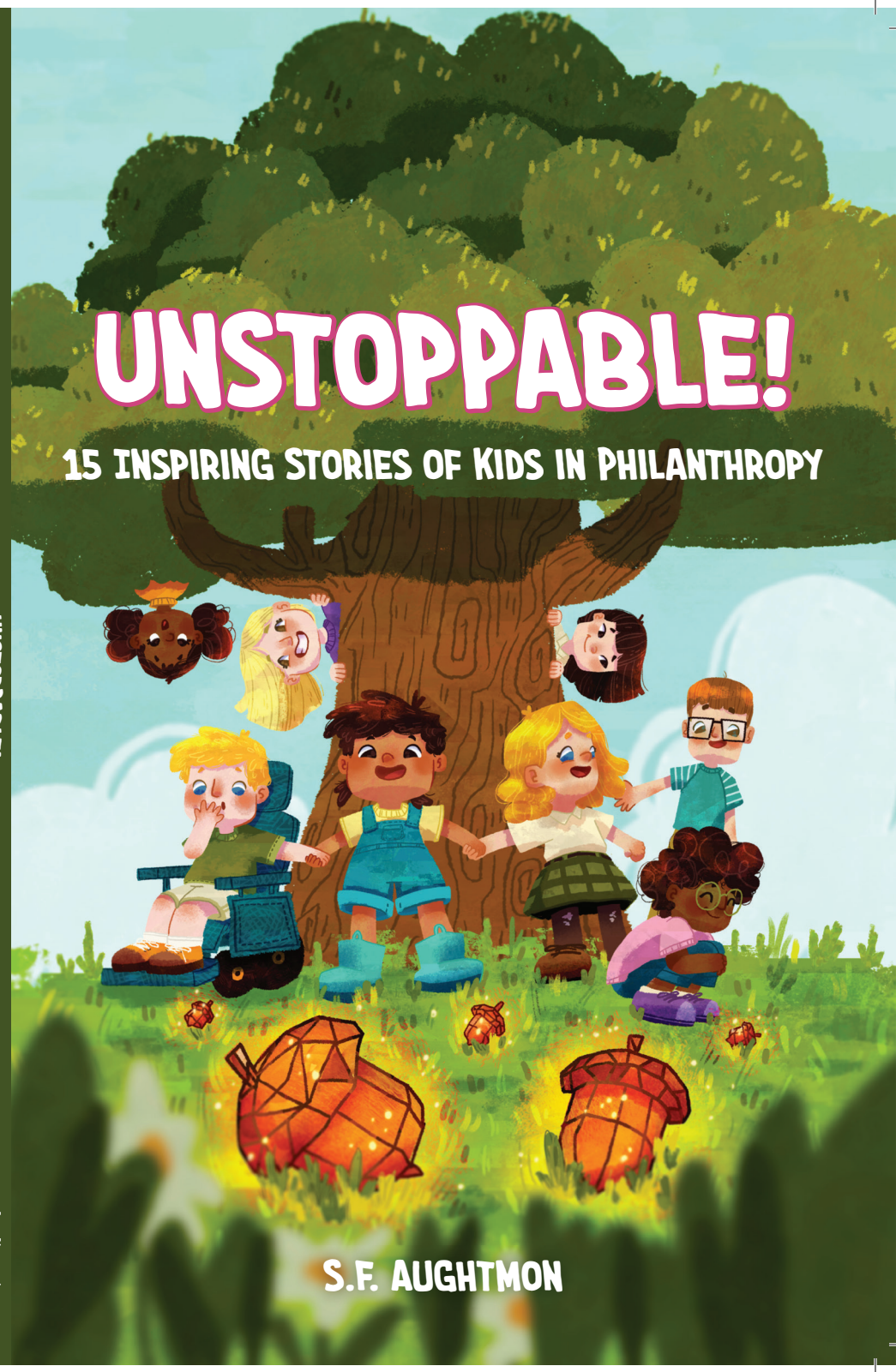


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S.F. AUGHTMON

UNSTOPPABLE!

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15 INSPIRING STORIES OF KIDS IN PHILANTHROPY

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15 INSPIRING STORIES OF KIDS IN PHILANTHROPY

By S. F. Aughtmon
Illustrated by Lucy Powers



Otter Cares Foundation
Fort Collins, Colorado

Unstoppable! 15 Inspiring Stories of Kids in Philanthropy

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Written by S. F. Aughtmon

Edited by Judy Gordon Morrow

Illustrated by Lucy Powers

Designed by Mayfly

To protect the privacy of Project Heart and OtterCares student philanthropists, all names of minors and some schools have been changed.

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To every philanthropist, young and old,
who strives to make the world better and brighter.

You inspire us.

Never stop using your time, talent,
and treasure to make a difference!

—From all of us at OtterCares



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THE 3Ts OF PHILANTHROPY

TIME

We all have time that we can use to make a difference in all kinds of ways. Whether it is with an organization or one-on-one with someone, you can use your time to help change our world!

TALENT

What is something you're good at that you can share with your community? Can you play the guitar? Are you an awesome writer? Can you paint, or are you good with your hands? We're all uniquely talented. You can use your talents and skills to make a difference!

TREASURE

You don't have to be rich to make a difference. Donating money or items that have value to a cause or organization you are passionate about can make a huge difference! No matter what you can give, your treasure is important and can make a big impact.



INTRODUCTION

AN IDEA IS NEVER TOO SMALL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Did you know some of the most incredible growth comes from small, meaningful beginnings? Take an acorn. It fits perfectly in your pocket. But if you plant it and nurture it, your little acorn could grow into a giant oak tree reaching over eighty feet tall and one hundred feet wide. You could host a huge class party under your tree.

Not only that, hundreds of years from now, your future family members could still throw class parties under your tree! (Mind. Blown.) That is some serious growth and **longevity**. (Have fun looking up **bolded** words in the glossary at the back of this book.)

That's just the beginning. A mature oak tree can drop over 2,200 acorns every year. What if you and your

schoolmates planted one acorn every year until you graduated from high school? How many oak trees would grow? So many! Your tiny acorn holds endless potential for growth and longevity. It's unstoppable!

Guess what else holds endless potential for growth and longevity? **Philanthropy**. Have you ever heard of it? If you break down the Greek root words, *phil* means "loving" and *anthropos* means "mankind." When you're a **philanthropist**, you love humankind.

Maybe you're wondering, *What does philanthropy have to do with me? How would I love humankind?*

You're probably thinking, *Where would I even start?* Good question. Just start right where you are.

There are classrooms full of philanthropists your age who have discovered that the 3Ts of philanthropy—time, talent, and treasure—can change the world one person and one project at a time. And it's FUN. (Who doesn't like fun?) What if you had a meaningful, acorn-sized thought about sitting with a lonely classmate tomorrow? That's loving humankind. *You're a philanthropist.*

What if your entire class threw an apple-picking party for an elderly lady in your community who can no longer pick the fruit on her trees? That's loving humankind. *You're a philanthropist.*

What if your whole school hosted a food drive for a disaster relief shelter? Wouldn't that be awesome? That's loving humankind. *You're a philanthropist.*

Philanthropy can spread like one thousand acorns planted across one thousand different lawns. Love multiplies. It's unstoppable!

Your unstoppable ideas hold endless potential for growth and longevity. One acorn-sized idea can spark oak-tree-sized goodness that lasts for years.

As you read this book, let the fun of philanthropy inspire you. Let it work itself up into your brain cells, down into your heart, and out through your fingertips as you reach out to help others.

Remember small, meaningful beginnings make a difference—acorns, ideas, actions, goodness, philanthropy, and YOU. We know you have the right amount of time, talent, and treasure to change the world one person and one project at a time.

We really hope you realize what we already know: *You are a philanthropist. And **OtterCares** is cheering you on!*



CHAPTER 1

FRIENDSHIP CHANGES THE WORLD

Did you know that **empathy** is a powerful part of philanthropy? When you have empathy, you put yourself in someone else's shoes. You ask questions about what they are thinking and how they are feeling. You imagine what it's like to be who they are, right where they are, and you let those feelings connect you to that person.

Empathy is a power move. It reshapes your heart and mind, moving you to action on someone else's behalf. Have you ever felt empathy for someone?

Nancy, our first student philanthropist, did. She put herself in someone else's shoes—and it changed everything.

Nancy sat at her desk, her legs swinging over the speckled brown floor of her chilly third-grade classroom. She pulled down the hem of her plaid skirt to cover the holes in the

knees of her tights. Playing in a skirt was hard on tights. And on knees. She had the scrapes to prove it.

Nancy tried to focus on her math sheet. *What is one-half plus three-quarters?* She looked up at the clock. *Only seven more minutes until morning recess.*

There was a light knock at the door. Her teacher, Mrs. Johnson, crossed the front of the classroom and stepped into the hall. A minute later, she stepped back into the room with her arm around a new student. The student's black, chin-length hair framed her face. She blinked rapidly as her hands fiddled with the pockets of her wool skirt.

Mrs. Johnson said, "Class, this is Fah. She just moved here from Thailand and is learning to speak English. Today is her first day. I would love for you to make her feel welcome."





Several thoughts raced through Nancy's mind. *Is she blinking back tears like I do when I'm nervous? I bet it feels scary to move to a new country and learn a new language. Starting school midyear with no friends is the worst. I bet her stomach hurts.*

As Nancy thought about all the crazy things Fah must be feeling, Mrs. Johnson called her to her desk. "Nancy, would you be Fah's special friend for the rest of the year? I would love for you to show her around our school."

"Yes, Mrs. Johnson." Nancy's face flushed as she thought, *Mrs. Johnson trusts me to take care of Fah. I can do that.* (Has your teacher ever noticed you in a good way? It can make your whole day!)

Nancy felt her heart thump with excitement as she led Fah back to the empty desk beside hers. They slid into their seats and smiled at each other. It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Nancy and Fah became a team. Together, they took on every lunch, recess, bathroom break, and math assignment. (Go, team, go!) Being a team made life better.

They laughed a lot trying to communicate. (What's the hand sign for recess?) Their friendship shaped the rest of Nancy's year—and her future.

Nancy became a philanthropist the moment she leaned into empathy and cared for Fah. She loved humankind. (Did you know you don't have to speak another person's language to have empathy? All you need is a great imagination and a big heart.)



