

**BEYOND OUR BUBBLE**  
**2010 Teen Challenge Team**  
**Accomplishments for Family in Need**  
**Completed in Two Weeks**

<p>Old soiled carpet removed from house  Broken tiles removed from kitchen  New flooring professionally installed  New fence posts cemented in place  Fence rebuilt in backyard  New raised vegetable garden built  Organic vegetables planted  New timer system and sprinklers installed in front and back yards  Front yard hand-weeded of all dandelions  Yard over-seeded and topped with topsoil  Rain gutters cleaned out  New front porch post installed and painted  New darkening blinds installed in all bedrooms  Bathroom tub sanitized and bleached  New toilet seat installed  New faucet installed in kitchen  New stove/oven purchased and installed  Carpets cleaned  Lights fixed in the bathroom  New light fixtures installed in the bedroom  New shelves installed in bedroom closet  Door into furnace room installed correctly  Massive desk removed from back room  Step placed to enter attic crawl space  New fan/light installed in kitchen  Air conditioner installed in back bedroom  All junk removed from alleyway  Backyard toys cleaned</p>	<p>New shelves built in boy's room  Girl's room painted  Furniture painted in girl's room  New knobs on furniture in kids' rooms  Bathroom painted  Bathroom vanity painted  Bathroom drawers fixed  Kitchen drawer rebuilt and painted  Kitchen cupboards touched up with paint  Refrigerator in garage removed  Trash at side of house removed</p> <p><b>SPECIAL EVENTS / GIFTS GIVEN</b></p> <p>2-night stay at the Downtown Marriott  Brunch each morning  Dinner for four at Newport Bay Restaurant  Multiple picnic lunches  Hours and hours of babysitting  Day at the spa for the Mom  Taking the kids swimming at the Marriott  OMSI  <b>CHILDREN'S MUSEUM</b>  <b>OAK'S PARK</b>  Behind the Scene's Tour of the Giraffes at the OREGON ZOO  Opportunity to apply for Academic scholarship at the private school  Video of the Teen Challenge 2010  Framed Photo of the Team with the Family  \$100 cash</p>
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It is often said that those of us who live in Lake Oswego are living in a "bubble". We believe that it is time to go *Beyond Our Bubble*.

Beyond Our Bubble was created by Jacob and Deborah Shimkus, longtime residents of Lake Oswego. This mother and son team has worked together on many projects in the Lake Oswego area. Out of their extreme passion for helping others and the environment, Beyond Our Bubble was born.

*Beyond Our Bubble* is a local organization dedicated to providing opportunities for people in our community to give of themselves in creative and genuine ways for the benefit of others and our world. It is our belief that service is one of the most valuable experiences of life. Giving of ourselves not only helps those in need, but also brings

about a greater sense of community and global connection.

Encompassing both humanitarian and environmental concerns, *Beyond Our Bubble* provides three distinct opportunities for individuals to make a difference.

*The Green Teens* address environmental issues locally, nationally and globally, enabling teens to work together to bring about heightened awareness and action for the earth.

*Into Africa* organizes efforts with local students and community members to provide awareness, support, and a personal connection to school children and their families in Africa.

*The Teen Challenge* is an opportunity for qualified teens to receive specialized training and work with a team of motivated peers on projects for the benefit of others.

The Players:

*Jacob Shimkus* is a senior at Lakeridge High School in Lake Oswego. In 2006 he created the Green Teens in order to share his passion for the environment. This group embarked on service and education projects throughout Lake Oswego, evolving from a small school group to an award-winning team. In 2008, Jacob coordinated the community-wide Earth Event, bringing heightened awareness to the effects of climate change. In 2009, the Green Teens were recognized as finalists in an international competition to reduce carbon emissions - for their creation of the Lake Oswego Don't Be Idle Campaign. Jacob served on the Lake Oswego Sustainability Advisory Board in 2008-09, and co-chaired the Lake Oswego Sustainability Action Month. He has worked with Secretary of State Bill Bradbury on climate change presentations, and currently serves as the first Sustainability Director for Lakeridge High. Jacob has received extensive leadership training through the Lead America program in Boston, the Claremont-McKenna College Step-up To Leadership school in California, and the Northwest Sierra Student Coalition Leadership Training Program.

Jacob has volunteered at Tryon Creek State Park, a local homeless shelter, and a number of other venues, but it became apparent that this wasn't enough. Inspired by the helpful work of Extreme Home Makeover and Oprah's Big Give, Jacob decided to expand his focus to bring similar unique opportunities to the teens of Lake Oswego, resulting in the Teen Challenge.

