



Kids' Community

Youth, Fine Arts and Aging Equal FAME

(NAPSA)—Fourteen-year-old William Duncelman has a great affinity for the elderly. While volunteering at several local nursing homes, the Houma, LA, youth was concerned that the residents were not intellectually or emotionally stimulated. So, he decided to do something about it.

William—himself afflicted with an overactive immune system and several diseases generally associated with growing old—brought his love of fine arts to nursing home residents by organizing Project FAME (Fine Arts Motivating the Elderly), a program that distributes books, videos and music to the elderly. The concept has spread quickly to retirement and nursing homes across America.

At first, William gathered items from his own closet. Then, he asked friends in 4-H to help. “Most of my volunteers were with 4-H, and most of my donations came from 4-H clubs when I started this project. They helped me a lot with collection of materials,” William said.

Finally, William wrote letters to local businesses, and news of his work soon spread by word-of-mouth. Donations flooded his home. So far, Project FAME has distributed \$150,000 worth of fine arts materials in 35 states. Scores of young Project FAME volunteers visit nursing home residents, closing the vast generation gap with a thread of commonality—an appreciation for fine arts.



“By [people] donating, it shows them [the elderly] that people do care about them and that they can in turn contribute to society,” William said.

William has received many accolades for his work, but he has gained far more from the project than mere fame. “We’re concerned about the future a lot. But we can’t have a future without having a past, and there’s no way to celebrate the past without looking to elderly people. They’ve lived their lives and seen what it’s like. We can learn from them,” William said.

There are many youth like William in 4-H, a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. You can be part of the 4-H adventure and find your own way to contribute to the world around you. Learn how at www.4husa.org.