Nancy changed one person's life with kindness and compassion. Actually, she changed two. She changed her own life as well. Her acorn-sized thought about being Fah's friend launched her lifetime love of philanthropy—from working with the Special Olympics in college to launching OtterCares in 2009 and the **Project Heart** philanthropy program in 2016. Her small, meaningful beginning grew into an incredible, unstoppable idea.

Nancy and the team at OtterCares partner with schools to teach students the 3Ts of philanthropy. (You already know the 3Ts!) Nancy uses her time, talent, and treasure to change the world. She has a few questions for you, her fellow philanthropists:

- What small, meaningful beginning is just waiting to grow inside YOU?
- Have you noticed someone at your school who needs a friend?
- How could you use your empathy superpowers to help that person?

Give empathy a try—it could change your life!

Fun Fact: The Special Olympics welcomes athletes with intellectual disabilities, ages eight and up, to participate in over thirty individual and team sports. These athletes train with certified coaches, compete, and celebrate the joy of sport. Awesome, right?



CHAPTER 2

CAMP FOR ALL!

Did you know that about twenty million kids go to summer camp in the United States? That's a lot of kids having a lot of fun. Youth all over the country hug their parents and head off to their favorite camps for a week of making friends and playing games. They eat s'mores by the campfire, zip-line through the forest, and challenge each other to poolside cannonball competitions. Sounds fun, right? It is.

Except for the kids who can't go. For them, camp week is just a huge letdown.

In 2007, a group of sixth graders at Lopez Elementary in Fort Collins, Colorado, decided to change that. These students found out about a cool camp for ten- to thirteen-year-olds with developmental needs. **Respite** Care Inc., a fantastic **nonprofit** organization, offers special care for students and their families. They send several students to Wilderness Camp each year.

Paired with amazing specialists, these students experience the joys of overnight camp. They enjoy activities like horseback riding, rock climbing, canoeing, and archery.

This is where Sam, a sixth-grade student, entered the picture. He had never been to camp. Facing many challenges from **brittle bone disease**, Sam worried about breaking a bone. He didn't think camp was an option for him, but his schoolmates set out to change that. When the Lopez students found out there was a possibility Sam could go to Wilderness Camp, they got to work.

Lopez Elementary partnered with Project Heart and hosted a Valentine's Day-themed fundraiser—the Hearts for Respite Luncheon. The class transformed their school's wide hallway into a banquet hall with balloons



and streamers. Students embraced their new roles as servers, greeters, and decorators. They tackled a huge checklist of things to do before people arrived.

Tables set? Check. Food ready? Check. Greeters prepared to greet? Check.

Pink-hearted posters welcomed parents and community members. Delicious food and delightful conversation filled the room. And best of all? A fundraising check was presented to the Respite Care staff. Every penny needed for Sam to go to camp was raised. (Way to go, Lopez Elementary!)

These sixth-grade students were new to fundraising. But changemakers do things they have never done before to



reshape the future. They face the unknown with courage and conquer their fears.

Sam became a changemaker too. Wilderness Camp proved challenging, with a week full of firsts. First time away from his family for a whole week. First time trying new activities. First time being independent.

While Sam enjoyed camp, he faced physical struggles, the fear of not wanting to get hurt, and the challenge of learning to trust his specialist. (Think about how it feels to do something new with people you don't know. It can be scary.) But Sam overcame his struggles and rose to the challenge. (Go, Sam, Go!)

During that time, Sam found out he needed major surgery. He said, "I wasn't in a great place the week before. But at camp, I got to experience a life I had never lived before." After camp, he had a successful surgery that helped build his strength. Having the courage to face his fears opened



doors to a new way of life for Sam. Does it get any better than that? Nope.

Fast-forward seventeen years to 2024. Lopez Elementary continues to send students to Wilderness Camp. Changing hearts and helping others is their heartbeat.

Many years later, Sam returned as a college student to the Hearts for Respite Luncheon, grateful for the schoolmates who helped reshape his future. The luncheon did not disappoint. One student shared his excitement, saying, “We raised enough money to send two kids to camp!”

Sam’s words of encouragement for future changemakers? “Keep caring for each other. Treat each other how you want to be treated. Be there for each other.” Check. Check. Check.

How about you? Do you see yourself as a changemaker? How does your heart beat for helping others? Add a few items from Sam and Lopez Elementary to your own checklist. Try something new that you’ve never done before. Be courageous. Be kind. And get ready to reshape the future.

Fun Fact: In 2013, Camp Alvernia in Centerport, New York, celebrated its 125th anniversary by fundraising for kids who couldn’t afford camp. How did they raise money? They set a world record with 125 campers walking one dog at the same time!

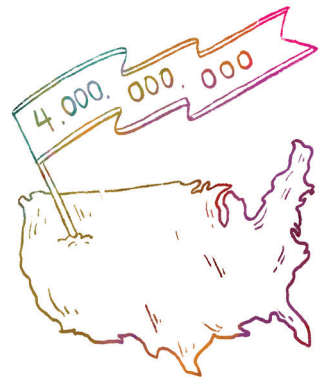


CHAPTER 3

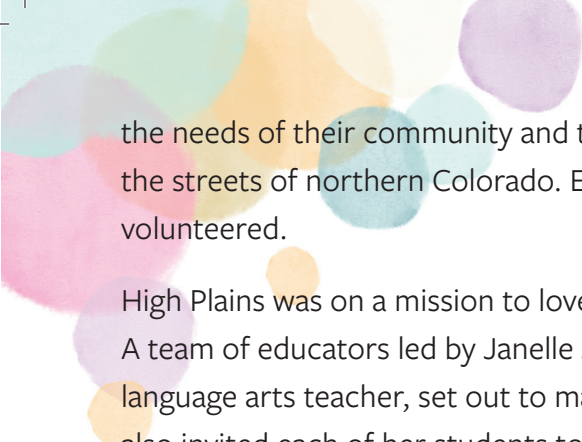
A DAY LIKE NO OTHER

Did you know that serving others helps you? Volunteering encourages you to learn new skills and connect with others. Community service has a calming effect, helping you feel good about yourself while boosting your happiness. (We feel great about that. Don't you?)

Volunteering in the United States is a big deal. If you like helping humankind, you aren't alone. In 2020 and 2021, people across our country volunteered more than four billion hours. That's a whole lot of hours! It's even more impressive that most folks choose to volunteer when it isn't convenient or easy.



In 2021, students from High Plains School in Loveland, Colorado, got in on the happiness too. They focused on



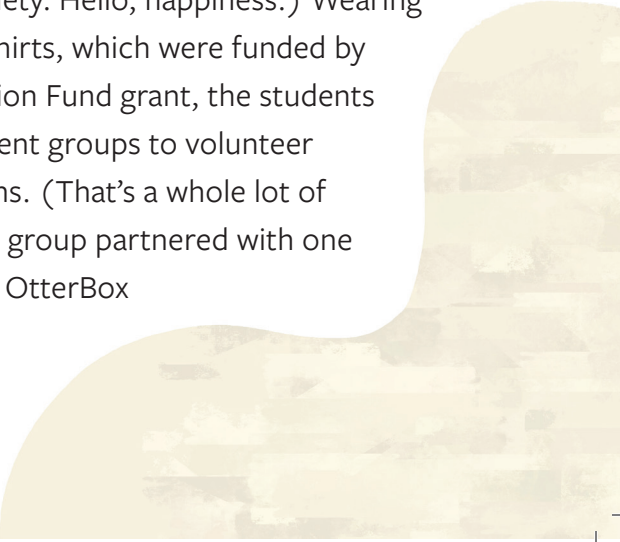
the needs of their community and took their service to the streets of northern Colorado. Every middle schooler volunteered.

High Plains was on a mission to love their community. A team of educators led by Janelle Joers, an English language arts teacher, set out to make this happen. She also invited each of her students to dig deep into their hearts before heading out the door.

What were their passions? How did they want to help those around them? What got them excited about serving?

These students took Project Heart to heart. By journaling about the 3Ts of philanthropy, discussing the needs in their community, and crafting their own powerful **mission statements**, students entered their day of service mentally and emotionally prepared to make a difference.

When the big day arrived, the middle schoolers were excited. (Goodbye, anxiety. Hello, happiness.) Wearing their Day of Service T-shirts, which were funded by an OtterCares Illumination Fund grant, the students split into thirteen different groups to volunteer with twelve organizations. (That's a whole lot of service going on!) Each group partnered with one or two employees from OtterBox who served alongside them.



High Plains students showed up to meet community food needs at Meals on Wheels, KidsPak, and the Food Bank for Larimer County. (Full bellies mean happy hearts.)

Students with a passion for music visited nursing homes. They played their instruments and sang for the residents. A group of knitters stayed at school to lend their creative talents. Future gardeners headed to the High Plains Environmental Center to plant seedlings and give the earth some much-needed love.

Animal lovers worked with Hearts & Horses, a specialized riding center in Loveland, Colorado, that supports the social and emotional health of people with disabilities. And another student group crafted fleece doggie toys and blankets for animal shelters.



A crew showed up to help build bunk beds for kids without beds by volunteering with a nonprofit called Sleep in Heavenly Peace. Using hammers, saws, and drills, the crew prepped beds for kids in need of a good night's sleep. This left a lasting impression on both the students and the OtterBox employees. Building beds for others tends to touch your heart.

An excited student said, "It's fun, and it's helping kids who don't have things that I have. I guess I take it for granted that I have a bed."

An OtterBox employee shared his experience as well: "I've slept on the floor, and it isn't fun. It makes me feel very good knowing that I've helped someone."



Fun Fact: Did you know that 93 percent of volunteers said volunteering put them in a better mood, and 94 percent felt a richer sense of purpose in their lives? Philanthropy keeps you happy and excited about life. Let's get in on that goodness!

From making cards to sewing quilts, High Plains middle schoolers found that helping others helped them. Students shared that serving made them feel great.

How about you? Are you on a mission to serve those around you? Do you enjoy singing or playing an instrument? Are you a crafts wizard who loves to knit or paint? Your amazing talents and time are needed in your community. You can help others with a service project of your own. Prepare to feel great when you do.





CHAPTER 4

UNLEASH YOUR INNER SUPER-STAR

Did you know that wild animals roam free on the grassy plains of Colorado? Lions, grizzlies, and leopards live in Weld County. More than 750 **carnivores** call the 1,214-acre Wild Animal Sanctuary home. The **sanctuary** staff travel all over the United States to rescue animals from cruel conditions: cute tiger cubs separated from their moms, full-grown lions sold illegally, and shaggy bears kept at roadside zoos. The sanctuary welcomes them to homey **habitats**. The tigers even enjoy a swimming area together. (Tiger pool party!)

