

BACK TO SCHOOL 2012

montclair

MAGAZINE

A HABIT OF HELPING

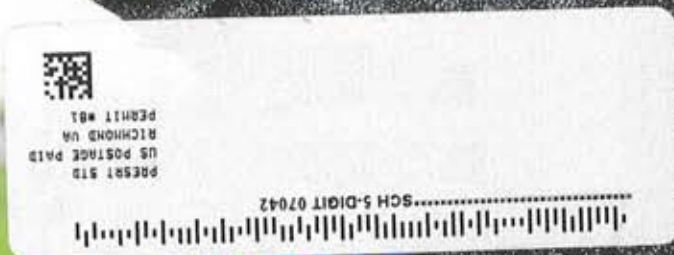
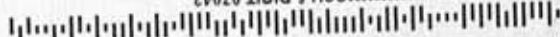
AREA TEENS MAKE A DIFFERENCE,
HERE AND ABROAD

RAISING KIDS
WHO LOVE READING
WHEN YOUR NEIGHBOR
IS A PARK
LESSONS IN CHARACTER,
YOGI-STYLE

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TO INHERIT A BETTER WORLD



Through their community service work, these students do their generation proud

BY ROSELEE BLOOSTON

Photos by Anne-Marie Caruso

ELIZA HUBER WEISS

SENIOR AT NEWARK ACADEMY

Lifelong Montclair resident Eliza Huber-Weiss has a passion for international service. Last summer, she traveled to the village of Lerai, Tanzania, and helped build houses there; before that trip, she lived in the Satluj River Valley in India's Western Himalayas and taught English. But Huber-Weiss' most significant achievement is the creation of Africa Initiative, a club that links students with peers in the South African village of Lillydale. She, her twin sister and father came up with the idea of a scanned and e-mailed monthly letter exchange. Fundraisers supply the students with sports equipment and educational posters, and the correspondence creates a personal connection. "I think what's most resonant is how similar people at my school find their pen pals to be," she says. Huber-Weiss hopes to return to Lillydale someday, and says that "Community service has become a really important part of my life." ➤



EMILY LANNING

LACORDAIRE ACADEMY GRADUATE,
FRESHMAN AT LOYOLA UNIVERSITY MARYLAND

Emily Lanning looks back fondly at her work as president of the student council's executive board at Lacordaire, as secretary of the school's Mission Club and especially at "her absolute favorite project," building houses in post-Katrina New Orleans. During her junior year, she assisted at the Louisiana Children's Museum, and volunteered for a local battered women's shelter. This past Spring, she returned to the city to work with the St. Bernard Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to rebuilding homes for those in need since Katrina struck. The project taught this enthusiastic young woman not only how to use power tools, but also the causes and effects of the hurricane's devastation. Lanning says she'll never forget the words of her New Orleans site supervisor: "When you are given the chance to help someone, that's an opportunity, and it's an opportunity you do not want to miss." Because she took this message to heart, she was awarded the Principal's Leadership Award.



GABRIELLE PETERSON

MONTCLAIR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE,
FRESHMAN AT SMITH COLLEGE

A member of the first Montclair Pre-K graduating class, Gabrielle Peterson was happy to participate in its Celebration Walk-a-Thon fundraiser. As a junior, she painted a mural on the lobby wall of the Montclair Neighborhood Development Corporation. But organizing last Spring's mayoral debate became her most challenging service project by far. Montclair High School Civics and Government teacher Billy Wingren asked Peterson, the senior class president, to co-moderate and plan the debate. "The most important part of the process was the protocol, choosing the questions and deciding how much time to allow for each response," she says. Peterson took this responsibility to her hometown very seriously. "A lot of people were unsure about their choice prior to the debate, so I knew that the answers to some of the questions would assist them in making their decision." Her leadership skills were recognized at a year-end ceremony, when she was given the prestigious MHS Award. ➤



In memory of
Milch Perlmeter
July 6, 1963 - February 1, 2011
Keep Smiling

AL-JANI BRICE

SENIOR, AT IMMACULATE CONCEPTION HIGH SCHOOL

Farming in Hawaii for a service project sounds like a dream, but it has meant more to Al-Jani Brice than doing good works in a spectacular setting. He feels, he says, "a humane responsibility to look out for my fellow man." The leadership development program Platinum Minds sponsored Brice for an intensive summer of farming, planting and cleaning beaches on the islands of Maui and Kauai. The experience allowed him to meet volunteers from all over the country.

"We patrolled the beach for materials that are harmful to the ocean, such as plastic, rope and metal," he says. While on Maui, he also worked with Habitat for Humanity to repair ruined apartments, and at a food bank, organizing and storing produce. At home in New Jersey, this energetic young man does community service with Morristown's Fredrick Douglas Reading Program, helping elementary students improve their reading skills.



PUJA SINGH

SENIOR, AT MONTCLAIR KIMBERLY ACADEMY

Puja Singh found purpose in the service project that has meant the most to her: volunteering at Staten Island University Hospital, where her father died when she was three years old. "The empathy shown to me during that difficult time awakened a desire to do the same for others," she says. An aspiring doctor who hopes to enter a joint BS/MD program after high school, Singh considers the hospital a "home away from home." Other ministering efforts include returning to her family's native India for three summers during high school to work with children affected by HIV/AIDS through Bal Sansar, an organization in her family's home town of Jaipur, Rajasthan. While there, she also helped out in art classes and English studies for children orphaned due to AIDS. Currently, she is the president of a club called LOVE146, whose purpose is to abolish sex-slavery. "The memories and bonds I've made through volunteerism are unforgettable," she says. ■



*Hair styling and makeup for the students courtesy
Danielle Bizarro, Gina Cassatt, Nicole Egidio and
Alexandra McNish of Studio D in Montclair*