

Kaleb's Story

– by Melissa Miller, Marketing at Daus Financial Group

Three years ago, my son, Kaleb, then 7 years old, didn't want to participate in the fundraiser for his school. He said that "old people" were dying every day and people were sick and had cancer. He told me he would rather raise money for them, instead of getting pencils for his school. I couldn't really argue that point. Later that year, however, he did raise money for the American Heart Association's "Jump Rope for Heart" campaign through his school, because he found that to be a worthy cause.

Since then we have had several discussions about where he'd like to help. Recently, he has been noticing homeless people asking for help around town and each time he wants me to stop so that we can give them money. At 10 years old, he already has such a big heart and wants to help everyone. We had read about the idea to make care packages for the homeless, and decided this would be a great project to take on. These bags are filled with basic supplies, toiletries, snacks, etc. and given to those in need. We're calling them "Support Bags". He was also concerned with people not having a place to stay and we researched the homeless population in Kalamazoo. What we found out disturbed him, especially finding out that many women and children were unable to find shelter due to the condition of the living quarters at the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission. We found out that KGM had undertaken an \$8 million campaign called the "Building Hope" project to raise money to tear down and build a new building here in Kalamazoo.

When I shared Kaleb's idea with my employer, Ryan Daus, he was inspired and agreed to help with the purchase of supplies for the bags and to match any monetary donations that Kaleb collects, up to \$500.00. Kaleb has now recruited some friends and they are going to reach out to the community for donations to fill the bags or monetary donations (checks made to the **Kalamazoo Gospel Mission**), in which the donor can specify if they would like to contribute to buying items for the bags or for their money to go toward the building fund. The DFG team and our families are going to put the Support Bag together in our office on August 25th.

I am hoping that Kaleb's story may inspire others, especially the younger generation, to give back!