



Jack McDermott

Medfield Foundation's Youth Volunteer of the Year for 2010

"How can I help?" seems to be Jack McDermott's mantra, and his putting that attitude into practice caused the Medfield Foundation to choose Jack McDermott as its Youth Volunteer of the Year for 2010.

At Medfield High School, Richard Desorgher, one of Jack's teachers reported that "[i]n my 33 years of teaching Jack stands out as one of the most active student citizens I have encountered. He is what Thomas Jefferson called the 'Active Citizen.' As an active member of the student council, he takes his responsibilities very serious. He is a leading force in the recycling and environmental effort. He is always looking out for student rights and he petitioned the administration when it was decided by the administration that tradition was going to be broken as to what colors the class would wear during the Spirit week activities. Rather than get upset or go outside the system, Jack brought the issue up at Student Council, wrote a very convincing letter to the Dean of Students, met with the Dean of Students and was able to get the ruling reversed. He has attended evening lectures on issues in political science. He was selected as one of the two representatives on the State Board of Education and attends one meeting a month with other students from throughout Massachusetts. He is one of the first students to volunteer to help teachers and his fellow students in any capacity possible. This award has Jack's name written all over it. He has recently developed a plan to restructure the cafeteria's food lines so that less trays will be used, hence saving energy through the washing of so many trays. He has also met with the administration to come up with a more democratic way to elect the representatives to the State Board of Education and make them more responsible to the general student population. I issue my highest recommendation possible to this outstanding young man, who really is the poster boy of volunteerism."



Jack's extra-curricular involvement at Medfield High School included serving as a tour guide for incoming students and special invited guests, to explain the curriculum, athletics, social life, and clubs. He was on the Student Council for four years, was in a leadership role as Student Council Representative, and as a senior was all-school Vice President. When the Student Council raised funds for Haitian earthquake survivors on a theme of give one dollar, Jack produced a short video highlighting the devastation, which was shown school-wide, and the Student Council raised almost four times as much.

Jack served for the past two years on the Guidance Advisory Group, as a liaison between Guidance, parents, and students as to the needs of the students and how to improve the offerings and communication of the Guidance Department. One parent on that committee commented that when Jack speaks everyone listens as they so value his insights, humor, and wisdom. He worked at the polls at The Center with his fellow students during the Senatorial Primary Special Election, as a cost-saving measure for the town. He participated at a retreat for the past three years for the Massachusetts Association for Student Council which is held for three days on the Cape each March, and while he attending the retreat he heard Craig Scott, the brother of one of the girls murdered at Columbine, speak about generating kindness and preventing bullyism. Jack made it his goal to share Scott's powerful message with the entire Medfield community, and so he and other student council members organized a car wash last summer to raise the \$2200 it cost to bring this speaker to town. Jack also assisted with the power point presentations offered with that speech.

Jack, a life long stutterer, was asked this year by Kerrie Krah, the Blake Middle School speech specialist, to volunteer tutor two students, and as a result Jack mentored and tutored one boy for stuttering therapy and another boy in mathematics and study skills, two days per week.. Jack also created and provided a unique structured therapy program. He advised administrators and teachers how best to develop communication skills in students who stutter. Jack published an article in the national CARE stuttering newsletter as a freshman and participated in the ISAD (International Stuttering Awareness Day) conference. To actualize a lifelong dream of producing a more effective approach to stuttering therapy, Jack created an innovative stuttering therapy system known as Balbus Speech Systems, which he worked on during independent study at MHS, with the goal to integrate technology into traditional speech-language pathology methods so as to help not just stutterers, but those who are affected by other speech challenges such as those in rehabilitation, with Parkinson Disease, or autism. Ms Krah reported that Jack shared his personal experiences with BMS students in a such powerful way that he made it a life changing experience for those students: "Jack's conviction to help others always comes first, and he was reliable, responsible, always on time, always with a plan, and always with a positive message."

Jack coordinated the music and was the DJ for the MHS Senior Fashion Show to benefit the All Night Graduation Party for the past three years.

At his church, Jack has played drums at the 6:00 Mass in the Youth Contemporary Group every Sunday since he was in 6th grade. Jack was one of three speakers to the 8th Grade CCD students about his experiences in volunteering and how giving to others made a positive impact in his life.

Jack is passionate about lacrosse and gave much back to the Medfield lacrosse program. As a Varsity Lacrosse captain, he helped organize and coach a summer lacrosse camp for boys, he organized and ran the Medfield Boys Lacrosse booth at Medfield Day, and every Saturday night throughout the past winter assisted coaching youth lacrosse boys at an indoor lacrosse program.

Jack says that he often gets more out of helping others than by doing things for himself, however Medfield is a better place because of this active citizen helping others.