

The young hear call to charity

By David Filipov

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An appetite to help

Dylan Mahalingam of Derry, N.H., used to get scolded for leaving food on his plate.

“I would tell him, ‘Dylan, do you know how much food you waste?’ ” said his mother, Krithika Mahalingam.

That changed in 2004 when the family took a trip to India. Dylan saw poverty. He saw children his age — 8 at the time — working in the streets. He started looking at his dinner from a different point of view.

“I started thinking, ‘How could I get this food over to another place?’ ” said Dylan, now a 15-year-old sophomore at Pinkerton Academy in Derry. “I wanted to make a difference.”

He aimed high. He would try to eradicate hunger and poverty, improve access to education, advance human rights, promote tolerance and gender equality, reduce the incidence of child mortality and HIV/AIDS, support a just economic system, and ensure environmental sustainability. These are among the Millennium Development Goals established in 2000 by a summit of 189 governments and heads of state. Soon after his India trip, Dylan, at age 9, created a charity and called it Lil’ MDGs.

Using the Internet to mobilize more than 20,000 people in 40 countries, Lil’ MDGs has helped raise \$780,000 for victims of the tsunami in Indonesia, and more than \$60,000 for hurricane victims. It has helped improve schools in Tibet, India, and Uganda, and sent school supplies to disadvantaged students in the United States.

Dylan travels the world to network and help raise awareness and win grants. He also finds time for tennis, karate, friends, and Sonic the Hedgehog.

“You don’t have to give up everything,” Dylan said. “But if you are passionate about something you can make a difference.”

http://www.boston.com/community/stories_to_inspire/articles/2010/12/21/youngsters_who_wanted_to_make_a_difference_step_up_to_help/?page=full