

# Inside Northside

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# Lemonade Brigade

When Kids  
Wanna Help

Business Owner

by Shawna Windom

SUMMER ON THE NORTHSORE may look a little different this year as an army of kids clad in bright yellow T-shirts and baseball caps are putting down the remote and setting out to make a difference. Invading local sporting events, neighborhoods and grocers, these kids are on a mission to raise money

for a cause of their choice by operating their own lemonade stands.

Their leaders are 12- and 10-year-old entrepreneurs Mary-Brent and Beverly Brown. These two sisters began the Lemonade Brigade with the hope that kids could see that it's never too early to start helping others.

"Lemonade stands are something we have done ever since we were little," says Mary-Brent. "We knew if we could get other kids involved, we could really make a difference."

## KIDS WANNA HELP

The young philanthropists began their own quest to do good with the founding of Kids Wanna Help, a non-profit corporation that teaches kids how to give back to the community by showing them how to raise and donate money to charities. The mission of the corporation is to encourage activities that "build confidence and self-esteem and encourage a lifetime of social and community responsibility."

The Brown sisters came up with the idea to begin



*Right:* Beverly and Mary-Brent Brown with Charlie Courville, a representative from Special Olympics of Louisiana.



pediatric oncologist to follow in her grandmother's footsteps, Mary-Brent knew the organization was the perfect match for her interests. The connection to the foundation, though, came through a friend of the family, Lisa Pellegrini, who was a close friend of Jennifer Leslie, for whom the foundation was created.

Jennifer was diagnosed with leukemia when she was a senior at St. Scholastica Academy in Covington. After a 14-year battle with cancer, Jennifer passed away at the age of 31. Her parents, Janet and Bob Leslie, began the J.L. Foundation as a way to support families of leukemia patients by helping them take care of common expenses not covered by insurances, such as plane tickets, hotel rooms, meals and gas. The foundation is operated solely by the Leslies, who donate 100 percent of its proceeds to leukemia patients. They feel their reward is in the approximately 130 families they have been able to assist since their beginning in

*Top: From left, front row: Jacqueline Lavin, Caroline Noel, Isabelle Pellegrini, Sarah Swiger, Beverly Brown and Chloe Grosch; back row: Honda of Covington's Don Bertus, Susan Quirk, Peggy Bridges and Louis Palmisano. Left: Honda of Covington's Don Bertus buys some lemonade from Jacqueline Lavin. Below: Jacqueline Lavin, left, and Caroline Noel prepare a cup of lemonade.*



such a corporation after Mary-Brent picked up a book that inspired her to help others. After reading "Miss Popularity," a story about a young girl who hosts a fashion show to raise money for her school, Mary-Brent began contemplating the many organizations she could help if she started her own fundraiser.

Bound and determined, Mary-Brent and Beverly hosted the first Kids Wanna Help fundraiser, a fashion show, last fall. Raising more than \$11,000, the girls agreed their charity of choice would be the J.L. Foundation, a local organization that offers financial assistance to families of leukemia patients.

Having always been interested in becoming a



## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THE LEMONADE BRIGADE?



"Anybody can own their own business; they just have to have the opportunity to learn how." —**Alex Harp, 11, who would like to help the homeless.**

"It's cool that kids started this and that just a couple of kids can do so much to make a difference." —**Virginia Price, 15, would like to help the Children's Hospital.**



"Even if you're a kid you can still do anything!" —**Victoria Harp, 11, who would like to help the homeless.**



"I learned how to start a business and that you can do a lot of stuff that can really make a difference." —**Stephen Satterlee, 11, who would like to help the Children's Hospital.**



March 2002.

When the Leslies were initially introduced to Mary-Brent and her goal to raise money for the J.L. Foundation, they had doubts about a 12-year-old girl wanting to help. Those doubts were soon laid to rest, though, as a very dedicated Mary-Brent proved she was a force to be reckoned with. "We were blown away; she is just absolutely incredible," Bob says. "I mean, if we just had one child in every community like Mary-Brent, just think of what a better world it would be."

