

One of our angels, Rachel Jaffe has written a piece for Teen Ink. Please read and vote on the article to help publish it.

Young Angels

By Rachel J., Pacific Palisades, CA

Exhausted and completely out of breath, it was the end of swim practice on a cold winter evening. All of my friends and I charged into the locker room in hope of snatching the first steamy shower. I ran under the spout as warm water trickled down my back after a hard practice. My friend Mara approached all of my friends in the shower with a pile of invitations for a dance that supported community service. I was so tired that I did not have the energy to give the invitation more than a glance but, as soon as I looked at it, I saw the opportunity that awaited me. In bold letters at the top of the invitation, "Young Angels" was sprawled across the page. As I looked more closely, I realized what this invitation meant. Young Angels was organizing a dance to raise money for community service projects and, not only would a tremendous amount of money be raised for charitable causes, but hundreds of teenagers would be having a great time in the process. I thought that this was such a great idea and I decided that I not only wanted to attend the dance, but I also wanted to become involved.

This was over two years ago and, since then, I have become a lead member in Young Angels of America. Young Angels was my first real experience with community service. Many kids get by with raising money for charities, and never experience the act of giving; I had the privilege of feeling as though I made a difference. At each dance, teens not only have fun with their friends but are also informed about different charities. Knowing that I have taught others how they can get involved gives me such a heartwarming feeling. Not only am I one person making a difference, but by helping bring in over two hundred children into the dance, I have had the opportunity to get many of others to make a difference as well.

We have a celebrity visit each dance party. I have been so impressed by the amount that young Hollywood gives back. Through my Young Angels experience, I have transitioned from a fan to a producer. The anxiety and fear that falls upon most teenagers when a lead member from Step Up 2 walks into the room (we have previously had Adam Stefani and Channing Tatum) no longer has the power to overcome me.

The most memorable experience of my time in Young Angeles was the Middle School Winter dance in 2007, when we had a special child help organize the dance and participate in the event. This child was Julia. Julia has a horrible disease that will eventually kill her by the time

she reaches puberty. At this one dance we were raising money for the organization that her parents started in her honor. Looking at this young girl who knew that she was awaiting her death was the most memorable experience of my life. She has a glowing passion about her and, by spending this one night with her, I was inspired. Julia had the best attitude of anyone I have ever met; she took every moment and made the best of it. Julia got me inspired to help others and to never take any moment for granted. After this experience I found the meaning of Young Angels. Julia had been my angel that got me inspired to be other children's angels.

I now have a mission. I want to inspire as many children as possible; I want to be an angel. So many kids don't realize how easy it is to make a difference in the world. I want to be the person who encourages a child to help out a friend who is going through a tough time. I want to be the person who heartens a child to travel to Africa and work in an orphanage. I am only 15 years old and I have produced over five events, getting nearly 1,000 children involved. I want to be the angel to inspire that passion in others to make the difference that I feel as though I have made in my community.

For more information please visit youngangelsofamerica.org.