

INDEXING

BY MINDY RAYE HOLMES

Mania

Going to the temple is not the only way to help redeem the dead.

Take it from these youth who have learned a fun way to participate in family history.

After coming home from a Mutual activity one night, twins Garrett and Blake, 12, and older brother Trevor Gneiting, 15, raced to see who could get on the computer first. But it wasn't games or surfing the Internet they were after. All three of them wanted to work on the FamilySearch indexing they had just been trained to do at a local family history center.



“We all enjoyed doing it,” Garrett says. “It was like a game we could always do because our mom couldn’t get angry about it.”

FamilySearch indexing is a way to help with family history by using a computer to get names off of records and make them available online for those searching for ancestors to find.

Providing this service is something that will affect many people because it helps those looking for their ancestors’ information so that it can be submitted to the temple.

“I know that I’m helping to find people that maybe wouldn’t have had the chance to have their work done,” says Amanda Pace, 18. “It’s cool to know that even if I don’t go to the temple for them myself, I can help them get there.”

WHAT IS FAMILYSEARCH INDEXING?

Basically, indexing is the process of turning written information into a form that computers can read and search. FamilySearch representatives have made digital images of historical documents such as books, census records, immigration registries, birth, marriage, and death certificates, and other records, which they have sent back to the Church.

When you log into the system and request a “batch,” you are sent copies of those historical documents. You type in the information you see on the record into boxes the program provides. The batch is also indexed by a second person to make sure it is right. A third person checks to see if there are any inconsistencies and decides what is correct.

Then the information is sent back to the Church and put on the family history Web site. Then when someone searches for a name that has been indexed, the information that was on the record will come up.

“Doing indexing made me feel happy because I was helping others by writing down names so they could look up those names and do their family history,” says Jason Trauntvein, 12.



Starting the Project

These youth and others from the Payson 20th Ward in the Payson Utah Mount Nebo Stake started indexing after their bishop challenged them to index 250 names each to qualify to go on a trip. He also extended the challenge to the leaders as well as the youth.

“We challenged them that we leaders could index more names than they could,” says Bishop Steven Pace. “The losers had to serve the winners dinner . . . and the leaders ended up serving the youth dinner.”

Four months after the challenge was issued, the youth had far surpassed the original goal of 250 names per person and had indexed more than 50,000 names altogether. The leaders realized the goal was too low and upped the challenge to 1,000 names, and they made the challenge not only between the leaders and youth, but also between the different quorums and classes.

“The priests quorum needs to pick it up,” says Kendall Little, 17, who has indexed more names than any of the other teens. “We don’t want to be one of the bottom two classes, because then we have to do dishes on the trip.”

Peeking at the Past

The youth were originally motivated by the competition, but now they say they do indexing because it’s fun, and they know they are helping those who lived before.

“I like to think about the people we are doing this for and how much they must

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MINDY RAVE HOLMES AND COURTESY OF TRUDI HYER



Using their computer skills, these teens have had some amazing experiences while indexing. Some have felt that they were receiving heavenly help as they worked. Others have discovered the significance of doing temple work.



HOW CAN YOU BEGIN INDEXING?

Getting involved in FamilySearch indexing is easy. All you need is a computer and an Internet connection. Go to www.familysearchindexing.org and click **Volunteer**. Everything you need is on the Web site, from installing the program, to step-by-step instructions on how to set up an account, to getting started and indexing each specific project. There is even a short video tutorial with time-saving tips. The program is easy to use and indexing a batch only takes 30 minutes, and you can save your work or quit at anytime if you don't finish.

For more information on FamilySearch indexing and how it works, see "FamilySearch Indexing," *Ensign*, Aug. 2007, 34–41.



appreciate it," says Miranda Hyer, 14. "When I first started indexing, I thought they were just old people who lived a long time ago, but they're not that different from us."

One of the big differences between the times of the people in the records and today is the writing style used. The youth said the only hard thing about indexing is trying to figure out how the names are spelled when the writing is hard to read.

"Some of the cursive writing is like hieroglyphics," says Jason Trauntvein, 12. "My mom would have to come and help me."

Being able to distinguish names that were difficult to read taught the youth that they were doing the work of the Lord and that He was helping them.

Amanda says there were times when she would think she knew what a name was while she was indexing and then



just have a feeling that it was something else. “Then I’d look at it again and I’d see that it clearly said the name I was feeling,” she says. “Those were really good experiences.”

Living in the Present

Having experiences helping those who lived in the past has also helped these youth strengthen their testimonies and live in the world today.

“Doing indexing helped show me the importance of temple work,” says Kendall. “I also know that God is willing to help us and give us the answers if we’ll just listen to Him.”

The willingness to provide this service is something that has changed them. And it’s also given them something worthwhile to do during their free time.

One time when Trevor had some extra time after taking a biology test in a class, he got on a computer and started indexing. Other students were on the computers playing games although the teacher told them not to. “The kids who were playing games got in trouble,” Trevor says, “but the teacher just told me to finish up my batch.”

The youth say being able to index names has been a satisfying endeavor, and counting the names they have indexed is way better than any score they could get on a computer or video game.

Looking to the Future

All of those names the youth indexed are real people who lived before, so there are thousands of Heavenly Father’s children being affected by their efforts with indexing, people Kendall says he hopes to meet one day.

“If you think about it, you’re kind of making lots of friends that you’re going to go meet eventually when you die,” he says. “Then they’ll all come and say, ‘Thanks for doing my name,’ because without you their work may have never been done.”

Receiving so many blessings has taught these youth and their leaders something many Church members have discovered: indexing is easy, fun, rewarding, and engrossing. **NE**



THE URGE TO INDEX

Kendall Little, 17, has led in his ward by indexing more than 18,000 names. He says when he started indexing, people told him it would be hard to put down, but he didn’t believe them. “But I did get caught up in it, because I started doing it anytime I had free time,” he says.

One of the great experiences Kendall had with indexing was once when he opened a batch that looked blank. He was about to send it back when suddenly he noticed very faded names. He decided to give it a try. “Somehow I was able to read them even though it looked like someone had written them with lemon juice,” Kendall recalls. “I know Heavenly Father helped me.”

Experiences like that and other things he’s noticed since he began indexing make Kendall an advocate for FamilySearch indexing. “I



would highly recommend participating in this marvelous work to anyone seeking comfort, an increased testimony, an increase of the Spirit in their lives, a greater understanding of the plan of salvation, a closer relationship to God, or a more tightly knit family,” he says. “For me, indexing did all this and more.”