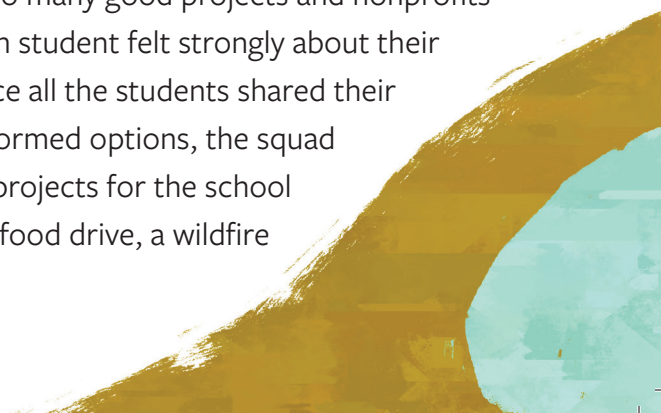
These amazing animals receive medical care and healthy meals. Speaking of meals, did you know the bears at the sanctuary get really hungry? They eat about 50,000 pounds of food every week—more than 2.5 million pounds of food a year. (And you thought you got hungry.) How does their volunteer workforce pay for all those big meals? The sanctuary actually receives tons of **USDA-approved** food

and cash donations from people and businesses who believe in their mission. Every last coin counts. (Hold that thought.)

Enter our student philanthropists, the STAR Squad Student Leaders from Shepardson STEM Elementary School in Fort Collins, Colorado. Led by their problem-based learning coordinator Becky Woodcox, these third- through fifth-grade student leaders served their school, modeled kindness, and encouraged school spirit. They wanted to help their community too, but they faced a challenge. Due to remote learning, classes met over video calls. This team of thirty-six all-STARs also had a few problems to solve.

Problem No. 1: Could they launch a service project from their kitchen tables? Yes! They switched from monthly meetings at school to weekly meetings online. (Their time together brought a silver lining to a difficult situation.) They discovered how to use their own time, talent, and treasure to support projects benefiting their community.

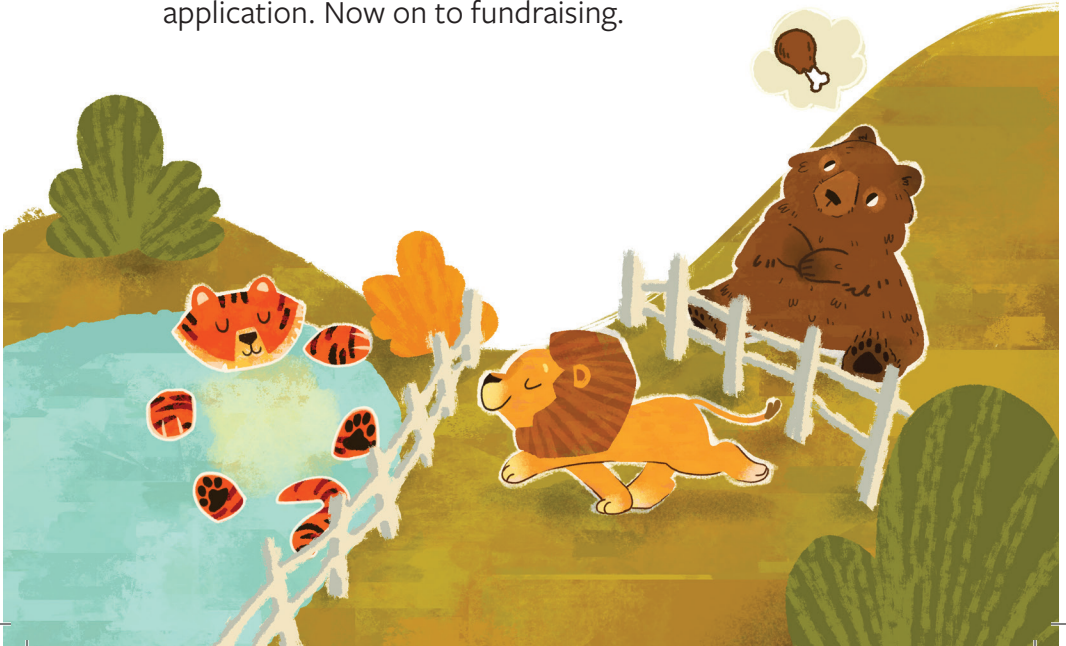
Problem No. 2: How would they decide which project to support? The squad found this a difficult choice. There were so many good projects and nonprofits to choose from. Each student felt strongly about their favorite one. But once all the students shared their passions and brainstormed options, the squad chose three service projects for the school year: a Thanksgiving food drive, a wildfire



prevention fund, and, you guessed it, the Wild Animal Sanctuary.

Problem No. 3: How could they fundraise from their living rooms? The STAR Squad applied for a \$250 Illumination Fund **matching grant** from OtterCares that would double the first \$250 they raised. Double the money meant double the animal food. Now all they had to do was write the grant.

Problem No. 4: Where would they find a fifth-grade grant writer? Well, a team of students took on the challenge. One student, Caleb, put his fifth-grade writing skills to the test. With help from his mom and his team, he answered questions like these: *Why is this service project important to you? Who will benefit from this project?* Then they designed a slideshow sharing how they would achieve their goals, and the team submitted their application. Now on to fundraising.



Problem No. 5: How would they raise the money?

Students presented their project goals to their families and friends, asking them to give. (“Hi! Would you like to help us love the animal kingdom?”) Money began trickling in. Back in school part-time, the squad also organized a class coin-collecting competition. Life was looking up. Whichever class donated the most coins would win an animal-cracker-and-juice party. (Yum!)

As spring approached, the STAR Squad heard some fantastic news: They were awarded a \$400 Illumination Fund grant from OtterCares—\$150 more than they had applied for. Shouts of joy went up, with fist-pumping and high fives. (Go ahead. Give someone a high five right now!) Not only that, but the school also collected a little over \$930. All their hard work paid off.



Fun Fact: The Wild Animal Sanctuary has more than 1.5 miles of elevated walkways so you can walk through the habitats and see these amazing animals loving life.

The STAR Squad presented a jar stuffed with money to the Wild Animal Sanctuary, and OtterCares sent a check for \$400. The squad's small but meaningful beginning of online meetings grew into an incredible gift for the sanctuary animals and the humans who cared for them. Problem solved. (Three cheers for the STAR Squad!)

Now what about you, fellow philanthropist? Can you see yourself doing something similar? Helping animals? Writing grants? Throwing animal-cracker parties? Everyday problems in your community offer opportunities for philanthropy. Go get 'em, tiger!





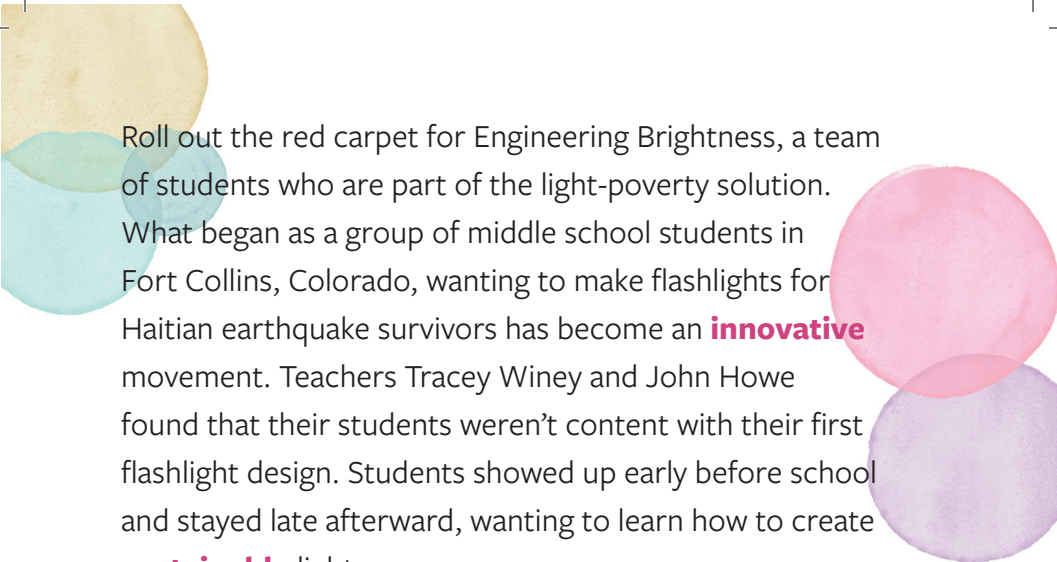
CHAPTER 5

LIGHTING UP FARAWAY PLACES

Imagine this: You're enjoying a great night's sleep in your cozy bed—right up until the moment a weird dream wakes you up. Your dream? Your great-aunt Lucy was your teacher, and your friends were purple-toothed hedgehogs. Now that's weird. What's the first thing you want to do? Turn on the light. Light makes everything better, doesn't it?

But there's a huge problem: Millions of people in the world still don't have access to artificial light. When the sun sets, their world goes dark. Electricity and light bulbs can be hard to come by. This is called **light poverty**. Some families use **kerosene** lamps, but these lamps can smoke, causing breathing issues or, worse, house fires. This is not the kind of nighttime light you need to get rid of weird dreams, light up workplaces, or make roads bicycle safe.

Access to light isn't the only issue many families are facing. What if you have an electric lamp, but your town turns off the electricity to save energy? Or what if you don't have electric outlets in your home?



Roll out the red carpet for Engineering Brightness, a team of students who are part of the light-poverty solution. What began as a group of middle school students in Fort Collins, Colorado, wanting to make flashlights for Haitian earthquake survivors has become an **innovative** movement. Teachers Tracey Winey and John Howe found that their students weren't content with their first flashlight design. Students showed up early before school and stayed late afterward, wanting to learn how to create **sustainable** light sources.

Engineering Brightness believes students can help solve the world's biggest problems. Today, students from Lincoln Middle School in Fort Collins, Colorado, all the way to Choluteca, Honduras, are doing just that. These world changers are working together to make the world shine brighter.

