

# YOUNG PIONEERS

BY JULIE JACOBS

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Three amazing young souls, Nicholas, Adele, and Max, fearlessly initiated their passions and made impressive marks on our world.





## PuzzlesToRemember

### Max Wallack

During her last few months living with Alzheimer's disease, Max Wallack's great-grandmother Gertrude was in and out of hospitals and nursing facilities. Her circumstances, though difficult, ultimately inspired him to establish a nonprofit to help other people suffering from the debilitating illness.

"When I visited her, I noticed that patients working on puzzles seemed more alert and less agitated," e-mails Max, who through online research learned how puzzles can engage and stimulate Alzheimer's patients as well as slow the disease's progression. "After her death, I decided to collect puzzles and bring them to the facilities that had helped care for her. That's how PuzzlesToRemember got started."

He launched his nonprofit in 2008 in memory of Gertrude, and in the years since—thanks to many puzzle manufacturers, grants and both puzzle and monetary contributions from the general public—has donated nearly 36,000 puzzles to more than 2,600 institutions worldwide caring for Alzheimer's patients. In addition to maintaining collection points in his home state of Massachusetts, Max locates facilities elsewhere for people looking to gift puzzles. He also has co-created, with Springbok Puzzles, a puzzle series specially designed for Alzheimer's patients.

Max's interest in Alzheimer's extends beyond PuzzlesToRemember. The 18-year-old senior at Boston University conducts Alzheimer's research in the university's Molecular Psychiatry in Aging Laboratory, and has co-authored related scientific publications as well as the book *Why Did Grandma Put Her Underwear in the Refrigerator? An Explanation of Alzheimer's Disease for Children* (half the profits of which support Alzheimer's organizations). In addition, he recently co-founded Clergy Against Alzheimer's to advocate for the cause in Washington, DC.

"I am always surprised by the numbers of people wishing to donate large numbers of puzzles, and I especially enjoy receiving photos of individuals with Alzheimer's who are happily working on the puzzles that I developed," notes Max, who has been recognized with numerous public-service awards. "I plan to continue running PuzzlesToRemember, and I plan to continue doing Alzheimer's research."



## Adele's Literacy Library

### Adele Taylor

Adele Taylor has always been an avid reader. “My mother actually always tells people that the only thing that would keep me quiet as a baby was her reading to me,” she laughs. “So naturally, I just grew up loving to read.”

When the now 19-year-old sophomore at Spelman College noticed at age 13 that some of her classmates were “struggling on words that I thought they should already know,” she went home, googled illiteracy, and came across a startling statistic: one in five adults in the United States doesn't know how to read past a fifth grade reading level. She felt she had to do something and in 2008 established Adele's Literacy Library (ALL), a nonprofit aimed at empowering people worldwide to read. Her organization collected 300 books at its first fundraiser and has since amassed hundreds of

thousands more, donating them to schools, libraries, daycare centers and other nonprofits like the Boys and Girls Club.

ALL also uses grants and contributions to purchase books, and now has an Amazon web store from which it gets a portion of the proceeds. Additionally, it runs various programs that have helped make it a global force in promoting literacy. Among them are Read ALL You Can, ALL Ambassadors and Storytelling with Adele. Another is ALL Says Go!, which focuses on areas with the highest illiteracy rates; in 2012, ALL

erected a library in Kenya equipped with solar-powered computers and 4,000 books.

Adele, ALL's CEO, has received many accolades, including the Nickelodeon HALO Award. Her biggest challenge, she says, has been balancing her ALL duties with her college studies toward becoming an attorney.

“When I first started out, I didn't imagine it to be this big. My end goal really was just to read to people and to have fun with it,” she offers, noting the support from family and friends and avowing that ALL “will always be a huge part of my life.”

## Gotta Have Sole

### Nicholas Lowinger

Shoes and self-esteem often go hand in hand for kids, which is one of the main reasons why Nicholas Lowinger launched Gotta Have Sole Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit that donates new shoes to children in need. The 17-year-old Rhode Island resident began volunteering at and giving clothing to shelters with his mother at age five, and over the years has spoken with kids who cannot go to school or play sports because they do not have appropriate, well-fitted footwear. He has seen homeless children wearing shoes that were held together with just scotch tape.

“A lot of [the kids’] peers bully them because their shoes are falling apart, or they have to share shoes with their siblings,” says Nicholas. “So I knew that new footwear was definitely the way to go, because I thought that could make the biggest impact in their lives.”

He started collecting and donating footwear as his Bar Mitzvah community service project, an endeavor that evolved in 2010 into Gotta Have Sole. Since its inception, the foundation has

provided new shoes to more than 20,000 homeless kids in 35 states, with the help of corporate sponsors that include Stride Rite, Timberland, Zappos, Reebok and Kohl’s, and fundraisers and shoe drives run by schools and other organizations. On board as well are the Mark Wahlberg Youth Foundation and the Boston Red Sox.

While Nicholas tries to make as many donations as possible in person—he and his family also try to connect with local shelters wherever they vacation—he relies on an



army of volunteers in communities across the country. His foundation recently initiated Gotta Have Sole school-based clubs, for which it offers guidance and chapter packets.

“As kids, we can be extremely creative and come up with amazing ideas,” says Nicholas, the recipient of the 2013 Muhammed Ali Humanitarian Award and

an inaugural Peace First Prize, among many other honors. “We all have the power to really change the world for the better.”