

Mile-High Perspective

In the Denver, Colorado, area you'll never be completely disoriented, even if you're in an unfamiliar place. All you have to do to get your bearings is look up to find the Rocky Mountains, which cut their rugged outline along the western horizon.

Similarly, Latter-day Saint youth living around Denver know how to find their spiritual bearings in a world of uncertainty and shifting values. By looking to the Lord and standing up for their values, they stand apart among their peers.

What You Say

Latter-day Saint teens seem to agree that one of the things that distinguishes them more than just about anything is using good language. Brett Hellbusch, 18, of the Denver Colorado North Stake, says, "Language at school is so atrocious. The way we talk is drastically different."

BY DAVID A. EDWARDS
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Teens in the Denver, Colorado, area stand out by standing tall.



Ian Griffey, 17, of the Arvada Colorado Stake agrees. “You can totally tell when someone is LDS. They don’t swear.”

Sometimes there is pressure. “Kids try to get me to cuss because they think it’s funny,” says Ethan Forbes, 15, of the Arvada Colorado Stake. “But actually they think it’s cool that we don’t cuss.”

Beyond avoiding profanity and vulgarity, LDS teens’ language is also different in other ways. As Amanda King, 16, of the Arvada Colorado Stake says, “We don’t degrade people.”

Kathryn Jones, 18, of the Arvada Colorado Stake says that an LDS teen stands out “by the way you treat another person with tolerance and patience. You don’t feel like you need to put somebody down, because you know who you are and who other people are—you’re a child of God.”

What You Do

It can be challenging when your standards are not valued or understood. “I struggle too,” says Kathryn. “Who doesn’t? For instance, the no-steady-dating rule. It’s hard. People don’t get it. People make fun of you sometimes. And sometimes they say things that are supposed to shake your faith, but you have to stay strong even though you struggle.”

For example, when Kathryn’s basketball team competes in a tournament camp that lasts through Sunday, her parents pick her up on Saturday night. “You have to deal with your teammates’ rolling their eyes and stuff when you explain our beliefs,” she says.

Dress standards also distinguish these teens. “We wear modest clothing,” says Amanda. “No tank tops; no low-cut blouses. Boys wear clothes that are not too baggy. Especially prom—members of the Church wear appropriate dresses, so you can definitely tell them apart.”

Like most LDS teens, these teens often get asked why they live by such strict standards. Kathryn responds, “When you know the truth, you want to live it and share it.”

Left: Ian Griffey tries to follow Nephi’s example: “His whole attitude—‘I will go and do’—is cool. You should put yourself aside and truly focus on what the Lord asks you to do.”

Right: Kathryn Jones looks up to someone special in her life: “My hero is my brother, who’s on a mission in Oregon. He is my spiritual, all-around hero. He shares the gospel with no fear. He’s not arrogant about it. He finds ways to share it. He’s always prepared to answer any question. He never passes up an opportunity to share what he knows. He’s always there for me to help me with problems.”





Why deviate from it when you know it's what you should be doing?"

A sense of being on the Lord's side strengthens these teens' resolve to maintain their standards despite being different. As Ethan says, "It's a great feeling to know you're one of the few."

Ian offers this perspective: "It's OK to be different from everyone else—if you are following Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ."

Music and Other Talents

Though they often receive attention because of what they *don't* do, these teens also get noticed for what they do, especially when it comes to developing and sharing their talents.

Music is something many of them seem to have in common. "Most LDS kids are involved in music—drama, band, choir, orchestra," says Amanda, who plays violin in her school orchestra and sings in the school choir.

Kathryn, who also plays violin, agrees. "Music is big," she says. "It's seldom that you find an LDS kid who isn't in band, orchestra, or choir." In fact, although only a few students at her school are LDS, so many of them participate in music that the hallway where the band, orchestra, and choir rooms are located is sometimes called "the Mormon hall."

Brett has played trumpet in the school band and sung in the school choir. He first grew to enjoy singing by participating in ward and stake youth choirs.

The Church also played a role for Brandi Hadfield, 17, of the Denver Colorado North Stake, in getting started in the theater. When she was younger, she participated in a ward road show. "I felt silly at rehearsals," she says. "It was a silly part. But when the lights went up, my heart beat, and I did awesome. I loved that feeling, so I decided to try out for more."

Since then she has performed in several school and community productions. And, she explains, she had a secret weapon that once helped her land a leading role in a musical—Primary. "They auditioned four different girls and looked for who was the most confident singing. I was

Left: Brandi Hadfield, a theater enthusiast, loves family and children: "With me, family comes first. I love spending time with my family. And I love children. Especially with community theater, there are a lot of little kids. I like youth theater better than school plays because it's more for children. I have a big heart for children. I've been babysitting for Relief Society enrichment night since I was 12."



PREPARING FOR A MISSION

As the young men in the Denver, Colorado, area turn their minds to missionary service, they start seeing things a little differently.