Here in the United States, students, teachers, and engineers (from fourth graders to eighty-year-old volunteers) meet in clubs to design, print, and **solder**



lanterns. They partner with students around the globe to light up the world. They also use their brain power and curiosity to ask good questions:

- Can you make flashlights from toilet paper rolls, paper cups, and D batteries? (You can. But they may not last too long.)
- How do you make lanterns without burning yourself? (Get safer tools.)
- What do you do when your Ugandan partner tells you that hand-cranking his lantern for fifteen minutes generates two minutes of light? (You start using solar panels.)



Innovation is all about **perseverance**. When you persevere, you keep going. You keep trying. You keep making mistakes. And you keep learning.

Since 2011, Engineering Brightness has hand-delivered thousands of lanterns to communities around the world. The personal relationships these gifted students have with their global partners make a huge difference. These partners give them feedback to help improve the lantern design.

The current lantern is 3D-printed, with solar panels encased in the lanterns. (More than ninety OtterBox

engineers and volunteers got to help students take their design to the next level.)

Did you know that Engineering Brightness students jump on calls with their global partners and help translate conversations too? Students in Colorado brainstorm with students in Nicaragua, figuring out ways to make the lanterns more effective. How cool is that?

Bringing light to the world is essential. Doctors performing surgery at a local clinic in Liberia found this out. When the electricity went out midsurgery, the room was pitch-black. Some student partners who had received solar lanterns from Engineering Brightness heard the surgeons needed light to complete the surgery. So the students went home and immediately brought their lanterns to the clinic.

One acorn-sized idea turned into an oak-tree-sized, lifegiving moment for the patient. Amazing, right?



Fun Fact: Engineering Brightness students have video calls all over the world with their global partners—from Guatemala to Malawi. Why? It's about kids improving the product, listening to the needs of people in other countries, and then designing a solution.

Remember how light makes everything better? What would it feel like if you could turn the lights on for someone? You can. Start asking questions. Start innovating. Keep going and keep trying. Innovation launches good dreams. (Not weird ones.) And good dreams are needed in this world. So go light it up!





CHAPTER 6

GAGA FOR FRIENDSHIP

Do you know how to play gaga ball? In case you don't, this awesome dodgeball game is played in a large octagon structure called the *gaga pit*. To begin the game, everyone places a hand on the wall while the ball is thrown up in the air. When the ball lands, all the players yell, "Ga-ga ball!" on the first three bounces. After the third bounce, the ball is in play, and the real fun begins. Players try to hit each other below the knees with the ball to knock them out of the game. The last player standing wins.

The game is fun, fast, and loud—the perfect setup for new friendships. That's where Severance Middle School comes in.

You may be thinking, *What in the world do gaga ball and friendship have to do with Severance Middle School?* (Hold that thought.) In just over a decade, the school grew from three hundred to eight hundred students. With such a big increase, students struggled to connect

and make new friends. (Have you ever been on your own during lunch break? It can be hard, right?)

But how do you build friendships when there aren't specific places to hang out?

Mr. Luce's eighth-grade social studies class was trying to figure that out. Every other Thursday, these students dove into Project Heart lessons. What is philanthropy? How can you use your time, talent, and treasure?

Mr. Luce asked the class, "How can you apply these lessons to your own school? Let's be problem finders and problem solvers." He encouraged his students to get involved in their community and help build a positive, respectful school. (Who doesn't want a positive, respectful school?) Challenge accepted.

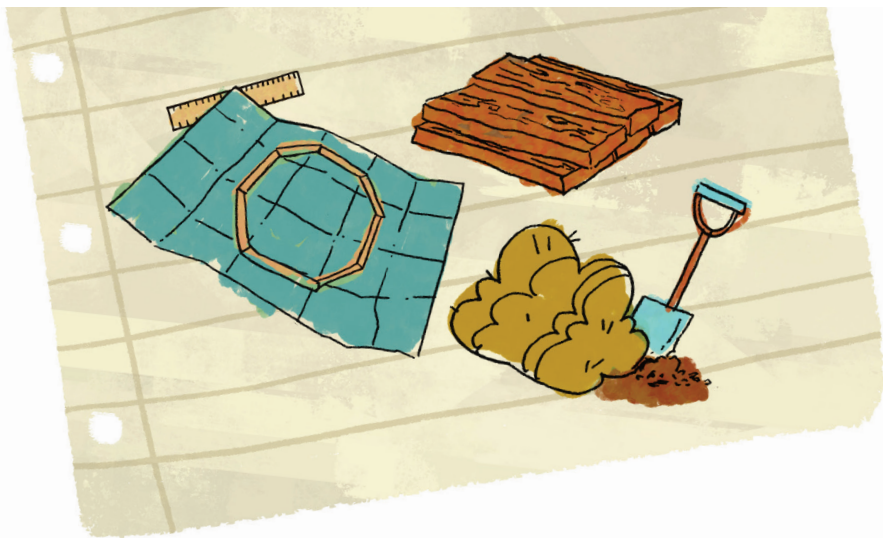


The class brainstormed ideas. They talked about getting permission to carry out their projects. Then they walked the school property. What problems did they see on their campus? What wasn't working at their school? The class noticed students sitting alone. They also realized their schoolmates needed a quiet place to retreat from the packed school building. Problems found. Now came the challenge to figure out how to solve them.

Breaking into crews, these Severance eighth graders got to work. If they were going to make positive changes and encourage friendships, they needed doable, buildable projects they could complete before graduation. They also wanted to leave a community **legacy** behind when they graduated—a legacy of fun, connection, and relaxation. Gaga ball, anyone?

One crew of eighth graders applied for an OtterCares Illumination Fund grant to build a new gaga-ball pit. What better way to make friends than to enjoy a fun and easy game together?

Another group of students found a neglected corner at the front of the school that was hosting a bunch of tumbleweeds. They imagined the space could host a bunch of middle schoolers instead. So they applied for another grant to buy lumber to build cozy benches. Both unstoppable ideas were funded. Way to go, Severance!



The class prepared for their builds. One student crew researched how to fit the gaga pit in the space they had. (“How big of an octagon can we build?”) Their principal even brought her higher math skills to the table and worked with several students to figure out the **dimensions**.

Another crew removed the brush from the bench area. Student construction crews received a helping hand from OtterBox employees as they prepped the lumber and built their projects.

Before the school year ended, more students were playing and laughing together. Kids lined up at the gaga pit for a moment of fun with friends. Classmates relaxed and chatted on the benches. Slowly but surely, new friends were made.

The eighth-graders’ legacy of friendship continues today. A legacy is a long-lasting **impact** that continues after you leave. Now what could be better than friends making

Fun Fact: The biggest gaga-ball game on record was organized by Briarwood Day Camp in Furlong, Pennsylvania, on August 9, 2010—with a whopping 481 players!

friends year after year? Sometimes small, meaningful beginnings grow into incredible fun.

Has the gaga-ball pit got your brain bouncing with ideas? What problems at your school need solving? How about upping your school participation? Or building more fun into your lunch breaks? Or just hanging out on a bench with a new classmate? Small changes can make a big difference. You could leave a friendship legacy at your school too!





CHAPTER 7

GOING WILD FOR A CAUSE

Did you know that a third-grader's brain is awesome? By third grade, your brain goes into super-learner mode. Research shows that your memory ramps up. And your ability to plan, solve problems, process information, and think on a higher level takes off. Your brain is on fire—in a good way!

Julia Halualani's third-grade class at Truscott Elementary School in Loveland, Colorado, knew all about super-learner mode. Attending a language immersion school, these great thinkers were learning both Spanish and English. (Good morning! *¡Buenos Días!*)

These amazing students took their learning to the next level when Mrs. Halualani paired their Project Heart lessons with books they were reading. They learned to recognize their own time, talents, and treasure, identifying those same elements in the heroes and heroines of the stories they were reading.



What was the main character’s time, talent, and treasure? How did the character use their time, talent, and treasure to love humankind? How did this experience change the character?

Next, these third graders shifted from focusing on stories to making real-life connections. They met with philanthropists they already knew—volunteers from the Junior League and KidsPak. The Junior League members provided snacks for the school. KidsPak volunteers loaded the backpacks each Friday with yummy, nutritious food for the weekend. The students connected with everyday philanthropists who loved THEM. The volunteers’ choices positively impacted their lives. This inspired the students to make the same positive impact and put the 3Ts into action.

As kindhearted animal lovers, the third graders wanted to use their time, talents, and treasure to support an animal nonprofit in Weld County. But which one?



The Truscott students broke into research groups and looked into different programs, from the Humane Society to Hearts & Horses. Then the groups presented what they learned to their class. Taking a vote, the classmates decided to adopt a tiger at the Wild Animal Sanctuary.

A guest speaker from the sanctuary visited, sharing how the animals needed special care and huge amounts of food. This tugged on the students' hearts even more. (Who doesn't love the thought of helping a tiger—from a safe distance?) Now the students just had to figure out how to raise money to feed their adopted tiger.

Mrs. Halualani arranged for the class to use the 3D printers in the school's innovation lab to create sculptures they

could sell at a fundraiser. The challenge? Their teacher needed to learn how to use the printers too. (Learning is good for your brain, even when you're an adult.)

Collaboration was the key. Together the students and their teacher worked with their school's information technology (IT) department to learn how to use the 3D printers. The Loveland Public Library also sent an innovation lab specialist to show the students how to use its special design program to create artwork.

Another expert, Truscott's art teacher, guided them in painting their sculptures. These inspired students had fun making powerful connections—using everything they learned to impact the world. (Hello, high-level thinking.)

The students' unique creations were featured at the Truscott Multicultural Festival, a fun school event. Friends, family, and their supportive Truscott community showed up to celebrate. The students shared what they had learned about the animal sanctuary with everyone who stopped by





their booth. (The students became the teachers.) Folks who donated \$5 or more toward their adopt-a-tiger fund received a beautiful mini-sculpture to take home.

These student philanthropists raised \$225. An OtterCares Illumination Fund grant matched these funds, and the class presented a check for \$450 to the Wild Animal Sanctuary. The third graders used their brains, hearts, and creativity for a big impact and an awesome outcome.

How about you? What unstoppable ideas are lighting up your super-learner brain right now? What oak-tree-sized dreams are filling your heart? This is the perfect time to learn new skills, make powerful connections, and get creative. You can impact the world with your kind heart and awesome brain. You are on fire—in a good way!

Fun Fact: Did you know that NASA wants to use 3D-printing robots to build homes on Mars? Maybe you (and some of Truscott's third graders) can help design them.