*Deborah Shimkus* is first and foremost committed to being a mom. Additionally, she has dedicated her career to working in the non-profit world. With a degree in Psychology and a masters in Environmental Policy she has focused on volunteer coordination and outreach for environmental and social service organizations, including the Friends of Tryon Creek, and the March of Dimes. She has been active in the community and schools, serving on the Lake Oswego Commission for Citizen Involvement, Lake

Oswego Board of Natural Resources, Kenya Keys Board of Director, LOTAG PTA, Lake Oswego EcoNetwork and multiple volunteer positions within the schools. She has an extensive background in leadership development and is fully dedicated to empowering people to be and do all that they can - for themselves and each other.

**THE TEEN CHALLENGE** The Beyond Our Bubble Teen Challenge is a team of six high school students selected to work together to bring about lasting, personalized and positive change in the lives of those less fortunate. The team worked throughout the spring to master critical skills and develop networks, all leading up to a two-week Final Challenge project in the summer (think Extreme Home Makeover / Oprah's Big Give teen-style).

The IDEA: The Teen Challenge was co-created by Deborah and Jacob. When they saw shows such as Oprah's Big Give and Extreme Makeover Home Edition, they both felt that teens had the potential to give of themselves in similar ways if given the opportunity. One year ago – September – they set in motion a unique way for teens in Lake Oswego to do just that. Jacob wanted to do something that really made a difference in someone's life, and to show that teens could go beyond their apparent apathy and really get involved. Sharing Jacob's passion for helping others, and recognizing his maturity and commitment at the age of 16, Deborah also believed that a group of teens could do amazing things for others.

In December they had the framework made for Beyond Our Bubble with the three elements of local, global and planet-based opportunities. They spread the word about the Teen Challenge, inviting teens – through the schools, newspaper articles and email blasts - to apply to be on the 2010 team. Over 30 teens applied from throughout Lake Oswego. It was so hard to choose the Team. We wanted to include every student that applied. But after extensive interviews, the Team was selected and the work began. The Team was comprised of three students from each of the local high schools (Lakeridge and Lake Oswego) and students from all grade levels.

There are many opportunities for teens to volunteer in our communities, but few offer the training on how to be most effective in helping others. The Teen Challenged focused on doing just that. *We focused on illuminating all of the strengths and potential that teens have, but don't necessarily know they have.*

*Some premises we believe in:*

*We are not alone in this world.*

*Others would like to help – but just don't know how .*

*By communicating and reaching out, we can enable people to help others easily and effectively.*

*By helping others, we change lives.*

The team met twice monthly on Sunday afternoons for trainings, exercises and networking activities providing the knowledge and skills needed to successfully and creatively help others. This included trainings on project organization, resource development, networking, communications and sensitivity training. Additionally, team members ventured into the community to build critical connections with local businesses and organizations.

The Team also practiced giving through "Random Acts of Kindness" including making lunches and valentines to give to the homeless, helping a church in NE Portland clean out spaces, and handing out flowers to brighten people's day.

The team learned the need to establish their identity, designing their own logo, tagline (Helping Others – Changing Lives) letterhead and business cards for when they went into the community to ask for support. They also designed and wore their blue t-shirts everyday.

### **The Final Challenge:**

The entire experience culminated July 10 – 24<sup>th</sup> with the Final Teen Challenge. After months of trainings, networking, service, and fun, the team was ready to take on this two-week endeavor. The team was presented with a carefully-selected family in need from SE Portland. (families applied to participate). They watched a video of the family describing their situation - then got to work.

As soon as the kids met the mother, a single mom diagnosed with terminal cancer, raising a 3 year old and a 5 year old, they fell in love with the family, and became even more committed to their Challenge. They knew that they couldn't make the mother's cancer go away – but they could make their lives a little easier, and bring a little sunshine into their lives.

Faced with cracked tiles, soiled carpets, mold, drawers and cabinets falling apart, overwhelming weeds, rotting fence posts and broken appliances, the kids went to work. Much of it they could do themselves, but they knew they would have to leverage what they had. They called upon their friends to come help weed the yard while they worked with business owners to secure everything from landscaping to flooring.

They had to enter the adult world, calling instead of texting people, and being responsible for meeting contractors and service providers.

They were amazed at what they could accomplish when they told their story and requested help. One Team Member (Katie) asked a friend at school if she would like to volunteer to help paint. Not only did her friend help paint, but she offered to buy the paint for the project!

Similarly when we went to return a rented nail gun to Home Depot and told them about

the Teen Challenge, they reduced the price of the rental.

