

The Point

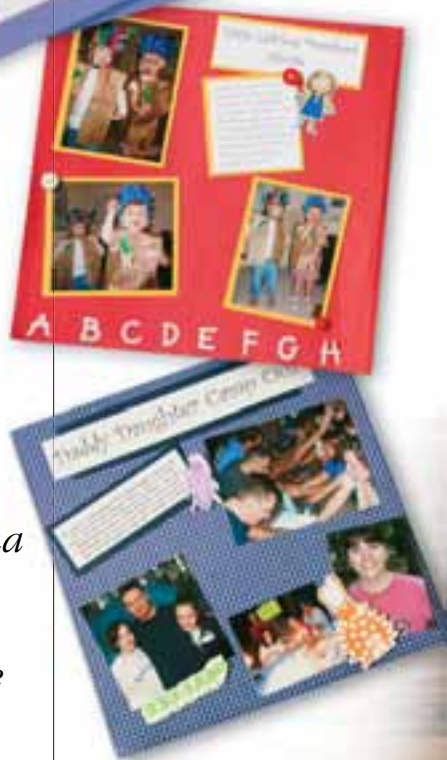
BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY
Church Magazines

Make it work for you.” That’s how Mia Maid Megan Ross sums up her advice about participating in Personal Progress.

But her mother, Deborah, the Young Women president of the Colfax Ward, Greensboro North Carolina Stake, adds this additional suggestion, which makes Personal Progress even more meaningful: “Use it to help those around you.”

The point is that Personal Progress can be a blessing *both* to you and to others. By working on six Value Experiences (three required and three elective) and one 10-hour project in each of the seven

What’s the reason for Personal Progress? These young women in North and South Carolina know it’s to help both you and those around you.



Young Women values, you can strengthen yourself as well as those around you. (See *Young Women Personal Progress* [2001].)

Rachel's Good Works

Megan and her mother point to another family member, Rachel, as an example of what that means. Rachel has already completed her Young Womanhood Recognition. She has enjoyed the self-improvement and the service to others so much that now she's setting additional goals, mentoring others in the program (including her mother), and constantly looking for ways to help other people.

For example, one of her Value Projects was about modesty, and the ward young women all worked together on a modest fashion show. Then Rachel put together her own modest fashion magazine, using photos and ideas from the event. After that, she and her mother went to a fabric store, picked out fabric, cut it, pinned it, and sewed a modest dress.

Another time, Rachel worked with all of the young women as well as the adults in the ward to put together a cookbook. Everyone learned about cooking, shared recipes, and the adults noticed that the youth took an interest in them, too. That prompted

Rachel Ross (right) and the other young women in the Colfax Ward, Greensboro North Carolina Stake, are using Personal Progress to bless their lives and the lives of others.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD M. ROWNEY

Rasha's Participation

Rasha Stacey, a Laurel, sees how Personal Progress translates easily into opportunities to serve. She often helps other young women work on their Value Experiences. For example, another Laurel, Rachel Odom, set a goal of learning how to cut hair. "She cuts her own but had never done it on anyone else," Rasha says. "So twice last year, my family invited her over. She cut all of the girls' hair, including my mom's. I really loved what she did, and we all had fun. It was a great learning experience—for me and for her."

Rasha helped Macy put together a cookbook. "No one was giving her recipes," Rasha says, "so I gave her several from our family and asked the other youth in the ward to bring some to church. Pretty soon everyone was helping her."

When Rasha found out that Malina Tracy, a Beehive, would be the only one to move up from Primary that year, she came to her aid. "I know what it's like to feel left out, and I didn't want her to go through that,"



MOM AS YOUNG WOMEN PRESIDENT

What's it like to have your mother as Young Women president? "It's kind of cool to have her working on her Personal Progress at the same time we are," Megan Ross says. "She knows how to get us excited about it."

For example, it was her mother's idea to hold a Personal Progress day, with a different activity to correspond to each value. "For example, for Good Works we made cookies for the elderly," Megan recalls. "For Individual Worth we acted out skits based on the Book of Mormon, and for Divine Nature we had a healthy eating course, and so forth."

And how does mom feel about being president? "I get to spend time with my girls, doing things Heavenly Father would be pleased to see them do," she says. "What could be better than that?"

Personal progress has helped the young women of the Lexington Ward, West Columbia South Carolina Stake (below), to strengthen their testimonies and put their values into action.





Sarah Shurtleff of South Carolina likes looking for meaningful Personal Progress projects, such as making this quilt, which she plans on giving to her own children someday.

Rasha says. “So I talked about Personal Progress, and I told her what I loved when I was a Beehive, and how much the other young women love her.”

