

**Youth Culture Lesson**  
**Finding Teachable Moments in Culture**  
From *YouthWorker Journal* and [YouthWorker.com](http://YouthWorker.com)

**Doing Good**

Teens Making a Difference

By Paul Asay

**What Happened:**

Respect: Most of us want it; some of us demand it; but we don't always get it. The thing about respect is that we've got to earn it—and sometimes that can be hard to do.

You might sometimes feel disrespected by some of the adults you encounter. Some might sell you short due to your age. In fact, they might conjure up a whole bevy of preconceptions based on who they think you are. Teens today don't know how to work hard, they might be saying. They don't pay attention to the world around them. They're too wrapped up in texting and videogames to care.

They'd be wrong.

Check out the news, and you'll find that teens are doing some amazing things this summer. In California, 16-year-old Ryan Traynor started a book drive to help provide reading material for underprivileged kids. After six months, Ryan collected 25,000 books.

"It's hard to measure the impact," says Jan Pedden, a librarian in Redwood City, California. "The number of books he has placed in the hands of people who did not have any books is overwhelming."

Then there's 15-year-old Teagan Stedman, who founded a charity called Shred Kids' Cancer when he was 8. The organization has grown steadily, conducting bone marrow drives, holding 5K and 10K races, heightening public awareness and raising more than \$300,000 to combat various childhood cancers. "In the future I'd like to see cancer as easily treatable as a headache," he says. "That would be the ideal future for me."

Sometimes, teens are making a difference simply by tweeting. That's what 18-year-old Aaron O'Dwyer did when he tweeted a picture of a homeless man's hand-written resume. It resulted in 3,000 retweets and scads of job offers for the down-on-his-luck job-seeker.

Some people always will underestimate teens when it comes to their abilities and their capacity to care, but that doesn't keep youth from doing some pretty amazing things. The proof is all around us.

**Talk About It**

Teens don't necessarily need to start a massive charity or have thousands of Twitter followers to make a big difference. Do you know of any teens making the world a little bit better? Who are they? What are they doing? How are their actions helping?

Has your youth group done anything special this summer? Taken a mission trip? Helped with Vacation Bible School? Volunteered time and energy in other ways? Are there ways your youth group could make a big impact during the rest of the year? Doing what?

Are there things you could be doing in your community or church? How can you help your neighbors? How can you help your families?

**What the Bible Says**

“Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3).

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Pet. 4:10).

“Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us” (Titus 2:7-8).

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:13-14).

*Paul Asay has written for Time, The Washington Post and Christianity Today. He writes about culture for Plugged In and has published several books, including his newest, Burning Bush 2.0 (Abingdon), available now. He lives in Colorado Springs. Check out his entertainment blog at [Patheos.com/Blogs/WatchingGod](http://Patheos.com/Blogs/WatchingGod) or follow him on Twitter @AsayPaul.*