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I often hear the phrase "think before you act", yet if you see someone struggling to open a door, or carry a heavy package, you don't have time to think, you just act. I've always enjoyed helping people, whether it is part of an organized school event or on my own. Simple acts such as helping with chores while my mom works, or a last minute call from a neighbor who needs a favor are things I do for others automatically. I look forward to pursue charitable causes but hope to continue making the lives of my family and friends better by focusing on simple acts of kindness.

Participating in the Aubrey Rose/American Girl fashion show four years ago was my first chance to be part of an organized charity event. My mom signed my sister and me up. At first I didn't know what it was all about, but it sounded like fun. When we arrived to register we learned that Aubrey was a little girl. Aubrey's mom talked to us about her daughter and her sweet but much too short life. It was only then that I understood the real meaning behind the fashion show. I'm proud to have been part of something so important.

"Prepare Affair" is a volunteer group that helps elderly people who are unable to take care of their houses. The day I worked was cold and rainy, so I got soaked. We spent the day cleaning out gardens, raking leaves and picking up trash. Most people came out of their houses with smiles and to say thank you.

I participated in a school project called "Christmas Kindness". Students were given ten dollars and instructed to use it for any random act of kindness they chose. I decided to try and raise more money for my random act of kindness. I used the money to buy supplies needed to create a hot chocolate stand at the end of my street. My money had tripled by the end of the sale and I donated it to the S.P.C.A. I went to the nearest Petsmart and asked the manager if he could also donate anything. I was surprised when he smiled brightly and gladly offered up toys and treats for the animals. We arrived at the animal shelter with my small donation. The people working there made a big fuss over it and wanted me to know how thankful they were. I was glad to have been able to help.

When I heard my family was "adopting" a family in need in Over The Rhine during Christmas, I thought we would just drop off some gifts to a business and that was it, yet when we arrived in Over The Rhine, I found it was much more than that. There were a lot of families talking, laughing eating in a church basement. We met our family which only had a mother, son and a little girl. We talked, ate breakfast, played games and made crafts. During those few hours, we got to know each other. It didn't matter how much money they had, they were perfectly wonderful people who just needed a little help. This was a wonderful single mom who just needed a little help. After we gave our presents and said goodbye, I left not thinking about the Christmas gifts, but the big impact this simple event had on me and the little kids too.

I am the second oldest in my family. Ever since I was little, I have loved to write. I wrote stories of all kinds and read them to my family. Every Thursday night, I decided the whole family would get together and write stories, then read them aloud. I guess my writing rubbed off on my siblings because now they do the exact same thing. They have become much more creative kids. My sister loves to write and draw comics now, and she has a whole box of them! My little brother writes stories with illustrations and he is only in second grade! Now, their friends are writing as well! I not only adore the fact that they like the same things I like, but that I had an impact on them.

At my school, we have a buddy system. I have two buddies in the first grade in the first grade. Our class visits our buddies often and do fun arts and crafts. It's neat to see how when I first met them, they were shy and not very talkative, yet now they won't stop gabbing! I have an outside of school buddy too. Her name is Blair. She is five years old and lives close to me. She comes over to my house all the time and asks if I can play. I always give her piggy back rides whenever she asks and we play almost anything. I have rabbits, and let Blair feed and pet them. One day, she was feeling kind of down, so I brought out my old Barbies for us to play with. Her face just lit up and I knew she was having a blast. The best thing about being with her is not only do I know how to make her smile, she knows how to make me smile too.

My community service projects may not be monumental, but they are important in what they've taught me. I've also learned that just by helping others with simple acts or even a smile can make a big difference in someone's day.