



# CHAIN REACTION

BY SHANNA BUTLER

*For a group of teens in Boston, one good turn led to many others.*

**Milly Astwood (above) was a friend to Jonathan Ubri (below), who was a friend to Bernard Lewis (below right) and many others. Now Jonathan is on a full-time mission, and a chain reaction that started with a simple invitation will keep growing.**

**J**onathan Ubri and his friends in the Boston First Ward, Boston Massachusetts Stake, know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet of God. They also know that what he says is true: “Every [convert to the Church] needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with ‘the good word of God’ (Moroni 6:4).”<sup>1</sup>

Jonathan, Milly Astwood, and Bernard Lewis know these words are true because they have lived them, and they have started a chain reaction of goodness in their lives and in the lives of others.

## A Friend

*“I invite every member to reach out in friendship and love for those who come into the Church as converts.”—President Gordon B. Hinckley<sup>2</sup>*

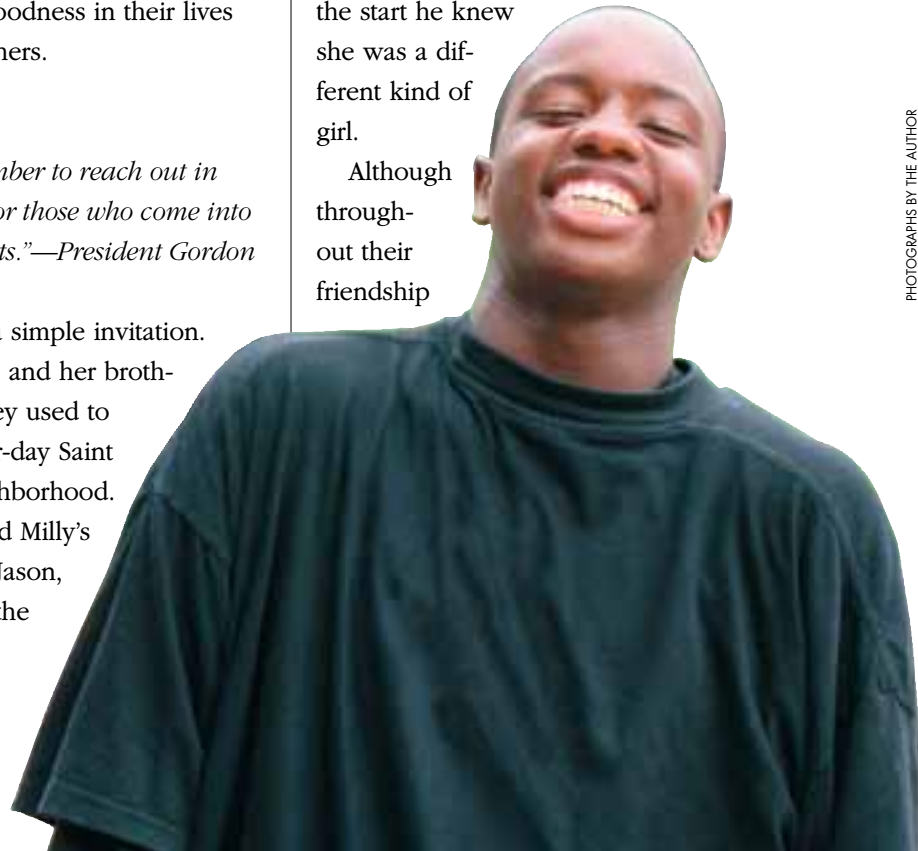
It all started with a simple invitation. When Milly (now 19) and her brothers were younger, they used to play with some Latter-day Saint children in their neighborhood. Those children invited Milly’s brothers, Henry and Jason, to play basketball at the meetinghouse and to attend church. When

they were teens, Henry and Jason joined the Church and eventually went on missions. Milly started going to church with her brothers when she was 8, and when she was 14, her parents allowed her to be baptized.

About a month after her baptism, Milly met Jonathan at school.

“The first day that I met her, I asked her what she was doing and she said she was going to the temple,” says Jonathan. Right from the start he knew she was a different kind of girl.

Although through-out their friendship



PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR





“Every convert needs a friend in the Church, someone who will be close to him, someone who will answer his questions, someone who will look after him and keep him coming. He needs a responsibility. He needs something to do. He won’t grow without responsibility. He must have a responsibility. We must take care of those who come into the Church as converts. They need constant nurturing in the gospel.”