CHAPTER 8

TACOS, TOOLS, AND TEAMWORK—A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Have you ever seen a Little Free Library (LFL) in your neighborhood? It looks like a sweet birdhouse mounted on a stout wooden post. But instead of housing birds, it houses books.

Most Little Free Libraries offer a variety of books for both adults and children. Good reads need to be shared. Some LFLs include a sign that invites you to take one and leave one. When you take a book, you can leave one of your well-loved books there for others to enjoy. How fun is that? Well, Poudre Community Academy found out.

Poudre Community Academy (PCA) is a high school that serves and supports teens who have experienced stressful situations. Even though many of PCA's students

have experienced trauma in their lives, these amazing high schoolers wanted to give back to their community.

Every Friday, PCA students serve their community. But in 2020, while much of the world was learning remotely, PCA students struggled to find a way to continue that uplifting habit. Thanks to a couple of creative adults, one class at PCA found a way to stay connected and serve by meeting outside—in the chilly March weather.



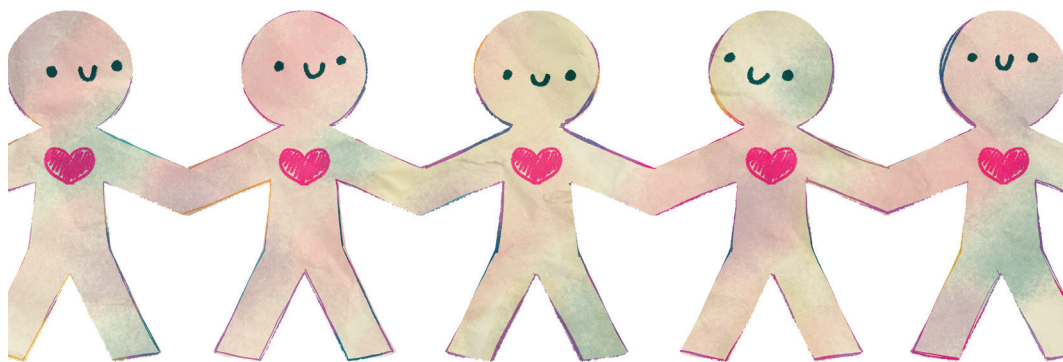
Meet Melinda and Chris. Melinda, a longtime **entrepreneur**, teaches at PCA and shares her background in building businesses to help inspire her students to impact the community. Chris is a talented **tradesman** who

works in construction and loves building and helping others. Melinda and Chris met through a mutual friend, Josh, a **contractor** who had worked with the students on community projects. They realized that their combined talents of **entrepreneurship** and construction could open a fun door for the students at PCA.

The students brainstormed ways to serve and landed on the great idea of building Little Free Libraries for the community. They led the way with the design, mapping it on paper and thinking through each step of the process. But finding room to build the LFLs proved difficult. Their classroom was too small for the equipment.

So, thanks to Josh, they took their classroom outside. He offered his construction trailer to the class, and an OtterCares Illumination Fund grant provided funding for the lumber. Every Friday, students showed up in the sun or snow, bundled up for the cold and ready to build. Outside the school, sounds of sawing, drilling, and hammering from the trailer filled the air. Their builds may not have been perfect at the start, but their hearts for building a better community were. The students persevered and kept learning.

Melinda brought doughnuts. Chris brought his tools—and his grill. And the class stayed warm eating **carnitas** tacos

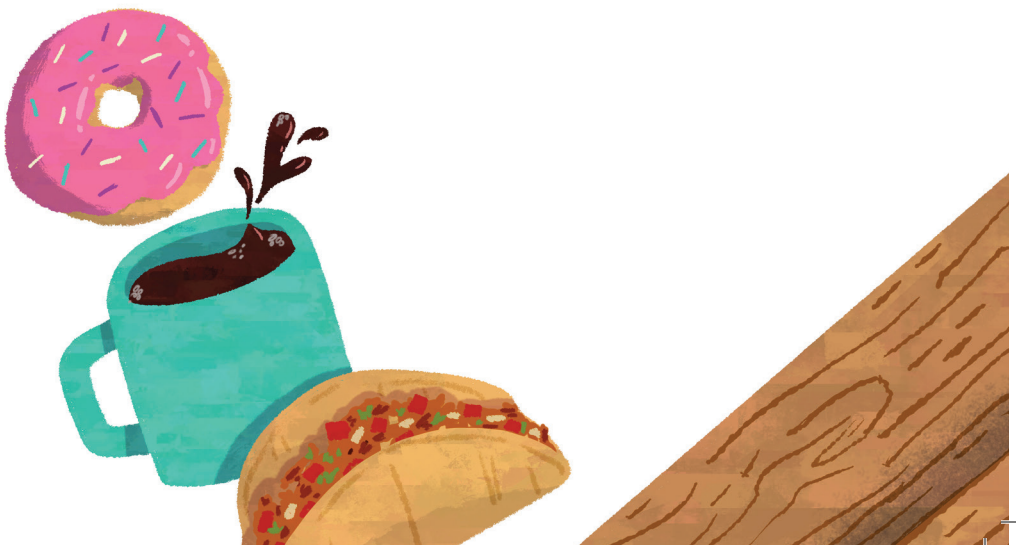


and sipping coffee donated from a nearby business. (Two tacos and coffee? Yes, please.)

The students had so much fun building together that other schoolmates came to hang out. Friends from a nearby high school dropped by, and Josh visited too. By building their first Little Free Library for their community, they became a closer community themselves.

When the PCA students completed the first double-decker LFL with small weatherproof doors, they set it in concrete outside Vindeket Foods. This market is a special food rescue that reduces food waste. Good food and good books are a powerful combination.

The students took the lead on the project from start to finish—from designing it on paper to pouring the concrete. As they waited for the concrete to dry, families gathered outside Vindeket. Shoppers watched as the students completed their labor of love. After the concrete



Fun Fact: More than 150,000 LFLs in over 120 countries are registered with the Little Free Library organization. Kids all over the world enjoy sharing books!

set, the classmates added books for both adults and kids. Before the class left Vindeket, kids waiting in line at the grocery store were already checking out the books. The students were excited. The little library became an instant hit, and the kids in their community benefited.

What about you? What favorite books would you like to share with friends? How else are you inspired to build a better community in your neighborhood? Whatever your unstoppable idea is, fun and friendship can help you accomplish your mission!





CHAPTER 9

PACKING GOODNESS

Did you know that wolf packs work together as a large family? Surviving takes a group effort. Wolves communicate to stay connected. A single wolf howls to let its pack know its location. Together, wolves howl as a pack to define their territory and defend against predators. Wolves are powerful when they stick together. Don't mess with the pack!

Wolves work as a team to hunt for food. Teamwork is the best. And when one wolf is injured or lost, it affects the whole pack. The wolves fight for each other to keep the pack safe.

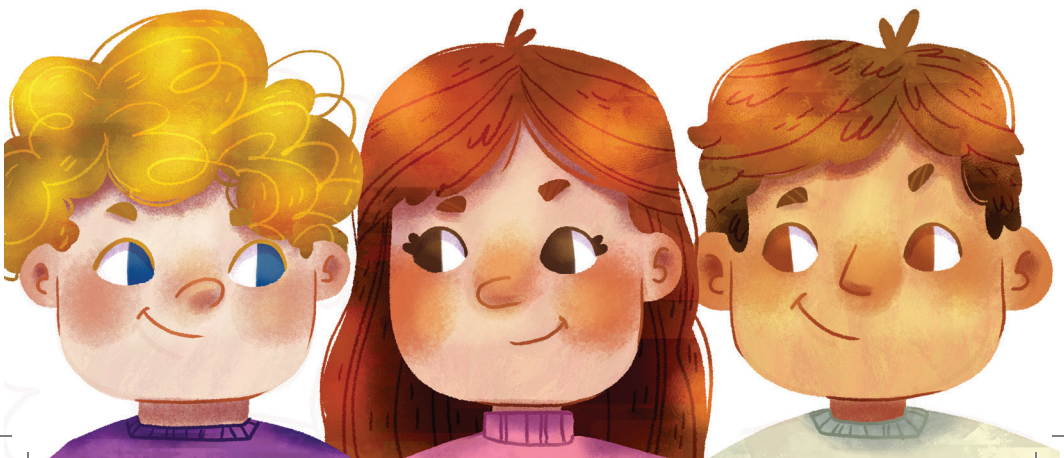
A special “wolf pack” in Loveland, Colorado, takes these truths to heart. The Bamford Elementary Wolf Pack cares for and protects its own. The school wants everyone—students, families, and educators—in their district to feel supported, protected, and loved by the Pack. (Let's go, Bamford!)

When Bamford Elementary opened its doors in 2021, principal Alissa Poduska, assistant principal Tressa Evans, and the school staff decided their school would be a Project Heart school—living out the 3Ts of philanthropy every day. Students met the challenge to use their amazing brains and empathy superpowers to meet their school’s needs, serve their community, and change the world.

Bamford wanted to serve their student body and school district by creating a community food pantry. But what goes into launching a goodness-packed idea like that?

The first year the school was open, students worked together to figure out the steps needed to open the Pack Pantry—problem-solving at work. Different groups collected data about running food pantries. Some students learned about **website development**. Others researched allergy **awareness** and brainstormed donation storage ideas.

The school year ended with a student-led Pack Pantry **showcase**. Community members walked through the



gym, viewed the students' presentation boards, and listened to their well-researched ideas for the pantry. Those innovative ideas became a reality as every class in the school focused on getting the pantry ready to open.

Students collected donations. Volunteers set up shelving. Community members helped organize the pantry. The Pack Pantry Grandmas pitched in along with the friends of Gary Bamford, the wonderful educator the school was named for. Everyone pitched in.

The Pack Pantry joyfully opened its doors in January of 2023. The donated items packed an entire classroom and overflowed into the next. Each class, from pre-K to fifth grade, played an important part in sorting, organizing, and keeping track of all the donated goods. Canned goods and school supplies loaded the shelves. (Pickles and pencils, anyone?)

Students spread the word about the grand opening with great excitement. They invited their families, friends, and school community to come visit the pantry. Then they held their breath as they waited to see who would show up. They wanted to help as many people as they could. The Wolf Pack was ready to change the world one bagful at a time.

When the first family visited the pantry, the school's hopes were realized. Joy overflowed with a few happy tears. Giving and helping others can fill your heart to overflowing with happiness. Slowly but surely word got out. Family

after family came to the pantry. What began as an acorn-sized plan grew into an oak-tree-sized program.