The life of a friend, participant and beneficiary of last year's fashion show deeply touched Mary-Brent and Beverly. Madelyn Egan, from Mandeville, was an incredible six-year-old fighting a two-year battle with cancer when she decided she wanted to participate as a model in the show. Madelyn asked her parents if she could postpone her bone marrow transplant until after the show, because she didn't want to risk losing her hair or being too sick to participate.

Acknowledging Madelyn's resolve, Mary-Brent decided she would raise money to help Madelyn and kids like her buy wigs so that they could live without ever having to be self-conscious about their appearance. Madelyn passed away in April, but Mary-Brent and her sister are still determined to make good on their promise and continue helping kids like Madelyn through their struggle.

### THE LEMONADE BRIGADE

Today, Mary-Brent and Beverly are working hard to continue to support the J. L. Foundation, while motivating the crowd of their young followers in the Lemonade Brigade—another Kids Wanna Help fundraiser—along the way. "It's so inspiring to see someone our own age giving back to the community,"



15-year-old Melanie Mahlstedt says. "It's really cool to see what they have accomplished just because they wanted to get involved." Melanie, an SSA student, was a team leader for the Lemonade Brigade's first Young Business Owner Workshop, held in April at the Tchefuncta Country Club in Covington.

Planned by Mary-Brent and Beverly, the all-day workshop had a two-fold goal of helping kids get involved with a charitable endeavor and opening up a world of possibilities by teaching them how to run their own business. Presenting a very adult palate of lectures, the Brown sisters held the event to get kids keyed up about opening their own lemonade stands. Topics covering everything from how to market your business to fiscal responsibility were presented—all, of course, on a 3rd to 6th-grade level. With 18 encouraging speakers, the participants soon learned that they don't have to wait until they're older to open their own business. It's something they can do right now.

Speaker Trigg Burrage, a seventeen-year-old entrepreneur and magician from Slidell, taught the four tricks to getting a business up and running like magic. He encouraged the workshop participants to find their passion, make a company image, reinvest into their business and give back to the community. Trigg says he found his passion for magic at the age of four through



a cheap trick kit. From then until today, he has been practicing and doing what he enjoys and has since realized he can accomplish anything if only he puts his mind to it. "I've been doing what

I love and getting paid for it,"

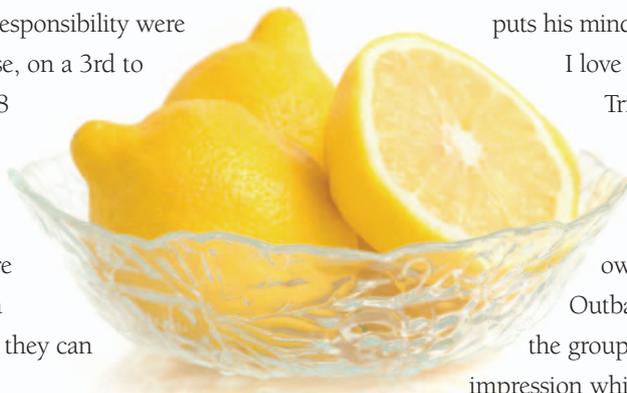
Trigg says. "I turned a hobby into a job and I love my work."

Matt Gallagher, the owner of Covington's Outback Steakhouse, talked to the group about how to make an

impression while being interviewed and

how to interview your own potential employees. Using his love of sports, Gallagher told the group that you always want to maintain the best team possible in operating a business.

"You're only as good as the individuals you surround yourself with," Matt says. "I have to be tough when it comes to choosing a member of my



*Above: Lemonade Brigade 2008.*

*Below (from left): Eli Murphy, Michael Arabie, Jr., Hayden Whiteman, Christian O'Brien and Oliver Murphy.*



## 2008 KIDS WANNA HELP FASHION SHOW

Saturday, October 18

Tchefuncta Country Club

Benefit for the J.L. Foundation to support families of leukemia patients

Fun for the whole family. Silent auction.

Modeling open to girls in grades 4-7.

Limited to 40 models.

A Pre-Fashion Show Workshop will be held at Tchefuncta Country Club Saturday, October 11. This is an enjoyable all-day event that prepares the girls to model. It offers them guidance on a variety of topics, such as choosing their best colors, skin care, dressing appropriately, the importance of exercise and a healthy diet, resisting peer pressure and why giving back to their community is so important.

