

TRI-COUNTY TIMES

Huxley's Michael Wiechmann honored for work with homeless Story County Youth

By Lynn Marr-Moore Contributing Writer

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Most 10-year-olds cannot tell you what the word philanthropy means.

Not so with Michael Wiechmann of Huxley. He not only knows what philanthropy is, he wears it quite well. Michael, soon to be 11 years old, was recently honored by United Way of Story County as the Outstanding Youth in Philanthropy.

Michael was nominated for the honor by YSS after his work to provide a better Christmas for many who needed basic everyday items. Last year, Michael worked to collect cash donations and items to put together hygiene kits for homeless youth that live in Story County. He was able to assemble more than 100 hygiene kits, which were given to YSS.

Andrew Allen, CEO of YSS commented on Michael's honor:

"Michael and his family embody the concept of positive community youth development," commented Allen. "His interest in helping others made him the perfect candidate for the Youth Philanthropy Award."

As for Michael, he had this to say:

"We heard in the summer that I had been nominated for the award, but I didn't get my hopes up. I just kind of forgot about it."

When he heard that he had been chosen to receive the award at the 14th Annual Story County Philanthropy Day Ceremony on Nov. 15, he knew that now he had some different work to do.

"I had to write an acceptance speech," commented Michael. "I was really nervous about it, but I wanted to thank everyone who helped me and the panel that voted for me, too."

"He did a great job and we were all very excited and proud of Michael," his mom Lisa stated. "We are also grateful to YSS, who not only nominated Michael for this wonderful award, but came to the ceremony as support for Michael."

Michael said his success in accomplishing his project of gathering items for the hygiene kits was due to the contributions and donations from many different people, but mostly to his parents, Eric and Lisa.

"Mom and Dad helped me a lot," he said. "Mom took me to the stores so we could buy what we needed for the hygiene kits, and Dad helped pack it all up. I could not have done it without their help."

"Michael is amazing," said Eric. "He is a big-hearted kid and always looking out for others."

"He is always looking to help others," said Lisa. "He is an all-around good helper and always thinking of others."

What's next for this soon-to-be 11-year-old philanthropist?

"My little sister, Ella, and I are collecting diapers and baby wipes for YSS," said Michael. "We want to collect as many packages as we can. Andrew (Allen) told me that diapers and baby wipes are needed."

"Research shows that access to clean diapers reduces stress and positively impacts the development and health of children," commented Allen. "It's hard to believe it, but something as simple as providing diapers can improve the life of a child."

Lisa said that if anyone wants to donate money for this diaper drive, they can send it to YSS or leave it at 420 Kellogg in Ames. There is no specific size or brand — any kind of diapers and wipes will be accepted.

A Facebook page will be set up soon, but in the meantime, if people want to donate directly to Michael, they can contact Lisa by emailing lnw1978@yahoo.com to make arrangements for them to pick up items or monetary donations.

Moral of the story: You are never too young to make a difference. Michael is living proof of that. Mission accomplished and on to the next one.