Now Bamford families, businesses, retired teachers, and community members all pitch in to supply goods and keep the pantry running. Serving families and organizing donations has become a regular part of each Bamford class routine. Classes work together to keep the community safe and fed.



The Pack Pantry opens its doors to the school district twice a month. The students work together filling online orders before families and friends arrive. Offerings now include small appliances, much-needed winter coats, and boxes of diapers. Did you know that babies can use up to three thousand diapers in the first year of their lives? That's a lot of diapers! Meeting these needs takes community care to a whole new level.

This school-wide project proved to the Wolf Pack that if you work together, you really can change the world!

Fun Fact: Bamford Elementary has a cool school motto: “Together we are stronger, and together we change the world!” After Bamford students shout their motto, they end with an enthusiastic Wolf Pack howl: “Owwwooo!” Try it out!

What about you? How has the Wolf Pack inspired you? What are some ways you would like to change the world? Maybe you and your classmates can get together and help serve your community. Working together to help others feels good, doesn't it? Don't mess with the pack! We're unstoppable when we stick together.





CHAPTER 10

STUDENT LEADERS CHANGE THE WORLD

Have you ever heard of Guatemala? It's a mountainous country in Central America, home to a beautiful rainforest, thirty-seven volcanoes, and wonderful people. Their food is some of the best in the world. Did you know that Guatemala was one of the first areas to discover chocolate? (Thank you, Guatemala!)

The corn tortilla, another tasty treat, is eaten in Guatemala daily. You probably buy them in packages at the grocery store, but many families make them by hand today. Have you ever tasted corn tortillas toasted on an outdoor grill? They're amazing!

But in Guatemala, the open fires used for cooking are often *inside* people's homes. While the homemade tortillas are delicious, all the smoke from those fires can damage people's eyes, lungs, and hearts. Even worse, up to four

million people die each year from smoke-related illnesses. With those serious diseases threatening the health of these lovely families, the future doesn't look so bright.

Students with a service-learning organization called Global Leaders heard about this problem and wondered how it could be solved. You may be asking, *Who are Global Leaders?* Great question. These Fort Collins high school students are all in on making the world brighter and better. They find problems and become part of the solution.

Joe Fontana, a teacher and **administrator**, wanted to encourage students to grow their leadership skills, learn from other communities, and serve others. So in 1997, he and several friends founded Global Leaders at Thompson Valley High School. (Talk about longevity! Students with Global Leaders keep growing their oak-tree-sized philanthropy dream year after year.)

Each week these ninth through twelfth graders tutor younger students, run mobile markets, and support the elderly.



They meet monthly for leadership training and group service projects. Their motto is “Students empowering students.” And they are.

The Global Leaders’ Student Executive **Board** is made up of students who have completed the program. They partner with the younger high schoolers, lead service projects, and meet with community leaders and grant givers. To build their philanthropy skills, the students also work with OtterCares and MindSpark Learning, another educational nonprofit. They are using their 3Ts all over the place—including Guatemala.

Back to the cookstove problem. When a former student went on a Global Leaders overseas trip to build classrooms in Guatemala, she asked a local woman, “How can we help your community?” The woman responded, “There’s a **pueblo** a couple of hills over. Trees, Water & People installed some clean cookstoves there, and we need some cookstoves too.” (This nonprofit helps people and the earth.)





The stoves' **exhaust pipes** eliminated the smoke inside the homes. Those cookstoves made a huge difference! Helping families breathe easier would be a great project when the team returned the following summer. (*¡Vamos, amigos! Let's go, friends!*)

Global Leaders students live with host families in Guatemala each summer and learn Spanish. These high schoolers continue to work side by side with Guatemalan students who have learned the same leadership skills they have. (Student philanthropists unite!)

Together, the Guatemalan and North American students have planted baby trees to help **reforest** land and volunteered at a nearby hospital and orphanage. They found common ground in serving. And let's not forget, they helped install clean cookstoves too. (Hello, bright future!)

With the help and wisdom of the Trees, Water & People nonprofit, the Global Leaders team found the best way to get families the stoves they needed. They invited several Guatemalan companies to demonstrate different styles of stoves, allowing the families to choose which stove made the best tortillas. Delicious tortillas and clean air are a winning combo.

Fun Fact: Global Leaders and their Guatemalan student partners keep shining brighter. Together they have built thirty-eight schoolrooms and fifteen single-family portable homes, installed one hundred clean cookstoves, planted thirty-eight thousand trees, and completed over 108,000 service hours.

Global Leaders students love finding new ways to brighten the future. How about you? What problem would you like to solve in your community? How would you like to build your leadership skills? Your willingness to serve and use your problem-solving skills will make the world a whole lot brighter.





CHAPTER 11

BUNDLES OF HOPE

Is there anything more wonderful than a brand-new baby? Nope, there isn't. Did you know that millions of babies will be born around the globe next year? Cuteness overload.

But did you also know that some little bundles of joy need extra help and attention right after they're born? If they're born early or have health issues, these sweet babies may need around-the-clock specialized care in the **neonatal** intensive care unit (NICU).

Teams of specially trained nurses and doctors care for each baby until they can go home to their loving families. Life is difficult for those families as they wait for that magical day. These beloved babies can remain in the hospital for days, weeks, or even months. This can cause their families to worry and feel separated from the rest of the world.

In 2021, the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) student club at Windsor High School

wanted to show their support, since family is important to them. Led by Jessica Teal, a Family and Consumer Sciences educator, these students decided to reach out and encourage NICU families.

You may be wondering, *What is the FCCLA?* This leadership club allows students to develop their leadership abilities, focus on their passions, and strengthen their relationships. (What a great jumping-off place for philanthropy!) The seventeen students quickly became **passionate** about supporting NICU families.

NICU families often felt disconnected from the outside world. Several of the FCCLA members knew that firsthand. When their younger siblings were in the NICU, anxiety and loneliness crept in. One student had been a NICU baby herself. The group's deep feelings of empathy moved them to action.

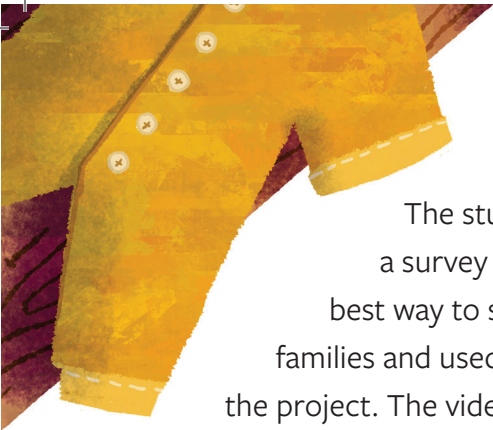




The Windsor High FCCLA held a brainstorming session—a small, meaningful beginning. They also asked questions about how they could help these families:

- What should our project be?
- How much money will it cost?
- How will we fund the project?
- How many families could we impact?

This group of student leaders launched the NICU Heroes program. Their goal? Create and fill thirty welcome baskets for NICU families at the Banner North Colorado Medical Center in Greeley, Colorado. Each basket would contain a handmade blanket, diapers, diaper rash cream, a felt rattle, **onesies**, and a baby bottle with an encouraging message. (Sounds amazing, doesn't it?) Their unstoppable idea would take a lot of time, talent, and treasure, so they reached out to their whole school for help.



The students took a survey to find the best way to support babies' families and used the data to shape the project. The videography class filmed a NICU Heroes video to show to the advisory classes that each Windsor student attended. The advisory classes then held a competition to see which class could donate the most money. Two child development classes handcrafted soft felt dinosaur rattles for every basket.

The FCCLA class also reached out beyond Windsor High to their community. The leadership class applied for an OtterCares Illumination Fund grant and received \$500 to help cover basket costs. United Way, a nonprofit that strengthens communities, donated diapers. The Sears Real Estate company purchased fleece for no-sew baby blankets that the FCCLA students learned to make.

The students couldn't believe the impact of their phone calls and emails requesting help. The *Greeley Tribune* newspaper did a write-up, spreading the uplifting news about the NICU Heroes project.

Fun Fact: What do the brilliant nuclear physicist Albert Einstein, the amazing singer Stevie Wonder, and the elite ballerina Anna Pavlova have in common? They were all born early and needed special care. Great things come in little bundles!

After months of planning and filling the beautiful baskets, the students were excited when delivery day finally arrived. It was the end-of-the-school-year highlight for the leadership class.

The NICU nurses were overwhelmed and thankful for the baby baskets and told the students how parents had been asking for the much-needed supplies. When the FCCLA class reached out to help the NICU families, they did more than encourage them; they touched their hearts.

What about your heart? How has the FCCLA inspired you? What unstoppable ideas are brewing in your brain after reading this story? You can reach out to your community and touch people's hearts too.





CHAPTER 12

PROJECTS WITH A PURPOSE

In 2023, the **US Patent and Trademark Office** granted American inventors 346,152 **patents**. That's almost double the number of patents the office granted in 2000. It appears as if we are getting more creative as the years go by. But not all inventions are created equal. Some are helpful, some are fun, and some are downright crazy.

Did you know that a robotics company created a hamster-ball robot that takes flight when it encounters an obstacle on the ground? Wouldn't you like to see that rolling around your school campus?

Another wild invention is a pair of airbag jeans for motorcyclists. If an unfortunate crash occurs, the pants inflate on impact. This takes motorcycle safety to a whole new level, don't you think?

But the best inventions that folks are creating are the amazing humankind-loving type. These inspiring inventions help others and make life better.

Humankind-loving inventions and projects with a purpose are exactly what one group of high school sophomores is passionate about. Teachers work with them to help them mesh their creativity with philanthropy. Can these students use their time, talents, and treasure to meet engineering needs in their homes and community? You bet they can.

These sophomores spent the first months of their class time learning engineering disciplines and mastering computer design skills. Their teachers brought Project Heart lessons into their classes and meshed them with engineering lessons. They even received funding from OtterCares for new tech the students needed to work with—several 3D printers and a laser cutter.

After all that learning, these innovative students put their skills to the test. The first hurdle they faced? Their philanthropy project needed to solve real-life problems. The students brainstormed design ideas with their





classmates, letting empathy and common sense guide them. Inspired projects from the previous year got their creative juices flowing. The main guideline for their project was the ability to easily 3D-print their designs.

