

Zach Bonner: Born to Help The Homeless

When Hurricane Charley hit southwest Florida in 2004, Zach Bonner was 7 years old. After hearing the news that those affected by the storm needed food and water, Bonner went door to door with his little red wagon asking for help. That little red wagon, combined with assistance from friends and family, eventually filled 27 semitrucks with food and supplies.

After raising awareness for Hurricane Charley victims, Bonner formed the Little Red Wagon Foundation in 2005. Since then, he has dramatically expanded the reach of his nonprofit to help kids in the U.S. and abroad in distressed situations.

"I've walked over 4,000 miles so far in four [cross-country] walks and have distributed over 6,000 backpacks with food and supplies to homeless," Bonner, now 15, says. "I believe God has a purpose for everyone, and this is the purpose for my life."

The work of the Little Red Wagon Foundation isn't just for those affected by poverty in the U.S., either. The organization has also reached out to the homeless overseas.

"I went to Uganda to distribute bars of soap to kids," Bonner says. "A long line formed, and I had never seen kids line up for a bar of soap. Homelessness is a universal issue."

The foundation is now in the process of building a youth center in Valrico, a suburb of Tampa, Fla. "[Homeless youth] can come off the street and will have a caseworker to help them," he says. "We'll also have other resources in the community for them."

In addition, Bonner has hosted 23 parties for homeless youth at Build-a-Bear and Chuck E. Cheese's stores, and he has

distributed more than 2,000 books to Title I programs serving students of migrant farmers.

The young philanthropist—whose story was turned into a movie last year (*Little Red Wagon*, directed by David Anspaugh of *Rudy* and *Hoosiers* fame)—offers practical advice to kids with dreams that seem too big: Just focus on a smaller goal.

“Don’t think you’re not qualified or doubt yourself,” he says. “Anything is possible. Choose one homeless shelter and have a canned-food drive. No matter how big or how small your project is, everything you do can affect the world and change it.”