

# Kids With Heart

These five young people are old souls when it comes to kindness.

BY KRISTEN MANIERI

**ELIZABETH TRAN**  
**GREEN AND BEYOND**

"We're the next generation and we're the ones who can impact the environment most," says Elizabeth, as she explains her motivation for starting TeensGoGreenGlobal.org. Now 17, she started the website when she was 12 to spread awareness about how teens can protect the environment. Then in 2009, the pageant competitor and current Miss Teen Florida International created the Miss Miracle Pageant, an annual event that has raised more than \$22,000 for Children's Miracle Network. "I feel like I am such a blessed girl," says the Cypress Creek High School student. "The most important thing I can do to return the favor is to share my blessings."



**ANDREW WEINSTOCK**  
**SWEET SUCCESS**

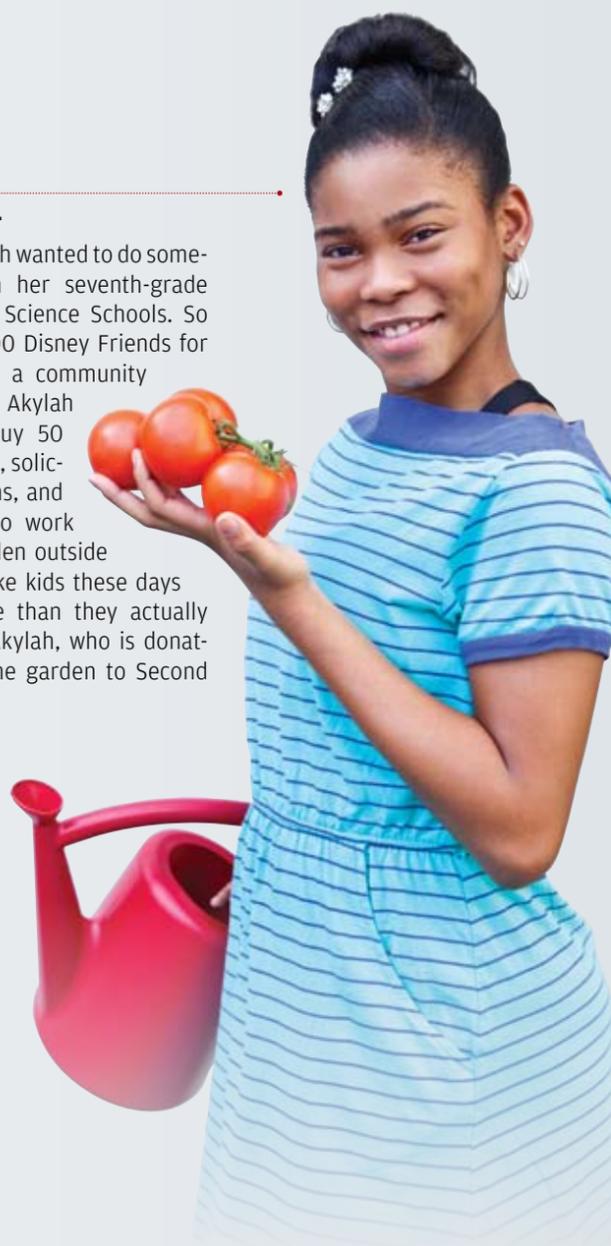
When Andrew decided to start collecting leftover Halloween candy for Operation Gratitude in 2009, he figured a reasonable goal was 50 pounds. He collected 911. In 2010, he collected 4,300 pounds. Last year, more than 2½ tons of candy passed through the 16-year-old's Winter Park living room on its way to Iraq, where American soldiers use it as a community relations tool with local kids. "I think it is important to let our soldiers serving overseas know that we are thinking of them and that we appreciate the sacrifices they make every day to defend our country," Andrew says.



**NIKKI KINGSLAND**  
**BLANKET COVERAGE**

After watching a class video on homelessness in 2009, Nikki collected 500 blankets and sleeping bags to help those in need. Since then, the 12-year-old has collected more than 5,000 blankets, sleeping bags and backpacks for Central Florida's homeless, along the way creating a website (nikkisblankets.webs.com) and a Facebook page to help her spread the word. "This experience has helped me realize that I have it a lot better than a lot of other kids my age," says Nikki, who hands out some of the blankets in person at Lake Eola on Christmas morning. "And it's taught us not to judge—these families didn't plan on ending up here."

NORMA LOPEZ MOLINA



**AKYLAH COX**

**A CULTIVATING SPIRIT**

Thirteen-year-old Akylah wanted to do something memorable with her seventh-grade presidency at Orlando Science Schools. So she applied for a \$1,000 Disney Friends for Change grant to build a community garden at her school. Akylah used the money to buy 50 Woolly Pocket plant kits, solicited some soil donations, and set her schoolmates to work building a vertical garden outside of the school. "I feel like kids these days can do so much more than they actually think they can," says Akylah, who is donating the bounty from the garden to Second Harvest Food Bank.

**RYAN HART**  
**SPEAKING VOLUMES**

Like any 13-year-old, Ryan gets asked to clean his room a lot. But last year when the Sanford Middle School student rolled up his sleeves, he unearthed more than 100 unwanted books and magazines, and rather than toss them, he decided to give them away. "Then I realized that if I have this many books, my friends probably did too," says Andrew, who was recently named a Disney Dreamer & Doer. Project Book Storm (projectbookstorm.weebly.com) was born and has since amassed more than 7,000 books, magazine and toys, all of which are funneled through the Seminole County school system and given to kids in the free lunch program. "I learned that if you try to make a difference, you probably will," Ryan says. "You should always try."