

*Amy L. Hart*

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Bruce L. Scheiner Make a Difference Award

*Sebring High School*

Every year around Christmas time, the Salvation Army puts up their Angel Tree in the mall. My freshman year, my best friend and I started looking at the wish lists of the children on the tree and noticed one thing: many of the children wanted a bike, and nothing else, for Christmas. We both remembered getting a bike on Christmas morning and couldn't imagine how sad a child that wanted nothing else would be if he/ she didn't get it. We also knew that the parents of the kids on the Angel Tree didn't have the money to buy the bikes on their own.

We thought about it and realized that these kids were probably still on there because a bike seems like a fairly large purchase for one individual, especially with budgets already being tight during the holidays. The only thing we could think of was to ask people to give smaller amounts and put them together to buy bikes.

That year we didn't have much time, so we asked our closest friends and family and got enough money to buy five bikes. The next year we started a little earlier and got enough for eight. My junior year, the third year we were on this project, we really got it going. We asked the members of our church and they came through with far more than we ever expected. We bought 33 bikes and had to move on to children who wanted other things because we had more money than we did bikes to buy. This year, we asked our church again and ended up with 32 bikes and gifts for 8 other children.

This project has made me realize how much of a difference little things can make, and what people can do when they will work together. As teenagers ourselves, we didn't really have the money to make much of a difference. We learned that we could help out through the organization of this task. By getting a large group of people supporting us, we were able to brighten Christmas for almost one hundred kids, and their families, in the last four years.

