



Rachel Ley is a member of the **generationOn Youth Advisory Council**. Her love of volunteering and passion for reading inspired her to create Literacy for Little Ones. The mission of Literacy for Little Ones is to encourage parents to read to their infants, instilling a life-long love of reading and creating a special bond between the parent and child. They deliver about approximately 60 packages of books per month to newborns and their moms and dads at their local hospital. So far they have impacted more than 1200 families with the program.

Why does Rachel volunteer? In her words, "As far back as I can remember, I have always been involved in volunteering. Service and helping others has become a way of life for me, and I am continually inspired by the genuine difference even one person can make in someone else's life. Seeing someone smile because of [the] help I was able to give makes it easy to maintain a positive attitude and a real concern for all people."

GenerationOn **Make Your Mark Week** (formerly Kids Care Week) inspires and mobilizes kids to use their energy, ingenuity and compassion to "make their mark on the world" through hands-on service. It is celebrated during the third week of October (Oct. 16-22, 2011) and culminates on Make a Difference Day, the largest national day of service. During the week, young people do small acts or service projects that together make a big impact on the issues that matter most to them. GenerationOn equips the youth with educational resources, tool kits, project ideas, incentives for small acts, and grants. The issue areas for Make Your Mark Week 2011 are Animals, the Environment, Homelessness, Hunger, and Literacy.

The Issue of Literacy

Most kids learn to read from first grade to third grade. Unfortunately, if they do not learn to read by third grade, they will experience great difficulty when challenged to "read to learn" throughout the rest of their education. And statistics reveal that if kids are poor readers in third grade, the majority will be poor readers in the ninth grade.

"Access to books and educational material is the single biggest barrier to literacy development in the United States and beyond. If we can solve the problem of access, we will be well on the road to realizing educational parity – a goal which has eluded this country for generations." — Susan B. Neuman, Ph.D. University of Michigan, Ctr. for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement

Make Your Mark on Literacy is an opportunity for young people to support childhood literacy. The goals for Make Your Mark on Literacy are:

- To raise awareness of the importance of childhood literacy.
- To encourage all children to enjoy reading and to read more by creating personal libraries.
- To foster childhood literacy by providing new and used books to children and to schools and libraries that need them.

To support childhood literacy, young people can implement one of the **Make Your Mark on Literacy projects**: collect new and used books to assemble BookShare Box Libraries and BookShare Bags; organize BookShare Read-a-thons to encourage reading and raise funds to buy new books; donate books to homeless shelters, waiting rooms at social welfare offices, or low-income pediatric



Cameron Payne is a fifth grade student who founded The Children's Book Legacy in order to collect and donate new and gently used children's books to his local community recreation center. He has donated over 3,000 books.

In addition, Cameron has donated books to a local children's hospital where he was once a patient. "Children's minds need to stay focused on school work and educational activities and not just get toys if they get anything at all while in the hospital," says Cameron. He strives to inspire young people to develop a life-long love for reading!



The **Vandalia Elementary School** held a book drive and collected over 500 books. Their Kids Care Club used a grant to purchase 100 canvas book bags, fabric markers and stencils. The Club delivered the bags to a local homeless shelter where they read stories to the children staying there.

clinics; or donate books to schools without libraries or with inadequate libraries.

GenerationOn will equip the youth with these tools and resources:

- **Issues Education** through easy-to-understand fact sheets on the importance of childhood literacy: *Literacy – Facts for Kids*.
- **Compassion Education Stories** to help young people understand the struggles of children who do not have access to books and the struggles of children with learning disabilities related to reading.
- **Activities** to kick off the project and educate the kids on the issue of literacy.
- **Service Projects** including creating and distributing BookShare Box Libraries and BookShare Bag Libraries to children in shelters, low-income schools, soup kitchens, pediatric clinics, and organizations such as Proliteracy and The Box Project.
- **Author Interviews** on books related to literacy such as *Thank You Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco and *Read for Me, Mama* by Rahaman Vasanti.
- **Caring Partner** that can provide additional information and/or outreach related to literacy such as Reach Out and Read and First Book.
- **Internet Resources** which include the websites of many organizations related to literacy and information to expand the literacy projects that kids choose.
- **Project Tool Kit** that includes resources such as logos, letters, forms and media tools including sample press releases and public service announcements.

Thanks to our founding partner, Hasbro, generationOn will award 200 mini-grants in the amount of \$250 each to support service projects that enable youth to "make their mark" on one of the following Make Your Mark Week issue areas: Animals, the Environment, Homelessness, Hunger and Literacy.