**President Gordon B. Hinckley, “Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 3.**



Milly would talk to him about the Church, Jonathan wasn’t really interested. Finally, she decided to invite him to a youth dance.

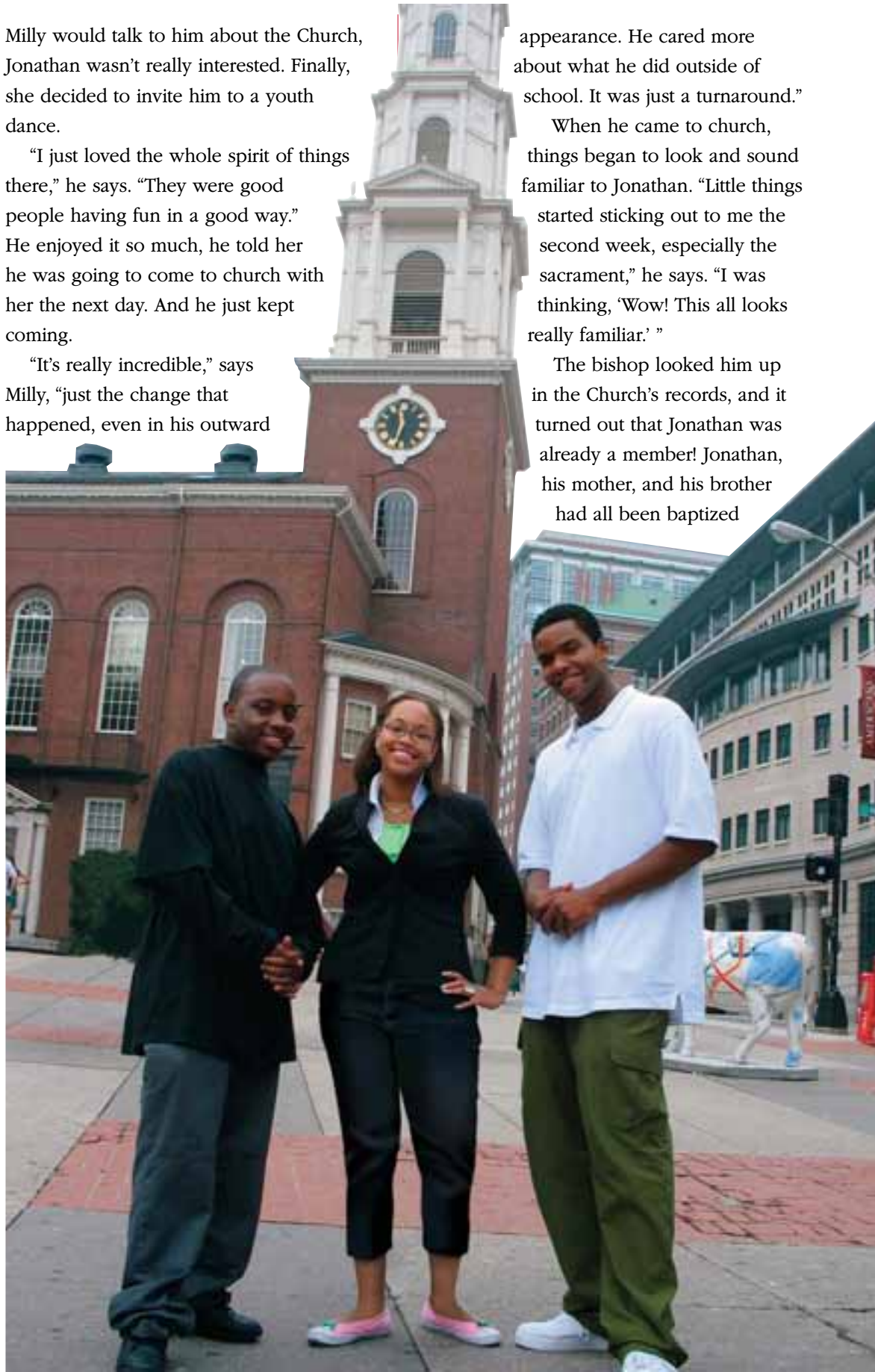
“I just loved the whole spirit of things there,” he says. “They were good people having fun in a good way.” He enjoyed it so much, he told her he was going to come to church with her the next day. And he just kept coming.