Next, the students interviewed family, friends, and community members to learn about their needs and problems. Asking questions focused their attention on others. Once they decided which problems they wanted to solve, the students designed their individual inventions to meet those needs. The final steps of the design process involved taking photographs of their designs, figuring out the dimensions, and printing **prototypes**.

Designing the prototypes took several days, and printing each prototype took a few hours. Then the student engineers tweaked any issues or weaknesses in their designs.

These humankind-loving projects have changed lives for the better. One student's aunt had a four-year-old with special health needs. The aunt used multiple **syringes** each day to care for her daughter's **genetic** condition. The syringes needed to be cleaned after every use and set out to dry without touching any dirty surfaces. How about designing a unique syringe holder to solve the problem? The student was on it. Her syringe-holder prototype dried five syringes at a time. Amazing!

Another sophomore designed a cup holder for a friend's wheelchair. Philanthropy at work! Both students used their design skills and brain power to love humankind.

The last stage of the learning process for these student philanthropists was receiving feedback from their peers. This helped the students improve their designs. And appreciation from those who received these life-changing





inventions inspired the students to keep using their creative engineering talents to help others. Thanks to these gifted sophomores for loving humankind!

So what about you? Have you ever dreamed of becoming an inventor? Maybe you have some unstoppable dreams you would love to see become incredible realities. What would you create? Think of people you would like to help. Keep track of all your acorn-sized ideas. You never know what humankind-loving invention you might come up with!

Fun Fact: At five years of age, British inventor Samuel Houghton patented a double-headed broom to make sweeping the yard with his dad more efficient. Samuel believes the best inventions aren't crazy. They're simple, helpful, and useful—and they make everyday life easier. Those are projects with a purpose!



CHAPTER 13

GROWING HEARTS ARE GIVING HEARTS

Have you ever visited a **botanic** garden? Were you amazed by all the different plants, flowers, and trees? So. Many. Beautiful. Living. Things.

Well, the Gardens on Spring Creek, an eighteen-acre botanic garden in Fort Collins, Colorado, is bursting with glorious, green goodness too. Two hundred species of plants, trees, and shrubs grow in the Welcome Garden alone.

Adventure awaits you in these beautiful themed gardens. Follow the animal-footprint path in the Children's Garden to the pond. Wander through the Foothills Garden and enjoy native plants like the state flower (the Colorado blue columbine) and the fuzzy-leafed blanket flowers with bright-red centers and yellow tips. Step onto the peaceful Wetlands walkway to see tall grasses and willows waving in the breeze.

Excite your taste buds in the most delicious garden of all: the Garden of Eatin'. This one-acre garden is loaded with organic veggies, bushes bursting with berries, and fruit trees ripe for picking. You might want to grab a handful of berries, but this wonderful produce is used for fun cooking classes and donated to the Food Bank for Larimer County to fill hungry tummies.

This garden takes care of people and needs people to care for it. So do the other gardens. How many gardeners does it take to raise thousands of pounds of produce? A lot!

But the Gardens on Spring Creek grows more than beautiful flowers, tasty fruits, and crunchy vegetables. It also grows budding philanthropists.

Project Hort (for seventh through twelfth graders) and Junior Hort (for sixth and seventh graders) offer volunteer opportunities every summer at the botanic garden. Twenty student philanthropists are chosen to work alongside the **horticulturalists**, staff, and educational instructors. They share their 3Ts with the earth as they plant seedlings,





spread smelly-but-good-for-the-soil **compost**, and help run the children's education programming. (Who doesn't love a good story time in a garden?)

Project Hort and Junior Hort staff and volunteers are passionate about plants and people. The students use their time, talents, and treasure to **steward** the earth. A steward manages things—like homes, properties, or gardens. When you're a good steward, you take care of what you're given. The time and talent you pour into your project grow and multiply. When these stewards nurture baby plants or mentor younger students, the growth is huge.

Each summer the students work through Project Heart's materials, lean into their passion for plants and people, and brainstorm how they can love humankind. (When you take care of the earth, the earth takes care of you.) Their acorn-sized ideas of goodness grow into oak-sized summer projects that spread joy and hope.



One student group designed discovery backpacks for families. These backpacks offered fun activities for the families to complete in each garden. Another group helped out in the Children's Garden planting flowers to attract bees and hummingbirds. More bees and hummingbirds spreading pollen around equals more colorful flowers and green goodness.

Did you know that nature is good for your brain? One student group developed a plant and mental health presentation. They spoke at the Gardens on Spring Creek and at local libraries, teaching about the brain benefits of gardening while offering lessons in planting **succulents**. These students know the power of plants. Gardening releases feel-good **hormones** in your brain called **endorphins**. Think of them as stress busters—just one more reason to get outside and dig in the dirt!

This crew also cares for the Friendship Growing Garden each summer. The students plant seedlings, weed and water



Fun Fact: Did you know that scientists have identified over 390,000 plant species in the world? That's a whole lot of plants in need of good stewards like you to take care of them.

the plants, and keep the bunnies out of the garden. Bunnies look cute, but they eat everything from carrots to kale.

These student philanthropists love nurturing plants and helping other kids enjoy the garden. Every minute they spend with their hands in the dirt builds community. The Gardens on Spring Creek gives them a place to learn and grow and pass on their knowledge to those following in their muddy footsteps.

The students who volunteer with Project Hort and Junior Hort are inspiring. These good stewards take care of what they are given and show love to humankind (and plantkind).

So, fellow philanthropist, can you see yourself knee-deep in green goodness? Could planting seedlings be your passion? Does watering berry bushes make your mouth water? Would mentoring younger students fill your heart with joy? You have what it takes to care for plants and people. So get growing!





CHAPTER 14

HEART + ACTION = CHANGE

Did you know that when you love what you're doing, your brain cells release feel-good hormones? When your brain feels good, it doesn't recognize how much time has passed. (Think spending time with a good friend.) But when you aren't having fun, your brain cells don't release those feel-good hormones, and time feels like it's moving verrrry sloooooowly. (Think cleaning your room.)

Now imagine doing something you really love to do and helping someone at the same time. Wouldn't that be awesome? Well, your brain actually releases the same feel-good hormones when you're involved in philanthropy. When you follow your heart and help meet a need for someone, it can be a feel-good double whammy.

Come to think of it, that's just what the fourth graders at Olander School for Project Based Learning did in Fort Collins, Colorado. Time flew by when they combined



their passions with philanthropy. Almost seventy students experienced that feel-good double whammy by helping their community.

Three fourth-grade teachers, Kris Odenbaugh, Krislyn Molander, and Adam Thibault, decided to spend the second half of the school year focusing on the 3Ts of philanthropy. These teachers encouraged their students to use their time, talents, and treasure on a philanthropy project that touched their hearts.

The fourth graders voted on three nonprofits to support: Animal Friends **Alliance** animal rescue, the W.O.L.F. (Wolves Offered Life & Friendship) Sanctuary, and Children's Hospital Colorado. Each student got to choose which nonprofit they were most excited about and joined that student team. They met regularly with their team, wearing Project Heart-inspired T-shirts. They were ready to go to work!

The Animal Friends Alliance team designed flyers asking for donations for the shelter—everything from paper

towels to trash bags. Next, they copied and counted the exact number of flyers needed for each class and sent them to the students' Friday folders. Then the team members created chew toys and blankets for the puppies and pipe-cleaner toys for the kitties. The rescue organization delighted in all the toys and goodies the Olander students donated for their wonderful animals.

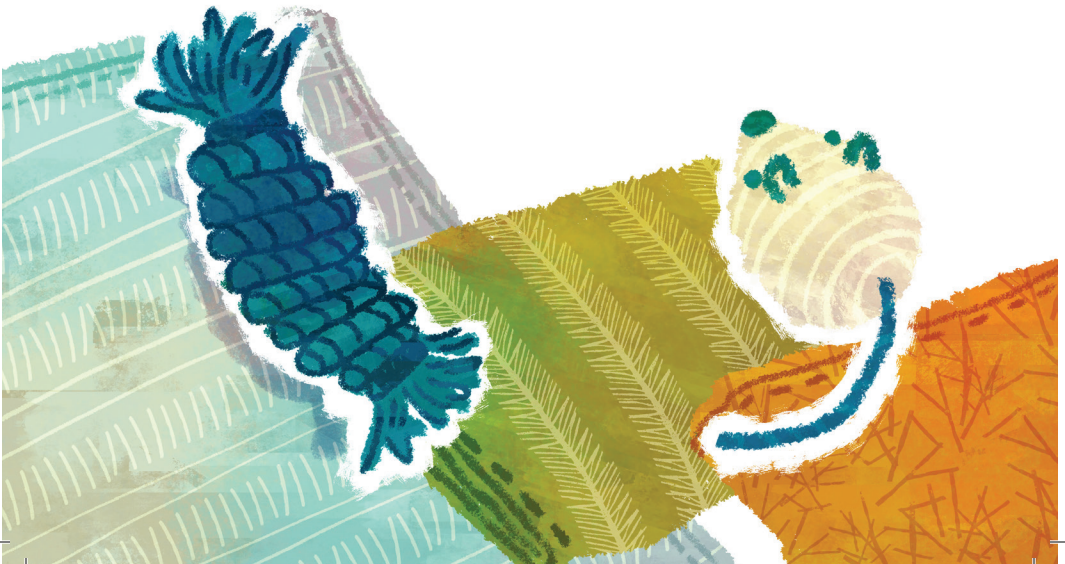
The W.O.L.F. Sanctuary team found out their nonprofit had outgrown their property and needed a bigger sanctuary for the wolves near Red Feather Lakes in the mountains northwest of Fort Collins. So these passionate students organized a fundraising event, partnering with Mary's Mountain Cookies, a bakery in Fort Collins, to sell delicious cookie dough. Then they advertised the event to the school community and set up a table near the school pickup area. The fundraiser was a huge success.



The team raised \$500 for the sanctuary, and OtterCares matched the funds with another \$500 Illumination Fund grant. The fourth graders presented a check for \$1,000 to the W.O.L.F. Sanctuary. Red Feather Lakes, here we come!

The third team of students focused on supporting patients at Children’s Hospital near Denver. Some of these students had been patients there themselves, and they knew how it felt to be stuck in bed not feeling well. The fourth graders designed hand-colored treat bags for all the patients—from toddlers to teenagers. Then they sent letters home with their classmates asking for donations—everything from Play-Doh to coloring books. The donations poured in, and the students “shopped” among the items, filling each treat bag with care.