Stuart McFadden, 19, of the Denver Colorado North Stake, who was recently called to serve in the Mexico Tijuana Mission, says, "A mission is two years of sacrifice, of showing gratitude for what we've been given. It's a chance to serve the Lord and your fellowmen."

He feels that his most recent Church calling in the Primary helped him prepare to teach the gospel. "I got to teach the really young kids—CTR 5," he says. "They're full of energy and light. Just seeing the light in their eyes is a powerful thing. When you're talking from the heart, you can see what they feel, that they know it's the truth."

His Primary calling was also helpful in other ways. "It definitely helps you deal with some stressful situations," he says.

He has also been studying the Book of Mormon, which he says is "the truest book on earth." In addition, he has studied *Preach My Gospel*, noting how it encourages a sort of spiritual self-reliance. "It always suggests that you write down notes and pray about it," he says. "It's like it's saying, 'Here's what you're going to teach. Take it from here.'"

For Ian Griffey, 17, of the Arvada Colorado Stake, the closer a mission gets, the more focused he gets. "Before, it wasn't on my mind

as much," says Ian. "In interviews with the bishop it always came up, but I would just say, 'Of course I'm going on a mission.'"

But, he says, things are slightly different now. "I'm shifting my emphasis," he says. "When I was 16, it was a little more about fun and stuff. Now I'm more focused on the Lord. A mission gives you a purpose."

Keeping that focus can be hard, says Ian. "One part of me wants to just mess around with my friends. But a mission shifts your focus, especially with dating and the world's view of dating."

But Ian has one bit of advice that has helped him: "Keep your focus on what you truly want for your life."

Brett Hellbusch, 18, of the Denver Colorado North Stake started thinking seriously about a mission when some of his older friends started leaving. "A mission is something you really ought to do," he says, "but you actually have to be ready and worthy to go."

Part of Brett's preparation has included sharing the gospel now. He frequently goes with the full-time missionaries to teach, and three of his friends have been baptized and confirmed in the past few years. From these experiences, he has witnessed the effects of the gospel of Jesus Christ in people's lives. "You can see how much happier they are," he says. "You can tell that their lives are better because of it."

These and other experiences have also built up his motivation for serving a mission. "You have to come to a point where you really want to go, not just because your parents want you to," he says. "Have that desire yourself, and work for it. Go on a mission for the Lord, yourself, and the people you're helping to convert."

The Savior is at the center of his desire to serve a mission. "Because of Him, you can return to live with Heavenly Father," he says. "He atoned for all your sins, so the least you can do is go on a mission." **NE**



Above: Stuart McFadden says that a mission is "two years of sacrifice, of showing gratitude for what we've been given." He studies *Preach My Gospel* and the Book of Mormon, which he calls "the truest book on earth."

Below: Brett Hellbusch loves all kinds of music and has shared his musical talents in many ways. He has also shared the gospel with his friends, three of whom have been baptized. "You can tell that their lives are better because of it," he says.





Right: Ethan Forbes loves family, friends, and the outdoors. He knows that "having higher standards keeps you safe. You're happier."

Below: Amanda King is in a wheelchair because of a birth defect affecting her spinal cord: "I just try to do everything. I try to be a regular person, because I am."

"The Church helps me realize that my family will be together forever and that if someone dies, I'll see them again."

"I believe that the Church has helped me throughout my life to be more confident and do more things."



picked for the lead, I think, because I had been singing for years in Primary."

For these youth, sharing talents is a way of reaching people at a spiritual level. As Brett says, "Music's a really good way to get spiritual things across."

Going to Seminary

Another thing that makes these teens stick out is how they stick together—particularly before school.

"I'm surrounded by Mormons before school," says Amanda. And Brandi describes a similar phenomenon at her school: "People tell me, 'I see you in your Mormon circle every morning.'"

This "Mormon circle" is formed, quite simply, because of early-morning seminary. The teens meet to study the scriptures and then go to school and talk together for a while, usually before most others have arrived. People notice them there and sometimes ask questions. "The most common question is 'How could you get up earlier?'" says Brett.

Their demeanor also makes them stand out. Brandi says, "The Mormons are the happy ones in the morning because we've already been up for a couple of hours."

It's not always easy, though. "Getting up for seminary is hard," says Ian. "It's a good way to start your day, but with the stress of school, it's hard to get up." But he sees mostly the benefits. "When you go, the day isn't as stressful," he says.

For Brandi, it builds a foundation. "Because of seminary, if I'm having trouble with anything, I know what to look for in the scriptures; when I give a spiritual thought, I'm able to go deeper and not just say, 'I like this scripture.' When I study at night, I understand it a lot better."

Standing Tall

Teens in the Denver area choose to live by Church standards because of the perspective they gain through the restored gospel. This perspective allows them to get their spiritual bearings in a confusing world so that they can clearly see who they are

and where they're going. And by standing tall, they really stand out. **NE**