Rasha also helped her sister Karen, a Mia Maid, to memorize her Scripture Mastery verses for seminary and worked with their mother to help Karen put together a memory book.

Meilian, a Laurel, was having a hard time thinking of projects, so Rasha invited her over to cook meals and desserts every Saturday for a month. “I did it for my Knowledge project,” Meilian says. “I learned to make food for my family. And now when I go to college I’ll be able to cook

for myself. That helps me be self-reliant, because take-outs get expensive.”

Meilian says that Value Experiences are great because they carry over into everyday life. “At school I’m in a fashion merchandising class, and for one of our big projects we produced a fashion show,” she says. “Because we’d already talked about modesty as part of Personal Progress, I chose to wear modest clothes for the whole thing. The experiences that go with each value help you have a better understanding of how to turn values into actions.”

Macy says Personal Progress is meant “to prepare you for life through personal experiences, and to build self-confidence through preparation and spirituality.” Rasha agrees. “Take scripture study, for example,” she says. “It builds you up for when you have trials, so you know where to find answers.”



ADDITIONAL PROJECT IDEAS

Here are some ideas from North and South Carolina:

- Megan Ross of the Colfax Ward in North Carolina took a photo to represent each value and then framed them. For example, Faith showed someone praying, Individual Worth showed her sister looking in the mirror, and Good Works showed another sister sweeping the floor. The photos now hang on her bedroom wall.
- She collected testimonies from her grandparents, immediate family, and best friends.
- She videotaped Primary children answering gospel questions and then invited ward members to watch the video.
- She emphasized being nice to her family for two weeks and then wrote about it in her journal. “It worked,” she recalls. “It changed the feeling in our home.”
- When Kirby Quada, another young woman in Megan’s ward, organized a stake dance with approval from leaders, Megan and others joined in. “We decorated the cultural hall,” Kirby says, “and we had a photo booth and a dance instructor, too.”
- Meilian Campbell, of the Lexington Ward in South Carolina, enjoyed learning about personal finances from her grandmother. “She told us to start by paying tithing,” Meilian says. “Then she explained budgeting and what it means to be thrifty.”
- Corinne Campbell, also from the Lexington Ward, sewed a modest dress. “When people tell me they like it, I enjoy telling them I made it myself,” she says.
- Christy da Rosa, from the same ward, decided to paint a scenic panorama on her bedroom wall. “My grandfather was a painter,” she says, “and that gave me the idea.”
- Rasha Stacey, from the same ward, read from the Book of Mormon in both English and French every day. She also watched only appropriate movies and checked in advance to know their content.

Sarah’s Service

In another part of the West Columbia Stake, Sarah Shurtleff, of the Irmo Ward, also recognizes that Personal Progress encourages personal growth as well as service to others. “When we have the Evening of Excellence and the New Beginnings programs, we talk about what we’ve done throughout the year,” she says. “If I find out that other girls need help, I help them. I’m not assigned to or anything, I just help where people need it.”

She likes to brainstorm ideas with girls, leaders, and parents to come up with meaningful projects. Once she helped her mother complete a quilt for her niece and then used what she had learned to make another quilt on her own. “I’m going to save it for my own children someday,” she says. Sarah taught a friend how to play hymns on the piano, and they performed “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer” (*Hymns*, No. 26) at a stake talent show.

But one of the most meaningful parts of Personal Progress for Sarah is that “they have you read scriptures and write in your journal about what they mean to you. Personal Progress is about who you are—a daughter of God. I’ve learned that I can do anything I put my mind to, as long as I work hard and don’t quit.”

Sarah’s mother Catherine, the ward Young Women president, sums it up this way: “Personal Progress builds their testimonies, helps them set goals and work to achieve them, and then to feel that sense of accomplishment as they finish what they set out to do. It’s exciting to see what they are able to do. It builds faith and strengthens testimonies.”

Perhaps it all comes back to what Rachel Ross says. “Personal Progress teaches us things we need, and it builds our testimonies along the way. It’s spiritual improvement, but it’s also emotional, physical, and mental improvement. The point is it’s really well rounded if you let it be.” **NE**

SELF-RELIANCE

One of the great gospel principles encouraged in Personal Progress is self-reliance. Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve emphasized these aspects of self-reliance:

- Nourish yourself spiritually through scripture study.
- Provide for yourself temporally by emphasizing education, physical health, employment, home storage, resource management, and social, emotional, and spiritual strength.
- Use resources and worldly goods wisely.
- Be prudent, wise, and conservative in financial matters. (See “Becoming Self-Reliant,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 64.)

Could you set Personal Progress goals in some of these areas? What could you do to help yourself become more self-reliant?

