

EAST COUNTY TIMES

BAY AREA NEWS GROUP - SERVING 2.7 MILLION READERS WEEKLY IN PRINT AND ONLINE

Monday, September 20, 2010

Volume 99, Number 112

An edition of the **San Jose Mercury News**

202 75 cents plus tax

HOMETOWN HEROES

Developed in partnership with BayAreaNewsGroup and Comcast

Jordyn Foley, 10, of Brentwood, center, hands Kids Helping Kids founder Tyler Page, 13, of Brentwood, a check for \$48 raised by Foley and four other girls during a bake sale.

DOUG DURAN/STAFF



Kid helps kids a world away

Brentwood youth starts nonprofit that has sent \$50,000 to Africa, beyond

By Hannah Dreier

hdreier@bayareanewsgroup.com

BRENTWOOD — Like many kids his age, Tyler Page loves video games, dreams of becoming a sports star, and returns each evening to a comfortable home filled with food and gadgets. But in his free time, Tyler works to help

Ghanaian children whose lives are detached from his own.

Tyler, 13, along with his mother, Laura Page, is the founder of Kids Helping Kids, which has donated \$50,000 to children in need.

Tyler and Laura say it was a snippet of daytime TV that changed their lives.

Three years ago, they happened upon an episode of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" featuring Ghanaian children

See PROFILE, Page 13

TYLER PAGE
AGE: 13

HOMETOWN:
Brentwood

CLAIM TO FAME:
Co-founded Kids Helping Kids, which has donated \$50,000 to children in need.

QUOTE: "If I'm complaining about something, I think, 'Would the kids in Africa be whining about this?'"

Profile

From Page 1

sold for as little as \$20 to fishermen who forced them to work long days with little food and no chance of release. Shocked by the images of children half his age toiling knee deep in murky water, Tyler, who had always assumed that all children were treated well, felt compelled to take action.

"I just imagined myself in their position," he said. "If I were doing that, I wouldn't want to live."

Encouraged by his mother, the 10-year-old held a carwash with his friends that raised enough money to save five children from a life of slavery. But he realized he couldn't stop there.

Today, Kids Helping Kids has sent \$30,000 to an inter-governmental organization that rescues child slaves in Ghana and raised another \$20,000 for other children in need. The organization is now Tyler's primary social outlet. For Laura Page, it has become a full-time job.

"When this started, all the dots started connecting in my life," she said. "I think I was just born to do this."

Which is not to say that it has been easy. Before quitting her job at Starbucks this summer, Laura Page balanced her charity work with the morning manager position that gave her family health insurance but demanded that she leave her house every day at 3:15 a.m.

What's kept her going, she said, is the dozens of children who regularly attend Kids Helping Kids meetings and events, and the hundreds of people from here and abroad who have visited the group's website to donate money or get tips on holding their own fundraisers.

Kids say they are drawn to the organization by a combination of empathy for suffering children, and the joy of being part of something larger than themselves.

On a recent summer evening, a handful of preteen girls in matching "Kids Helping Kids" T-shirts set up a lemonade stand at a Streets of Brentwood event.

"Step right up, don't be afraid," they chanted, "we got lemonade. It helps kids around the world."

It costs \$240 to rescue a

HOMETOWN HEROES

Hometown Heroes, a partnership between Bay Area News Group-East Bay and Comcast, celebrates people in the Bay Area who make a difference in their communities. In addition to highlighting remarkable individuals, the Hometown Heroes feature aims to encourage volunteerism, raise visibility of nonprofits and key causes in the area and create a spirit of giving.

Read about a new Hometown Hero every other Monday and watch the program on Comcast on Demand at Channel One > Bay On Demand > Hometown Heroes.

Developed in partnership with BayAreaNewsGroup and Comcast

Ghanaian child from slavery, according to Eric Peasah, the official featured on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" episode. Peasah travels the world fundraising for the International Organization for Migration, an agency founded after World War II that finds child slaves, negotiates their release, brings them to shelters for counseling and medical treatment, then reunites them with relatives.

He has been particularly taken with the Brentwood group, which he called "one of the coolest things" he had ever seen.

"If kids everywhere could be as selfless," he said, "the world would be a better place."

Peasah has become pen pals with several Kids Helping Kids members, and on a recent visit — his fourth — children jostled to hug, chatter with and sit next to the tall African.

The photographs Peasah sends from Ghana fill the Pages' home.

In one, a group of young boys sporting Kids Helping Kids T-shirts and weighed down by oversize backpacks filled with goodies sent from Brentwood smile at the camera. Tyler says these images have shaped how he views his life.

"I feel extremely lucky," he said. "If I'm complaining about something, I think, 'Would the kids in Africa be whining about this?'"

KIDS HELPING KIDS

Phone: 925-759-4806

E-mail: laurapage610@sbcglobal.net

Meetings: Every second Wednesday at REI, 2475 Sand Creek Road, Brentwood

Parents say the organization does much more than help kids in Africa; it instills confidence and perspective in their own children.

"It really helps the kids to stop thinking about just themselves," parent Valerie Casares said.

Casares' daughter Raquel attended her first Kids Helping Kids meeting when she was 6 years old. Laura Page recalls that the girl sat silently through the whole meeting, and then shocked her the next day by putting together a makeshift lemonade stand.

"I didn't want the kids to be hungry," said Raquel, now 7.

Other members have started ambitious projects of their own. For instance, 10-year-old Jordyn Foley raised the funds to establish a summer camp scholarship after overhearing a friend's grandmother tell her she could not afford to attend drama camp this year.

Thanks in part to efforts like these, the charity is increasingly turning its kid-powered efforts to a more diverse array of causes. This winter, Tyler and his mother went to Hollywood and enlisted teen stars from such shows as "Wizards of Waverly Place" and "iCarly" for a fundraiser that sent \$12,000 to Haiti.

But fighting child slavery remains Tyler's passion, and Laura Page is now making plans for the two of them to travel to Africa and meet some of the kids they have helped. Tyler has already started thinking about what he might say to children whose suffering affected him so profoundly.

"I would tell them that they're troopers," he said, "and that we're here for them."

Contact Hannah Dreier at 925-779-7174.