For more information, applications and tickets, see [KidsWannaHelp.com](http://KidsWannaHelp.com).

team, because I'm very competitive and I always want to surround myself with the best team possible."

Shannon Mangun, a college professor and therapist, spoke about being creative while running your business and making sure you love what you do. Shannon's passion is for crafts, and she always takes time to incorporate her love of creating things into what she does daily. She emphasized that you don't have to reinvent the wheel to do something creative; you just have to make it better. "The person who invented Velcro was inspired by a weed," Shannon says. "Think of all the things that can inspire us each day to make what we do even better."

After listening to the speakers discuss how to run a successful business, the kids were given a chance to learn about the five charities that the 2008 Lemonade Brigade will support and what they offer to the community. Presentations were made by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, the Parenting Center of St. Tammany Parish Hospital, the Covington Food Bank, Special Olympics of Louisiana and, of course, the J. L. Foundation. Each Lemonade Brigade team makes its own decision about which of the five their summer lemonade sales will support. In order to ensure they would make a good decision, the kids asked hard-hitting questions, such as, "If I give my money to your charity, how much will be spent on overhead and how much will go to the cause?"

After a summer of selling lemonade—and baseball caps with the Lemonade Brigade logo—the teams will gather for an awards ceremony and pool party. At that time, the money raised will be distributed to the charities, and awards will be given to the most

successful teams and to the kids who whose efforts stood out over the summer.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

With underwriting help from local sponsors who share Mary-Brent and Beverly's dream of building a better tomorrow through the compassion of youth, the sisters plan on making both the fashion show and lemonade stands annual Kids Wanna Help events. All of the underwriting received is used to cover the direct expenses of the fundraising activities.

Supporters include: Honda of Covington, Uniforms by Bayou, Friends of Tchefuncta Country Club, Mandeville Party Co., artist Wess Foreman, Parish National Bank, Art Time, Funland Golf & Games, Kids & Family Northshore, Body Sugaring USA Day Spa, Hornbeck Offshore, The Hingle Family, Lisa Pellegrini, D.D.S., G. Brent Brown, D.D.S., Living, Inside Northside, Junior League of Greater Covington and TravelCorp International.

To show their appreciation for the support, the Lemonade Brigade recently kicked off its first lemonade stand at Honda of Covington, one of the Lemonade Brigade's first and most significant sponsors. When Laurie McCants, owner of Honda of Covington, learned about what Mary-Brent and Beverly were doing, she just knew she had to get involved and become a supporter of the girls. "I thought it was amazing the amount of effort these younger girls put into this project," Laurie says. "They have such good intentions and really huge goals. They are children that put so much heart into it."

## BUSY, BUSY GIRLS

Aside from Kids Wanna Help, both



Hamming it up for the camera are Madelyn Egan, left, Beverly Brown, right, and Mary-Brent Brown.

Mary-Brent and Beverly juggle a very exhausting schedule at Kehoe France Northshore with student council and cheerleading. Mary-Brent is also involved with Beta Club and Beverly is involved with art and several sports. With so much on their plates already, how do the girls manage to organize these extensive charitable fundraisers? “It takes a lot, but we manage to do it in little tidbits of time,” Mary-Brent says.

Beverly sums it all up: “We are just so fortunate to have so much. We need to give back, because there are a lot of people out there who need our help.”

“It’s so emotional for me that your own children would be an inspiration,” Stacy Brown, Mary-Brent and Beverly’s mother, says. “You think you’re supposed to be guiding them

through life and, in some ways, I think that they’re guiding us.”

To learn more about Kids Wanna Help and the Lemonade Brigade, visit [www.kidswannahelp.com](http://www.kidswannahelp.com). Kids Wanna Help is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible.

*Editor’s Note: Mary-Brent is the youngest of the eight students chosen from 226 nominations who received the 2008 Louisiana Young Hero award given by the Louisiana Public Broadcasting and the Rotary Club of Baton Rouge on April 16. The award honors outstanding students in grades 4-12 who have excelled in the classroom, served their community, overcome adversity and inspired others through their deeds.*