

## **Monroe boy embarks on mission to help homeless children**

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**By Gerard Mundy**

Daniel Colodner, at home in Monroe with his parents David and Sandra. (Photos by Gerard Mundy)

Monroe - Sitting at his kitchen table drinking hot cocoa in his Monroe home, Daniel Colodner seems like an average 12 year-old. But this young boy is on a mission to help some unfortunate kids.

Late last month, the Monroe-Woodbury Middle School student was moved by an ABC television special that documented the plight of some unfortunate children in Camden, N.J. Camden has been labeled the country's most violent and poorest city.

Daniel sent a letter to a group called Urban Promise, which helps the city's children, telling them that he wanted to help.

"I first saw that kid and I said, 'God, what if I didn't have a home, what if I were like these kids, I'd probably want to get helped, so I want to help them,'" he said.

"That kid," which Daniel referred to and who caught his eye — and heart — is named Ivan. Ivan is four and he's homeless. He told ABC anchor Diane Sawyer that he wanted to be Superman so he could help his family.

Daniel wants to help him.

"I feel lucky to have everything that I have," he said. "I feel happy because when I have a bad day, my family is here."

Daniel's close bond with his family is evident at their Monroe home. His mother, Sandra, wiped away tears as she listened to her son — who speaks with such ambition — explain to a reporter how he wants to make a difference in the world.

With his parent's help, and a dream, he is doing just that.

He picked out a design for a T-shirt he will be selling for Urban Promise. Urban Promise has already given thumbs up to the project, Daniel's father, David, said.

He also chose the slogan, "Together we can do it," for the T-shirts and his fundraising efforts.

David Colodner will be helping his son pay for the initial costs of the shirts and getting them produced.

Daniel will also be lobbying his student council at Monroe-Woodbury Middle School to possibly help sell the T-shirts. He already convinced his father — who works for music company, Latin Percussion - to ask his company to donate some instruments to the Camden kids.

His mother, who works for a pre-school, will be collecting baby clothes to deliver to the children and parents of Camden.

“From the beginning, I don’t think if I had other parents, this could have gone as well,” Daniel said.

On Feb. 2nd, Daniel’s letter to Urban Promise was read live on Good Morning America on ABC-TV.

“I have all the things I want. It makes me sad now seeing that kids don’t even have a house,” he wrote in the letter. “I don’t want to see kids suffer. It would make me so happy to help kids and families in need ... Ivan and those other could have a home ... be a regular kid like me.”

Urban Promise has gotten thousands of donations since the program aired on television. Trust funds have been set up for the children and lawyers have donated services to create them.

ABC has also received thousands of e-mail’s with kids wanting to help in some way in their communities.

Daniel Colodner is doing that here in Monroe and is asking for the community’s help.

ABC has also showed interest in shooting a segment at Daniel’s house after he has completed the fund raising.

He doesn’t like the popularity, though, but knows that getting this out will help the kids that need his help in Camden.

“I feel happy that more people know about it,” he says. But I don’t want to be recognized as the kid that helped people — I just want to help people.”

Daniel is planning to visit Camden with his parents and possibly bring along some of the love his Monroe community offers.

“Just think if you didn’t have a home with the weather conditions now — kids are suffering,” the young boy said with passion in his eyes.

His mother says, with tears in her eyes, “We’re so proud of you. His father nods his head and smiles.

“But this is just the beginning,” he reminds them.

If you would like to get more information, buy a T-shirt (\$15) or help give a hand to the children of Camden, N.J., you can e-mail Daniel and his family at: [HelpingCamdenKids2@yahoo.com](mailto:HelpingCamdenKids2@yahoo.com).