“It’s really incredible,” says Milly, “just the change that happened, even in his outward

appearance. He cared more about what he did outside of school. It was just a turnaround.”

When he came to church, things began to look and sound familiar to Jonathan. “Little things started sticking out to me the second week, especially the sacrament,” he says. “I was thinking, ‘Wow! This all looks really familiar.’ ”

The bishop looked him up in the Church’s records, and it turned out that Jonathan was already a member! Jonathan, his mother, and his brother had all been baptized





**W**hether they're on Boston Common (opposite page) or at church, these friends work together to help others and bring them closer to the gospel.

when he was 11.

"I just did because my mother did, and the same goes for my brother." Jonathan's family stopped attending church a month after their baptism. "It really didn't mean much to me because I didn't know much about the Church," he says.

But when Milly invited him back, the Church began to mean a lot to him. "Coming back, I never felt out of place," he says. He was welcomed warmly and ordained to the priesthood when he was 14. Before he went on his mission to Rio de Janeiro, Jonathan was a member of his ward's Young Men presidency.

And how has living the gospel changed his life?

"How hasn't it? It was a complete 180. There was so much potential in me that I never would have realized."

### **A Responsibility**

*"Every convert who comes into this Church should have an immediate responsibility. It may be ever so small, but it will*

*spell the difference in his life."*—President Gordon B. Hinckley<sup>3</sup>

Milly's invitation to Jonathan was followed by many more invitations from Jonathan to others—other members of the Young Men who were not attending church. He and the other active young men in the ward called their invitations "Operation Mormonation."

Not only did they get on the phone at the start of Young Men class to invite everyone on the roll who wasn't there to come to church, but they also assigned those young men responsibilities. Those responsibilities helped the young men feel welcome and useful.

Quorum presidencies worked with the bishop to remind people of activities, and each young man was given the opportunity to help teach lessons, organize activities, set up for Mutual, and teach with the full-time missionaries. They also had to call and report on the status of their assignments.

"It was basically just learning how to serve each other and to delegate. The





**T**he first time Bernard came to church he helped clean the building so that he could play basketball afterwards. His first visit was followed by many others because the young men in the ward welcomed him and helped him to gain a testimony.

Church is really run through quorums. Everyone has an important role in each quorum, not just the presidents,” Jonathan says.

Serving in their quorum made the young men of the Boston First Ward more dedicated to the gospel. “I know that loving each other and teaching each other and serving each other in the Church will bring us closer to the Savior,” Jonathan says.

#### **The Good Word of God**

*“And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God.”—Moroni 6:4.*

Bernard Lewis, 16, received a few invitations from the Boston First Ward. The first was from the Young Men president, Rob Smith. Brother Smith, Bernard’s neighbor, saw him outside playing basketball one day and invited him and his brother to come play at the church—after they helped clean the chapel.

Bernard was happy to come, and when he got there the other young men immediately welcomed him. “They were like family to me. I really liked it there,” he says.

