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Helping halfway round the world (6:41 p.m.)

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When Craig Kielburger was growing up, his mother would stop on the street and talk to homeless people.

She would give them money and chat with them, asking their names, where they were from and whether it had been cold.

Kielburger would impatiently tug on her coattails.

"I used to think it was for them, but now I realize it was to teach us a lesson about acknowledging the humanity in every person."

The lesson must have sunk in. At the age of 12, Kielburger formed Free the Children, an organization that now builds schools for children in Kenya, Sierra Leone, rural China, and Sri Lanka. It also works on projects involving alternative income, health care, water and sanitation provision, and peace building — a list of activities that has earned the group three Nobel Peace Prize nominations.

Every year, Free the Children takes about 1,000 Canadian volunteers to those countries, where they help with development projects and learn lifelong lessons of their own.

Now 24, Kielburger spends most of his time out of the country.

On Wednesday, he'll be in Edmonton at MacEwan's Global College Week, spreading the message about how parents can foster this kind of selflessness in their own children.

These days, children see world poverty all around them on the television news or in newspapers, Kielburger said. Many parents try to shelter their children by telling them to look away. But poverty is all around them, and they can't hide from it so they often close their hearts to it.

That's how a generation of passive bystanders is raised, Kielburger said, quoting the Dalai Lama. And yet, on one level everyone is born with the urge to help, Kielburger said.

"I'm a big believer that people want to help, they just don't know how."

His talk on Wednesday will provide "how to" tips for getting involved.

For example, families can read the newspaper together every morning, lay it out flat on the table and not just see it as a collection of all the violence and poverty and suffering in the world, but as a menu of issues parents and their children can choose to get involved with, he suggested.

More of these tips can be found in Kielburger's latest book, *Me to We: Finding Meaning in a Material World*, which he co-authored with his brother.

Kielburger believes children benefit when they're encouraged to be active citizens. "It empowers them because they know in a small way they can make a difference in the world."

That's one aspect of globalization that Kielburger wants to foster.

He grew up with the Internet, 24-hour satellite news, and the common practice of consuming products from every country on the map.

"Young people grow up with global commerce, global news, and in many ways with global culture. We're global in almost every way, except we're not yet global in our compassion."

Steven Macumber, 19, recently bridged that gap when he went to Kenya as a staff member of Free the Children. Macumber grew up in Edson and spent his last two years in Edmonton before moving to Toronto last May for his current job.

In rural Kenya, he joined other staff members in the backbreaking work of digging two holes — one for the foundation of a library and the other to hold a tank that would hold clean rain water for the people of the village.

It rained heavily and the rain undid half the work they'd done the previous day. Yet Macumber knew he was making a difference, and he called the experience phenomenal.

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