



CANS *for* KAILEY

A deacon and a BYC are helping a young woman who is going blind to see more clearly. And it's helping their ward and community see more clearly too.

By Richard M. Romney
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This is a story of vision lost and vision gained. It's the story of Kailey I. of eastern Utah, USA, who as a baby was so eager to enter this life that she came early and spent her first four and a half months of life in the newborn intensive care unit. Doctors said she might not live long and that if she did survive, she wouldn't be able to see or speak. She would spend her life in a wheelchair, they said, and she would suffer from cerebral palsy. Today, Kailey and her parents say that Heavenly Father must have had other plans. The years have been filled with prayer and days of ward and family fasts, multiple priesthood blessings, repeated surgeries, several three-and-a-half-hour drives to doctors, and even a two-and-a-half-month period of total blindness. Despite all that, Kailey is a

vibrant, happy 12-year-old who just advanced from Primary into Young Women.

But her eyes, diseased from birth, have never provided more than limited sight. At age 10, Kailey permanently lost vision in her left eye. Now her right eye—which has a field of vision so small it's like looking through a straw—is getting worse.

Kailey, ever the optimist, has been learning braille, a language that allows her to read by feeling raised dots with her fingertips. "Braille is going to be part of my life," she says. "So I decided to start learning now. That way, I'll have a head start."

But to communicate in Braille, Kailey needed expensive equipment, including a special computer.



The Goal

Though many people in the community—such as those at her father’s work as well as in the ward—would have gladly paid for the equipment, Kailey decided she could raise money for the equipment herself by recycling aluminum cans. The problem: it would take *a lot* of cans. When the ward deacons quorum president, Carter N., learned about her goal and dilemma, he came to the rescue and brought others with him.

“My uncle had a metal shed,” Carter says. “He said I could tear it down, recycle the metal, and make some money to help Kailey, so I did that with his help. But I kept thinking about her idea to recycle cans. ‘Couldn’t we collect enough cans to help pay for her equipment?’”

The next Sunday at bishopric youth committee (BYC) meeting, Carter shared his feelings and presented a plan. “The youth and the leaders talked it through,” Carter says, “and we all said, ‘We can do it’” to help Kailey collect cans. “We’ve been gathering cans ever since.”



BUILD SPIRITUAL UNITY

“Fellowshipping is an important priesthood responsibility. Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums are to act in concert with the sisters under the direction of the bishop to ensure that each person is welcomed with love and kindness. . . . We all need to work together to build spiritual unity within our wards and branches. . . . It is your duty to reach out.”

Bishop Gérald Caussé, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, “Ye Are No More Strangers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 51.



WHAT IS BYC?

BYC stands for *bishopric youth committee*. The bishop presides over the committee, which is composed of the bishopric, one of the bishop's priests quorum assistants, the deacons and teachers quorum presidents, the Young Women class presidents, and the ward Young Men and Young Women presidents. The bishopric may invite others to attend as needed.

The committee usually meets monthly. The bishop may conduct, or he may assign someone else to conduct. Before each meeting, the bishop reviews and approves the agenda with the person conducting, which may include planning ways to:

- Identify the needs of the youth and plan activities that meet those needs.
- Help youth live and promote Church standards.
- Encourage youth to participate in meetings and activities, including seminary.
- Fellowship youth who are investigating the Church, have recently been baptized, or are less active.
- Evaluate past activities to see if their intended purposes were fulfilled.

Committee meetings provide youth leadership opportunities and instruction. "One of the best things I learned by being in BYC is how much we can accomplish when we all work together," says Adam L., 16. "It brings us together to know we're doing something for someone else and it's helping them."

To learn more about BYC, see *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, 18.2.9.

A Huge Collection

Gathering may be an understatement.

"The BYC took the idea and ran with it," says Mark D. Holmes, Kailey and Carter's bishop. "The youth made plans, put up posters, and did all the work. The rest of the ward joined in too. Pretty soon people who weren't members of the Church saw us out gathering cans and were eager to get involved." Many businesses invited the youth to put up posters and set out boxes labeled "Kans for Kailey."

Although the original goal was just to recycle as much as possible, during the next few months, more than 14,000 aluminum cans were collected by the youth, the ward, and the community. "The bishop let us store them in his shop building," Carter explains. "We completely filled that, plus a couple of horse trailers." After the cans were crushed to save space, they still filled a storage shed that's 12 feet wide, 12 feet deep, and 8 feet tall.

"At first I didn't think we could get that many cans," says Michael P., 13. "But when people remembered they were doing it for Kailey, they all seemed to have more desire to help."

"We were doing for her something she couldn't do entirely for herself," says Kinsley K., 12. "In a small way, we were following the example of the Savior."

The money collected from the recycling provided more than enough money to purchase the Braille equipment. "I really like the equipment," Kailey says. "I use it a lot."

What's more, the youth, the ward, and the community all gained a vision of what they could do when they worked together.





An Important Welcome

But there's more to the story. Because of her physical challenges, Kailey hadn't always felt like she fit in at church. She and her younger brother Kenston, 10, both have autism, which makes it tough for them to express their feelings and interact with other people. Kenston also has Tourette's syndrome, and so he makes repeated, quick movements and utters sounds that he cannot control. Even though their testimonies of the gospel are strong, Kailey and her family felt like they might be a distraction to others, and so they sometimes left Church meetings early or didn't come at all.

However, when the youth started gathering cans, Kailey joined in every activity. She quickly made friends with the youth and the youth leaders in the ward.

"She joined right in and did everything," says Rachel M., 17. "And by being there, she got to see not only what we were doing, but she experienced our attitudes about doing it as well."

"Kailey's always nice," says Tommi B., 12. "When you see her, she's always the first one to say hi."

"I just want to be friends with everyone," Kailey says. "It really means a lot to me to be accepted."

As Kailey's parents saw how well she was fellowshipped by the youth of the ward, they gained an increased vision of how the ward family could support their family. They felt more welcome at meetings, including bringing Kenston along. Ward members have come to understand that Kenston will sometimes unexpectedly sit in the choir seats and then return to his family after a few minutes or that he may make a noise he can't stop, and they also understand that his friendship is quick and genuine.

"It didn't take long before the youth caught the vision that getting Braille equipment was never really the true goal of this project," Bishop Holmes says. "The real goal was to let Kailey and her family know that we love them and that we need them here to make our ward family complete." **NE**