Brother Smith invited him to church, and as Bernard started to attend church,

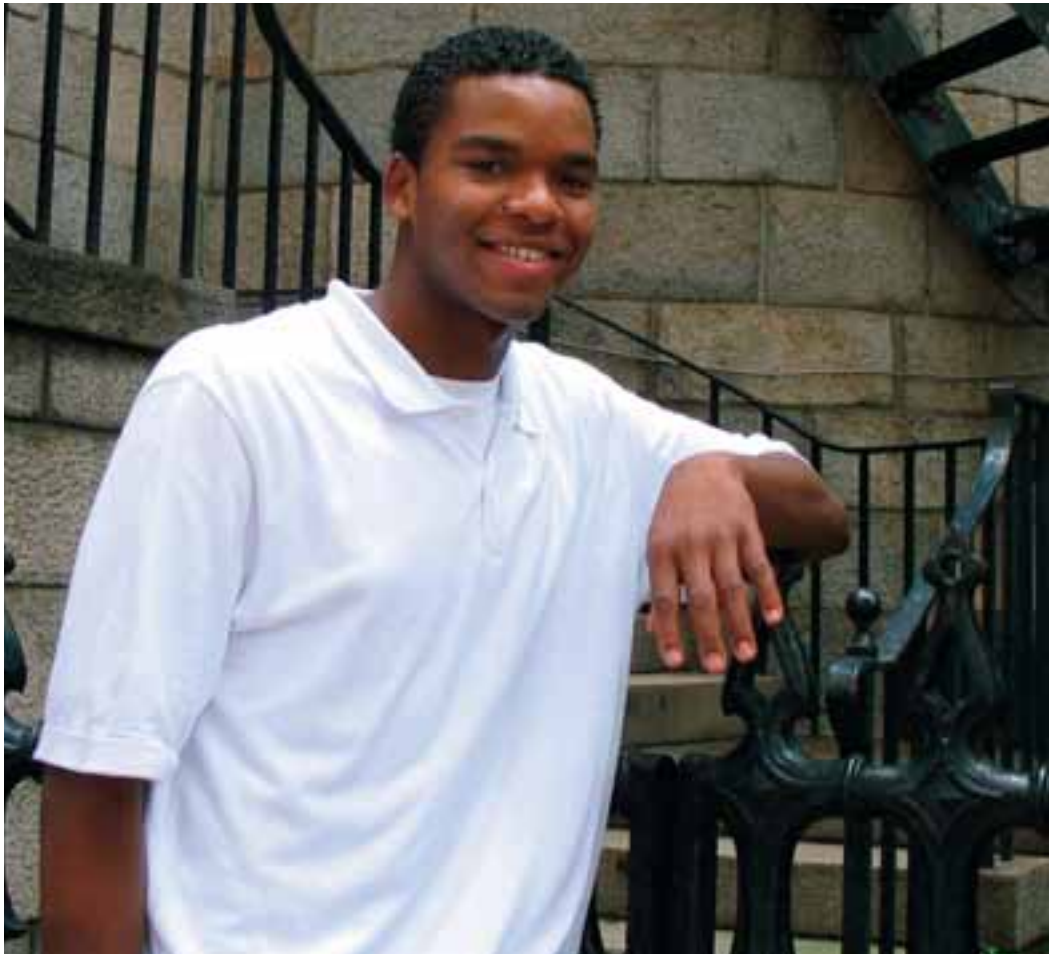
youth conference, and other activities, he decided to stay because it all made him feel so good. He says that during this time Jonathan was a good example to him. “I look up to him,” he says. “He’s like my big brother.”

Jonathan agrees. “We became really close. I call him my little brother now.”

And when Bernard’s mother allowed him to join the Church, Jonathan was able to baptize him.

Besides the invitation to come to church and be baptized, the young men in the ward also invited Bernard to read his scriptures. His testimony of the scriptures led him to join the Church,





**T**hese Boston youth know that you can start a chain reaction in your city too. So invite a friend to come to church and to come unto Christ. You never know how many people you will affect for good.

and he continues to study them regularly.

“The scriptures lead you to the right place,” Bernard testifies. “You need to read the scriptures to know what you believe in and ask the Lord if they are true. The scriptures are important. They are the word of the Lord.”

**You Are Needed**

*“I ask each of you to please help in this undertaking. Your friendly ways are needed. Your sense of responsibility is needed.”—President Gordon B. Hinckley<sup>4</sup>*

It all started with a simple invitation. Henry and Jason, Milly’s brothers, were invited, so they invited Milly. Milly was invited, so she invited Jonathan. Jonathan was invited, so he invited Bernard and many other young men to the gospel. And now that Jonathan is going on a mission, he will continue to invite people to Christ.

“It’s a pattern, and it’s pretty incredible if you think about it,” says Milly. She says if you have a friend you want to invite to church, “Just do it. The worst thing that could happen is they’ll say no. If you really care about someone, then you should invite them because you could change their life.”

Jonathan says, “There’s a chain of people we affect with our actions. Not just one person.”

So, go ahead. Invite someone. And start a chain reaction. **NE**

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Learn how to be a member missionary by studying *Preach My Gospel*.

**NOTES**

1. “Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 47.
2. “Some Thoughts on Temples, Retention of Converts, and Missionary Service,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 51.
3. “Inspirational Thoughts,” *Ensign*, July 1998, 4.
4. “Converts and Young Men,” 48.

