



## Genesis at the Crossroads



My name is William Meyer and before I tell you about my charity project, I would like to tell you a little bit about me. I am a 14-year old living in a New Jersey suburb. I am the middle child of three boys and I am about to go into my freshman year of high school. My interests are politics, music, acting, reading and boy scouts. When I grow up, I dream of completing law school to become a Senator.

I am Jewish, and when a Jewish boy is thirteen, they have a special coming of age ceremony called a *Bar Mitzvah*, which typically includes a special long-term goodwill/community service project, also called a *Tikun O'lam* project. *Tikun O'lam*, which in Hebrew means “repairing the world”, is something that has a special meaning to me. I decided that I would be far more enthusiastic if I cared a lot about the cause.

Since I wanted to do something that I was connected to, I decided to focus on music. From my early childhood, my life has been intertwined with music. I've taken music classes at Westminster Choir College since I was four. I've played classical, jazz, and contemporary piano since the age of five. I play classical and jazz trombone and I also sing all kinds of music. My high school music program, which I will be joining this year, has the top jazz band in the state, and all the bands practice many hours after school. This past summer, I spent two weeks at Litchfield Jazz Camp, a sleep away camp completely devoted to jazz. As you can see, music is a *big* part of my life, and I felt it would be amazing if I could give that same love of music to others.

That's why I chose *Arm Them with Instruments* as my project. *Arm Them with Instruments* is a program designed by an organization called Genesis at the Crossroads ([www.gatc.org](http://www.gatc.org)). It works to distribute instruments to children in impoverished countries, predominantly the Middle-East and Africa. Instruments give these children the chance to learn how to play an instrument, which gives them the chance to spread music throughout their community. Gently used instruments are donated by households no longer using them to be redeployed in impoverished countries, where they will be cherished for years to come.

I knew that gathering instruments would be a lot of work. After all, these are not cell phone batteries we are collecting, where people always have a spare to donate. So, I created customized magnets which gave the basics of *Arm Them with Instruments*. I included these magnets with my nice, albeit a bit delayed *Bar Mitzvah* "Thank You" notes, and I also made some posters for my school.

I know what some of you may be thinking: "Where are you going to find that many people who have instruments they are no longer using?" That was my question for quite a long time, and then, it came to me. Last June, as my middle school years were winding down, we started to pick our classes for high school. Due to my love of music, I kept band in my schedule. However, about half of the middle school band and orchestra members in my year dropped music. Of those sixty or so who dropped music, I'd say that about 45 owned their instrument. That means 45 prospective donors to my program, and that is just one of many middle schools in the area. As you can see, if you know where to look, you can find unused instruments anywhere.

So, as I continue to move forward in my Tikun O'lam project, I continue to look for new ideas for furthering my goals. I am periodically conversing with Wendy Sternberg, the head of Genesis at the Crossroads and constantly looking for other ways to do my part for Tikun O'lam, repairing the world.