

I affect the lives of people around me just by being me. I don't have to pretend I'm someone I'm not, I just go right out into the world and be myself. Three big ways I affect the lives of people around me are: my attitude towards things, respect for myself and others, and my faith in God.

I'll start off with my attitude. I try to give 100% in everything I do. I work hard in school, sports, and in life in general. I try to keep a positive attitude and to always have a smile on my face. I am not afraid to state my opinion about topics. I know what is right and wrong, and I will never give in to peer pressure. I have wonderful friends that will always be there for me. When I am down and depressed, I think of what my mom always says, "There is always someone out there who is worse off than you are." And "Tomorrow's another day and problems are minimized in the light of a new day."

Respect. That is a big part of my life. I am always respectful to my teachers and elders, as well as to my peers. Some people are really disrespectful to teachers, parents, peers, and other people's property. I am appalled at what some kids say to their teachers. They are here to help us learn and make us well rounded people, the least you could do is be polite and respectful. When I get a nice encouraging comment on my report card it really makes my day and makes me feel good about myself. I don't understand how kids can get a bad comment on their report card and don't care at all. I really believe that you should treat others the way you yourself would like to be treated. I want people to respect me, so I give them respect. It's as simple as that.

Another thing I would like to say while I am on the RESPECT subject, is that I believe all people are equal. I do not understand how the color of skin can separate people. In my eyes, it doesn't matter what color skin you have, what language you speak, what background you are from--everyone should be respected equally. Do you think if a 4 year old white kid sees a 4 year old black kid he's going to run away from him? No, they will probably play peacefully. The eyes of a kid look deeper than the surface, they look at the heart. Sometimes I think we all need to look at people through the eyes of a kid.

I also respect myself. My friends and peers know I will never try drugs, smoke, or drink and drive. Why not? Because I respect the life God has given me and I want to make the most of it. I am not worried about peer pressure when I get older. I am a very confident person and have a high self-esteem. I know I will never give in to peer pressure, but I know some will. I hope that by setting a good example, I can show others that being true to yourself and who you are is way cooler than going along with the crowd.

Lastly, I am a pretty religious person for being just 14 years old. I pray every night with my mom. I pray for a lot of people--even people I don't know at all. For example, when Carson Palmer was injured, I prayed for him. Sure, I never met him, but from what I read he seems like a real nice man. I pray for a lot of people who are going through treatment for cancer and other illnesses. I pray for strength to be able to stand up for someone rather than sitting back in the crowd. So anyway I pray for all sorts of things at anytime, in any way. Sometimes I will just talk to God, tell him my problems. Having a close relationship with God really makes me a better person. Another way I have affected the lives of others is I participate in liturgical movement. This is when we do hand motions and sort of dance in a reverent way to a religious song in church. It is really moving to watch and gives you goose bumps. I remember watching the eighth graders last year, and thinking, "Oh, that's so pretty, I want to do that." And this year I am doing it. How do I know I affected people's lives doing liturgical movement? Well, some people cried, and a lot of people came up to us after church and said we did great and it was really pretty. I was afraid at first, trying to remember the steps and motions. My teacher just said, "Dance from the heart for your Lord." I was thinking how do you do that, but in the end that's exactly what I did. I was so happy to be dancing for God nothing else mattered. Liturgical movement was an awesome way to be closer to God because it answered the question, "Ask not what God can do for you, but what can you do for God."