The Children’s Hospital team added another layer of love to the project by starting a coin drive to help families who couldn’t pay their hospital bills. When the coins weren’t



Fun Fact: More than six million sweet rescue animals nationwide need forever homes. If your family is looking to adopt a puppy or a kitty or both—a pet double whammy—there are a whole lot of cute pets that would love to go home with you!

coming in fast enough, the students offered stickers to the classes that donated the most. With an Illumination Fund matching grant, this student team donated just under \$1,000 to Children's Hospital.

Following their hearts, having fun, and meeting the needs in their community left the Olander fourth graders feeling **empowered**, full of hope, and wanting to do more. It doesn't get any better than that.

What about you? How would you combine what you love to do with philanthropy? What needs could you meet for someone by following your heart? Go for it. A double whammy of good feelings is waiting for you!





CHAPTER 15

BUILDING A BETTER WORLD TOGETHER

Did you know that world changers all over the globe are using their time, talents, and treasure to impact their communities for good? Many have launched nonprofits to bring help and attention to the world's growing needs. At last count, nonprofits in the United States alone numbered almost two million. That's a lot of world changing!

Do you want to change the world too? Or do you feel overwhelmed just thinking about all the giant problems everywhere? Maybe you're nervous about trying to create awesome solutions for those problems. That's understandable.

Let's back up and think about this. What if you could team up with a bunch of friends with the same 3Ts and passions you have? What if your team focused on one problem together? How would that feel? Better? Terrific? Empowering?

Well, that's just how the seventh graders at Fulton Academy of Science and Technology in Roswell, Georgia, felt when they showcased their community innovation projects.

Jake Franklin, the innovation coordinator at Fulton Academy, encouraged all eighty students to see how they could change the world in their Roswell community.

Each student pitched a project idea and shared personal interests that could be used to raise awareness for a nonprofit. For example, how could a student who loves to bake use that skill to meet a community need? After pitching their ideas to each other in class, students joined teams that matched their skills, passions, and the type of philanthropy they were interested in.





Each team focused on a project and goal that would have maximum community impact and mapped out what they would need for their showcase event. Their projects took three months of careful planning. This included completing their Project Heart lessons and ordering supplies. They also applied for OtterCares Illumination Fund grants, researched nonprofits, designed trifold presentation boards, and prepared showcase booths.

The baking team sent out preorder letters encouraging families to order the yummy homemade goodies they wanted. The Clean the Chattahoochee River team purchased trash picker-uppers and trash bags and promoted a day to clean up the river. The team supporting mental health awareness rented a dunk tank and held a teacher-dunking contest to raise money.

The Raffle for Green Parks team connected with their local parks and recreation department. They wrote letters asking local businesses for donations they could raffle



off to support more parks in low-income areas. The team of BMX riders made a plan to set up a shop on campus to repair bikes and raise money to support **leukemia** research.

The bike repair team had a heartfelt interest in their project because one of their members was battling leukemia. The team sent letters to family and community members asking them to bring all their bikes to showcase day.

With a total of fourteen teams planning to showcase their projects, you can imagine the creative range of problem-solving ideas that would be on display.

On the day of the showcase, spirits ran high. The community showed up excited to participate. Each team manned their booths and presented their projects. Students mended bikes and sold brownies. Shouts of



laughter rang out as the teachers were dunked multiple times. The Smoothies for Housing team blended tons of nutritious smoothies to aid a local homeless shelter. The day marked a huge win for the student philanthropists and their community.

The students' smiling faces revealed the power of their partnerships—working together was fun. The teams used their 3Ts to raise awareness and money for their beloved projects and nonprofits. The seventh graders did what they set out to do: Change the world one problem at a time.

What friends share your interests and skills? Do you share similar 3Ts? Why not team up and work together? If you do, get ready to feel empowered. Your unstoppable, collective ideas could change the world!



Fun Fact: Fulton Academy and OtterCares partnered to impact the Roswell, Georgia, community in a big way. Seven student projects received matching grants for the funds they raised. Five more student teams received **materials grants** to help with supplies. Fulton Academy raised \$5,500, and matching funds from OtterCares boosted the amount to \$8,000. The students donated the money they raised to local and national nonprofits working toward community impact. Way to go, world changers!

CONCLUSION

YOU ARE A CHANGEMAKER!

I love the saying, “The smallest deed is better than the greatest intention.” Doing something is much more important than just thinking about it. It doesn’t matter what age you are.

You can be a philanthropist even now by turning your empathy into kindness and compassion.

You might be a little nervous or afraid to volunteer. But remember, you’re doing something really important, and you don’t have to do it alone. Just grab a friend and, together, dip your toes in—or jump in with both feet. Once you join in, you will experience heartfelt joy and connection the way I did with my new friend from Thailand.

Philanthropy brings the giver so much joy, often more than the receiver.

You have time, talent, and treasure to share, no matter who you are. You can shovel sidewalks, mow lawns, or carry groceries. You can even smile at the grumpy checker at the grocery store.

The responsibility to be a philanthropist lies with you. And you should know, you can make a really big difference!

—Nancy Richardson

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alliance. A union between persons, families, or parties. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

awareness. Knowledge that something exists, or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

board. A group of persons who manage, direct, or investigate. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

botanic. Of or relating to plants or botany. (Vocabulary.com)

brittle bone disease. A rare disease in which somebody's bones break extremely easily. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

carnitas. Small chunks or strips of meat and especially pork that are fried or roasted until crisp and are sometimes served in a burrito or taco.
(*Merriam-Webster's.com Dictionary*)

carnivore. Any animal that eats meat. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

collaboration. Two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

compost. Decaying plant material that is added to soil to improve its quality. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

contractor. One that contracts to perform work or provide supplies. (*Merriam-Webster's.com Dictionary*)

dimensions. The range over which something extends.
(*Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary*)

empathy. Being aware of and sharing another person's feelings, experiences, and emotions.
(*Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary*)

empower. To give official authority or legal power to.
(*Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary*)

endorphin. A chemical naturally released in the brain to reduce pain, that in large amounts can make you feel relaxed or full of energy. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

entrepreneur. One who organizes, manages, and takes on the risks of a business or enterprise. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

entrepreneurship. The activity of making money by starting or running businesses, especially when this involves taking financial risks. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

exhaust pipe. The pipe at the back of a vehicle or on a machine through which waste gas escapes from the engine. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

genetic. Connected with genes (= the units in the cells of a living thing that control its physical characteristics). (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

habitat. The place or type of place where a plant or animal naturally or normally lives or grows. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

hormone. Chemical substance produced in the body or in a plant that encourages growth or influences how the cells and tissues function. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

horticulturalist. A person involved in the study or practice of growing flowers, fruit and vegetables, usually as a job. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

impact. A forceful effect. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

innovation. The introduction of new things, ideas or ways of doing something. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

innovative. Introducing or using new ideas [or] ways of doing something. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

kerosene. A type of fuel oil that is made from petroleum and that is used in the engines of planes and for heat and light. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

legacy. A situation that exists now because of events, actions, etc. that took place in the past. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

leukemia. A serious disease in which too many white blood cells are produced, causing weakness and sometimes death. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

light poverty. Having limited access to artificial light.

longevity. Length of life. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

materials grant. A grant to purchase supplies for a service project, such as a cleanup day, a luncheon fundraiser, or a lemonade stand.

matching grant. A grant that matches funds raised by a student-led fundraiser that benefits a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

mission statement. Something that states the purpose or goal of a business or organization.
(*Merriam-Webster's.com Dictionary*)

neonatal. Connected with a child that has just been born.
(*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

nonprofit. Not established to make a profit. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

onesie. A bodysuit for an infant. (*Merriam-Webster's.com Dictionary*)

OtterCares. A nonprofit that invests in education and [empowers youth] to create lasting change through philanthropy and entrepreneurship.

passionate. Having very strong feelings or emotions.
(*Cambridge Dictionary*)

patent. The official legal right to make or sell an invention for a particular number of years. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

perseverance. Continued effort to do or achieve something, even when this is difficult or takes a long time. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

philanthropy. A spirit of goodwill toward all people especially when expressed in active efforts to help others. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

philanthropist. One who makes an active effort to promote human welfare. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

Project Heart. A philanthropy education program that teaches young people that they have the power and ability to create real, lasting change in their communities and the world.

prototype. An original model on which something is patterned. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

pueblo. An American Indian village of Arizona or New Mexico consisting of flat-roofed stone or adobe houses in groups sometimes several stories high. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

reforest. The action of renewing a forest by planting seeds or young trees. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

respite. A period of rest or relief. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

sanctuary. A place that provides shelter or protection. (Merriam-Webster.com student dictionary)

showcase. A situation or event that makes it possible for the best features of something to be seen; to show the best qualities or parts of something. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

solder. A soft metal that is melted in order to join together pieces of metal so that they stick together when it cools and becomes hard again. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

steward. Someone who manages property or other affairs for someone else. (*Vocabulary.com*)

succulent. (Of plants) having leaves and stems that are thick and contain a lot of water. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

sustainable. Involving the use of natural products and energy in a way that does not harm the environment. (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*)

syringe. A tube for collecting blood or other liquids or for putting liquids into the body usually through a needle that can be put under the skin. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

tradesman. Someone who works in a trade that needs skill at using [their] hands, usually in the building industry. (*Cambridge Dictionary*)

USDA-approved. [Approval from the US Department of Agriculture] that products are safe, sanitary, and properly labeled and packaged.

US Patent and Trademark Office. The federal agency [responsible] for granting [United States] patents and registering trademarks.

website development. The process of building, programming, and maintaining websites and web applications.

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To our founder and dreamer, Nancy Richardson: Thank you for believing that one young and inspired mind can change the world. Without your passion, purpose, vision, and heart for giving, these and so many other stories like them would not exist. Thank you for trusting us to carry your dream of equipping a generation of makers, doers, and givers who have the power to Ignite Tomorrow Today.

AT PROJECT HEART, WE'RE ON A MISSION TO CHANGE THE WORLD, ONE CLASSROOM AT A TIME.

Changing the world is a big goal. We can't do it alone. We want to ignite an entire generation of thinkers, makers, doers, and givers who have the passion and resources to tackle the world's biggest problems. That is why we created Project Heart, our philanthropy education program. Project Heart taps into every child's innate desire to give while providing them with the tools and framework they need to be tomorrow's world changers today.

For more information about Project Heart, please visit www.myprojectheart.org.

