



Good Deeds, Rewarded

Holly Tarbell Receives Award for Charity Work

BY SARA HALL | NB INDY

When she was younger, Corona del Mar High School sophomore Holly Tarbell saw people living in poverty and slums without the basic necessities and knew she had to do something help.

"I had the opportunity to travel when I was little," she said. "I saw many situations that needed help."

Tarbell said she saw families who had next to nothing and children growing up in the slums. It was sad, she said, to see that and then see other people's lavish spending and taking everything they had for granted.

"I thought it was hypocritical of the rest of the world to spend so carelessly, people only worrying about themselves" she said. "That was really disappointing to me. ... I felt like I needed to do something."

Her family has always been involved with the community and helping others, she said, so it seemed natural to her.

Tarbell said she started doing charity work when she was young through her church, Rock Harbor Church in Costa Mesa. They participated in many church sponsored charity events in the community. She and her family also took several trips to Mexico and visited

poverty stricken areas in Mexico with her church as well.

Tarbell, 15, recently received the O'Connor Mortuary Heart and Soul Award, which honors local residents each month for their exemplary and inspiring roles within the community.

"Holly so vividly depicts why the Heart and Soul Awards were created: To recognize the unsung heroes of our community who strive constantly to make a difference in the lives of others, simply because they love to do it," said Neil O'Connor, president and CEO of O'Connor Mortuary.

"I'm excited to get this award," Tarbell said. "I'm glad people can see this and know they can make a difference too."

She said compared to others she hasn't done much, but she has quite a list of accomplishments for a high school sophomore.

"You're never too young to start helping," she said.

She has spent two summers in Guatemala with Young Life, a Christian organization that reaches out to adolescents. During the Guatemala trips, Tarbell and other volunteers help with various projects in poor, middle and upper class communities.

PHOTO BY SARA HALL



Holly Tarbell received the Heart and Soul Award from O'Connor Mortuary for her charity work going back to when she was little.

Tarbell

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In Guatemala she worked with orphans and handed out food to the needy, she said. They went out and helped the local residents in their own community, she said.

"It changed my life," Tarbell said.

Tarbell said she went on her first mission trip to Guatemala after seeing an article about it in a Christian magazine. She talked it over with her parents and prayed about it, she said.

"I wanted to make sure I was doing it for the right reasons," she said.

Locally, she has spent time with at risk youth through a church in Watts. She, and other members of her church, work with the kids to try and break the cycle of poverty, drugs and gang activity that is common in that area.

Tarbell has also worked with the International Princess Project (IPP), whose mission is to establish self-sustaining enterprises in partnership with indigenous organizations that provide for physical, emotional and spiritual needs of women formerly enslaved in prostitution and advocate for women enslaved in prostitution around the world.

The organization sets the women up with jobs making pajamas. The pajamas are then sold through their website to customers around the world.

The purpose of the IPP is to give the women an opportunity to learn a marketable skill and become a part of a viable business.

"(The IPP) helps get them on their feet so they don't go back to that life," Tarbell said.

Tarbell has also volunteered at local beach clean-up events, soup kitchens and

youth outreach programs.

Next winter she plans to go to India with Harvest India, a Christian organization that works in the villages and slums of India. The organization builds churches, bible colleges, AIDS and HIV care centers, and provides shelter, food and education to orphans and safe drinking water to villages among other things. The organization also has a U.S. base in Costa Mesa.

Tarbell said a lot of her friends also do volunteer work and she tries to encourage others to get involved as well.

She suggests contacting a charity or outreach organization. Something as simple as volunteering at a soup kitchen can make a big difference, she said. And it can be fun and rewarding, she added.

It can be really simple and easy, she said, it's really about finding someone with a need and filling that need. Simple acts of kindness, she said, like helping someone with their groceries or donating to a local shelter, still help and are great for those people who don't have time to do a big project, like go on a mission.

"It all makes a difference," she said.

She also does regular teenage activities, she said, like rowing at the Newport Aquatic Center and hanging out with her friends.

"I have to balance it," she said.

She is considering spending the summer volunteering at a Young Life camp for kids. Tarbell said she would like to get into business in college and would like to go on more mission trips and continue to be involved with charity work. She has been volunteering and doing charity work for so long that it seems natural for her to continue.

"I felt called to do it," Tarbell said. "(As) I kept doing it and I could see the difference (it made)... And I can (still) see the need."