

TAKING THE TIME TO MAKE THEIR WORLD BETTER

Indianapolis' teen volunteer rate is slightly below the national rate. Efforts are under way to encourage more young people to volunteer.

Here are some examples of local teens who have chosen to volunteer.

Ashley Nicoson



Year: Junior.

Age: 17.

School: Lawrence North High.

Volunteers with: Best Buddies; president of her school's chapter.

What she does: Spends time with a classmate with

intellectual disabilities. Set times are required to be in the program, but Nicoson goes beyond the requirements and has frequent sleepovers and hangout sessions with her buddy, Kelsey Kern.

Thought: "People used to think it's cool to be mean. Now, it's not lame or dumb to help people out. I think it's changed a lot."

Lauren Gibson



Year: Sophomore.

Age: 15.

School: Carmel High.

Volunteering since: She saw chimpanzee expert Jane Goodall speak about the environment in 2008. After that, Gibson started Carmel Area Roots &

Shoots, which encourages youths to make positive changes in the environment.

What she does: Environmental volunteering. She also is program coordinator for the Carmel Green Teen Micro-Grant Program, which helps volunteers fund their projects through the United Way.

Thought: "There will always be people who call you a tree hugger and hippie, but honestly, lots of people say, 'What you're doing is amazing. How can I help?' It's getting more and more socially acceptable."

Jose Aguilar



Year: Senior.

Age: 17.

School: George Washington Community High.

Volunteer since: Freshman year.

What he does: Work through his school's Key Club, where he regularly

helps with food and blood drives; park and neighborhood cleanups; and soup kitchens. In

June, he was one of three Indianapolis high school students to visit Washington to attend the national Jefferson Awards program.

Thought: "I've always thought there's more than just my world — there's other people who have gone through problems. I like getting the recognition of helping without asking."

Amanuel Kibrom



Year: Junior

Age: 16.

School: Pike High.

Volunteer since: Freshman year.

What he does: In addition to the Sierra Club and Key Club, he works with Growing as Second Genera-

tion, a group of Ethiopian students that educates the public about the Ethiopian culture while learning more about traditional American customs.

"We go out and do cultural stuff — show them that we are a civilization, not just a bunch of starving people," he said. Through the United Way's Youth as Resources, the group recently held a forum to highlight to Ethiopian adults and children the importance of volunteering, as many adults do not know its importance when applying to colleges.

Thought: "What we're trying to do is educate other Ethiopians about more volunteer things they can do. Because in many cases, people from Ethiopia, the parents don't know about volunteering — they don't really know about recording hours, how to do it."

Darian Busby



Year: Senior.

Age: 17.

School: Broad Ripple High.

Volunteer since: Last year.

What she does: Brings weekly meals to the homeless and teaches young

children at her church Sunday school.

Thought: "Even some people in my family used to be homeless, so it really made me want to help people. It really felt good to help people that were less fortunate than me."

'OUR CHILDREN, OUR CITY'

The Indianapolis Star is joining our readers and the community to improve the lives of children and education in our city. The Star has set three goals for the project, including increasing the number of volunteers in the community by 10,000. If you would like more information or want to arrange for someone from The Star to speak to your organization

about this effort, call (317) 444-KIDS — (317) 444-5437 — or e-mail us at ourchildren@indystar.com.



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