



CAR WASH FOR PEACE – Nine out of eleven siblings of the Katterjohn family held a car wash on Sunday to raise money for War Kids Relief’s “A Soldier’s March for Peace” fund. Pictured L to R back row: Tim (14), Kate (15), Ben (22), Zack (11), Brie (12), and Aryn (16). L to R front row: Matt (8), Alex (7) and Alyssa (18). Missing from the photo are Micah (4) and Lynae (20). – Connie Bickman photo

The Katterjohn kids

A soldier walks – siblings raise money for cause

by **Connie Bickman**

When you get a family like the Katterjohn kids, Cannon Falls, to put their heads together for a cause, you can be sure they will follow through.

The siblings – 11 kids ranging from age 4 to 22 – heard about Iraq war veteran Gunnar Swanson and a Soldier’s March for Peace (ASM4P), and they wanted to join in and help.

Gunnar is walking 1,000 miles from Dallas, Texas to Northfield, stopping at YMCAs and youth centers along the way to talk about how much kids in war-torn countries can use their help and encouragement. At each stop the kids write letters that will eventually be delivered to kids in Iraq and Afghanistan through a children’s charity called War Kids Relief.

The concept behind ASM4P is that it is oriented to get kids involved in helping other kids – a youth-led 10-week fundraiser. “We don’t just want kids to donate, we want them to earn that donation, to feel they are actually doing something,” Gunnar said. “Donating a penny a mile is only \$10. Doing mini-fundraisers to earn \$10 (or more) makes it easy for the kids to contribute.”

Money donated will help establish programs for children in Iraq and Afghanistan which will lead to safer, healthier,

violence-free lives. “Peace in Iraq begins with the protection of the children.”

The Katterjohn siblings, who are familiar in volunteering to help charitable causes and are all about peace, decided on a Sunday car wash – a good team project.

“I very much respect what Gunnar is doing. There are so many needs in the world that are going unnoticed, and Gunnar has not only noticed but is taking the time and effort to make things change. We were so glad to be able to help him out and be part of something that will make such a huge impact on the kids he’s walking for,” said eighteen-year-old Alyssa.

“Gunnar is AWESOME!” interjected seven-year-old Alex.

“We made \$128.55 at the car wash. It was really cool, because even the people who didn’t have time to get their car washed came over and made donations. And most of the people who did get their car washed gave an extra donation. We had a couple of truckers who obviously couldn’t get their vehicle washed, but came over to make donations, and quite a few military men also made donations and encouraged us.

“Everyone was very sweet and willing to help. We were all grateful to the workers and owners of the Cannonball who

let us use their facilities and for everything they provided for us throughout the day. They were amazing!”

The Katterjohn kids themselves are pretty amazing. They are all home schooled by their parents, Roxanne, a nurse at Mayo in Rochester, and their dad, Kent, a freelance videographer. And, surprising for such a large crew, they say they all get along really well. “It’s like having 10 different best friends to choose from each day,” said Alyssa.

There will be a few changes in the family dynamics coming up, however. Lynae, 20, just left for Verity Institute in Indianapolis, IN, and Alyssa will be joining her there soon. Ben, 22, will be leaving for seminary in Fort Lauderdale, FL. That leaves just eight Katterjohn kids at home to carry on the big task of helping to make changes in the world.

“So many people talk about making a change, but never do anything about it. I think it’s really cool that someone is actually taking action,” Aryn (16) said of Gunnar. Ditto that to the Katterjohn kids.

More information about what other kids are doing around the U.S. to help support Gunnar’s ASM4P efforts can be seen at www.warkidsrelief.org/march/share.