

### Jessica Collins A Place to Sleep Nomination:

The purpose of A Place to Sleep is to provide beds and mattresses for children who are currently sleeping on the floor, couch or sleeping multiple people to a bed. This service allows them to get a good night's sleep to increase concentration, school grades, self-esteem. This ultimately enables the child to grow into a productive, peaceful, and contributing member of society. This is the mission statement of the non-profit organization, A Place to Sleep.

Inspired by the movie *The Blind Side*, 10-yr-old Jessica Collins was determined in 2009 to provide a bed for someone who didn't have one, preferably a child. Jessica discovered through the Family Resource Center at her school that there were children in her school who did not have a bed. From there, she rallied her family, church and community to collect bed frames, bedding and money to purchase mattresses for 6 children. Driven by this success, she expanded into Shelby County and is working with the local school system's Family Resource Center to identify needs. The goal is to help as many children as possible when the need arises. Jessica has organized volunteers and coordinated fundraisers that have provided beds for over 1,050 kids not only in Shelby County, but other Kentucky Counties as well (Jefferson, Woodford, Henry, Spencer, Fayette, Oldham, Bullitt, Martin, Franklin, Trimble, Marion, Washington, Anderson, Grant, Hardin and Kenton). Children are recommended by the Family Resource Coordinators at each school in Shelby County. She has helped children from every school in the Shelby County School System. Some children that are too young to be in school have been recommended by Head Start, Salvation Army, HANDS program, and ALC Pregnancy Center.

Because of Jessica's efforts, 1,050 children in Shelby County, Kentucky and surrounding counties are able to get a good night's sleep. She believes, as are the beliefs of A Place To Sleep, that:

- A good night's sleep is important to a child's health,
- A good night's sleep will help a child's concentration and improve school grades,
- Having a bed of their own improves a child self-esteem.

Her organizational skills along with her sweet yet confident personality have enabled her to include the entire community, bringing various civic and religious groups and businesses together to get the job done. She's always kept God based so that God gets the credit and not her. She is grateful and appreciative for all who volunteer. Her sincerity in believing that she is actually helping people and that she is making a difference.

This was written by Jessica:

"Have you ever spent the night with a friend, sleeping several on one bed or on the floor? As most of us have, we know that it is not comfortable, and you are tired the next day. Imagine sleeping like

that every night and it being a "normal" night's sleep. Now imagine going to school 5 days a week and having to perform well and being held to the same standards as the kids who got a good night's sleep.

The kids assisted by A Place to Sleep have shown improvement in attention, grades and attitude (per the schools.) Knowing that I am affecting their lives in a positive way is what motivates me to continue. I was only a fifth grader. This goes to show that anyone of any age can find their passion and act on it. People with ideas can make a difference. Trust me, those little ideas you come up with in the car or in your dreams can help your community in a way unimaginable. I encourage you to help in some way."

This is why Jessica is being nominated for the Bridges Over Barriers Award. SHE GETS IT.

She has captured the attention of local, regional, state and national leaders. She has brought together various faiths and civic groups in a common effort. Jessica's continuing effort to provide beds for children is one part of an innovative solution to help children succeed in school and go on to become healthy citizens, good parents, and contributing members of society. Jessica is a role model for all, but especially the children she helps as several have said they want to grow up to be like her and some are now volunteers. Jessica is a staunch advocate for children and their well-being, speaking to various groups on their behalf. Best of all she is a senior at Collins High School this year, and she is already making plans to keep this organization going for when she goes to college next fall.