In a room donated by the New Thought Center for Spiritual Living in Lake Oswego, the teens met each day before heading out to the house, or into the business community. Then after a long day of painting, coordinating, building or networking, this is where they returned each evening, to put their feet up, eat some fast food, and prepare for the next day.

At all times, the care and comfort of the family was a priority. Team members coordinated to be sure the children were being entertained while the work continued. The children were in heaven having their very own teenagers to play with them every day.

**A HIGHLIGHT:** The Challenge began on Saturday, with meeting the family and previewing what all might be done. Planning and calls were made. By Tuesday morning, the team learned that TEAM DEPOT of Tigard's Home Depot was on board and would be able to send a team of volunteers out on Thursday – doing a variety of things, including ripping out the old carpet. The Team had to go into high gear to see if they could find a contractor to put in flooring – and to do so as soon as the carpet was removed. They also had to create a special vacation for the family so they would be out of the house during the disruption. And – while the family was gone, paint the rooms that needed painting. They had no money. But they had their brains and their networks.

One of the most rewarding moments was when they realized their challenge and suddenly all 6 team members were on their cell phones at once, calling their contacts to see what they could piece together. The result was nothing short of spectacular: after countless hours of calls, texts and emails, by Wednesday they had coordinated the carpets to be removed in the morning, a contractor to lay the flooring that afternoon and evening, paint to be donated, friends to help weed and paint, and a family vacation comprised of a 2-night stay at the Downtown Marriott, upgraded to include brunch and – after some last-minute negotiation, parking. Realizing that sending the family to a hotel would not necessarily be a vacation for the mom, the Team coordinated a package to include their babysitting at the hotel pool, escorted trips to OMSI, Oaks Park and the Children's Museum, and picnics in the park, as well as dinner at Newport Bay and a spa package for the mom.

While the family was 'staycationing' the teens went to work alongside Home Depot and the many other volunteers that arrived to help. They ripped out the old carpet and had laminate wood flooring installed, they pounded out broken tiles in the kitchen, fixed lights, rebuilt the backyard fence, painted etc. (see the comprehensive list for all that they did). The work continued even after the family returned as they built a raised garden for her organic garden, built shelves in the bedrooms and arranged for a new stove to be delivered and debris to be taken away.

They did the work that they could, and got professionals to do the work they couldn't. The kids did all the painting, built shelves, cleaned, built the gardens, weeded, repaired

drawers, cleaned the gutters, removed junk, and treated the children to constant love and attention. The teens networked with general contractors, electricians, plumbers, and other professionals to put in the flooring, replace the faucet and install a new fan. They worked side by side with the volunteers from Home Depot, learning how to install fence posts, electrical lighting and support beams.

The teens worked to not have to pay for services or buy items, but rather enable others to participate in the project. However, they did need to purchase some things – so they asked for donations from the community and set up a table at the Lake Oswego Centennial celebration.

The Challenge was not all about fixing up the house. In addition to all the home repairs, the Team gave the family their vacation, a Behind the Scenes tour of the giraffes (the mom loves giraffes), and paved the way for the oldest child to receive a scholarship to attend their desired school. On the final day, the Team had a party at the house where they showed their parents the work they had done, and presented the mother with a lemon tree (her favorite) and a DVD movie showing all their activities, a picture frame with their photos and \$100 cash, as well as certificates for the Zoo tour and the scholarship.

Looking at the list of all they accomplished in just two weeks – starting with absolutely no money, these are teens to be proud of. They worked hard, long hours – many times with only 4 or 5 hours sleep: hard physical labor, and even harder networking and coordinating efforts. There were the frustrations and the stresses that accompany any home-repair projects – multiplied by six. Add to that the challenges of transportation, as only three of the teens could drive and it was a 35 minute drive from their LO homes to the home site.

A typical day at the site was:

One of the teens was off in a borrowed truck to get dirt for the garden while another was working with 1-800-Got Junk to remove an old refrigerator while another was preparing to install a new kitchen faucet, one was painting a bathroom, one was on the phone encouraging Home Depot to donate a new stove and one was playing “dress up” with the children.

The best part was not how the kids learned to do real physical work, or even in learning to utilize their skills in networking and thinking outside the box. Rather it was the realization that those in need are real people with names and faces, and that they, as teens, can in fact make a difference in the lives of others. They were, in fact, Helping Others – Changing Lives.

With the completion of the 2010 Final Challenge, the Teen Challenge will now morph into Teens In Action with a focus of short-term episodic opportunities for teens to help others. For more information, go to [www.beyondourbubble.org](http://www.beyondourbubble.org).