

Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation



Nov 2012

e-Peace Update

www.MattieOnline.com

Mattie's Peace Club

WHAT – A Membership Program created to support the mission of *Mattie's Foundation*, which is to spread a message of hope and peace for all people.

WHO – Children, Teens, Adults, VIPS, and Messengers who **Choose Peace!**

WHY – Peace matters, and it begins with a choice in thought, in word, and in action – OUR CHOICE.

COST – Kids ages birth-12 are FREE! Teens, Adults, VIPS, and Messengers pay a nominal fee that supports our mission.

BENEFITS –

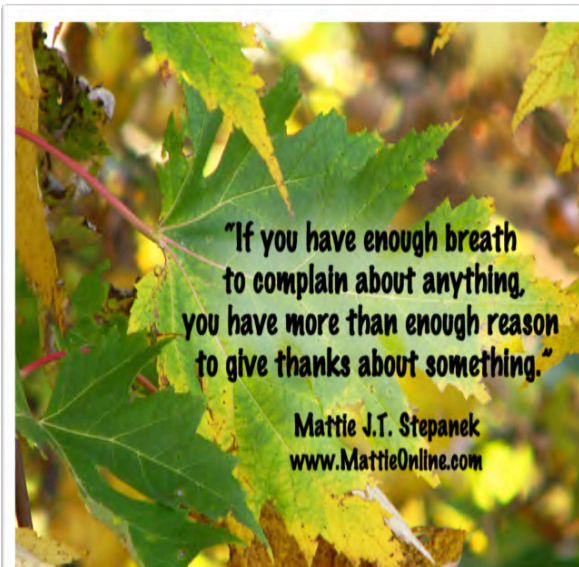
- ♥ **Peace Club Kids & Teens** pages for poetry, art, photos, and more.
- ♥ **Peace Club Teens** can choose a *Three Choice "Peace Journey"* which may earn Community Service Hours
- ♥ General/VIP Member bumper sticker
- ♥ **Peace Club General Members & VIPS** provide **much-needed support** that enables us to continue creating and disseminating peace materials.
- ♥ **Peace Club Messengers** sponsor *Peace Certified Schools & Youth Groups*.
- ♥ Peace Club Adult Members are offered **Member Discounts** in our *Peace Shop* and on *Peace & Book Chats*.
- ♥ Support is **tax deductible**.

Peace Post from Mattie's Foundation: *On Giving and Thanks*

During May of 2001, Mattie J.T. Stepanek was 10 years old, and had just learned that he had transitioned from “a child with a life-threatening condition” to “a child who was dying from that condition.” After a decade of living with the “possibility” of early death as his reality, he was suddenly coping with the “probability” of this inevitable fact. He desperately wanted to become a teenager, but the chances of having a few more treasured years were becoming slimmer.

Although he fully embraced the excitement of an eternity in Heaven, Mattie also loved life here on earth, and he was in no hurry to leave. He cherished the symbolic possibilities inherent in every sunrise, and he meditated on both glorious and mundane accomplishments to be considered with every sunset. He cooed over every baby he met – saying they were the gift of our future, and he

hugged every elder – saying they were the blessing of our lessons learned. And, just as he encouraged each of us to do, Mattie remembered to “play after every storm,” choosing to laugh and celebrate life – despite the burdens that needed to be balanced in with the blessings.



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On Giving and Thanks (continued)

Yes, Mattie was optimistic and resilient in spirit, and a child who somehow found something worthy to embrace even in the most challenging situations. But how would this 10-year-old respond to the news that he may not be here for Thanksgiving – his favorite holiday? And how does *anyone* choose to move through the moments of each day, understanding that *any* of those moments may be a final moment? Mattie paused for a few minutes, considered the reality he was facing, and then offered the following:

*“If you have enough breath to complain about anything,
you have more than enough reason to give thanks about something.”*

Against medical odds, Mattie did live another three years, dying just a few weeks before his 14th birthday. He was thrilled when he reached that sought-after milestone of becoming a teenager. And during those three “bonus” years as he once called them, Mattie made the choice to continue giving thanks for the time he did have on earth, rather than become bitter and dwell on that time he would not have here. Of course, there were difficult days when he struggled to make peace with the fact of a brief lifespan. But somehow, Mattie made the choice each day to find meaning in existence – not just his own, but in all existence.

He spent much of those three bonus years shaping a message of hope and peace, and writing essays and poems and prayers for our world. In other words, he spent his gift of time on earth giving breath to words that would become gifts to others, beyond any particular lifespan. And he spent that time expressing thanks for the mosaic of humanity that we are, and sharing his vision for a world that would one day realize that peace *is* possible, if we simply choose to think and speak and live peacefully with our neighbors.

“Peace is not about *agreeing with* or even *liking* our neighbors,” Mattie said. “And peace is not an absence of conflict. Peace is about *being with* and *not judging* our neighbors. Peace is simply about us co-existing, with purpose and without violence.”

During November, most of us in the United States will celebrate Mattie’s favorite holiday – Thanksgiving. Many of us will gather together with family and friends, filling the day with traditions of turkey and football. Some might even venture out to take advantage of sales, and begin shopping for the December holidays. While these activities can be the beginning of great moments and memories, they can also be the source of stress and frustration, if we lose sight of the big picture themes for the season – *giving* and *thanks*.

As we move through November, let us each choose to embrace the time we have here, and to celebrate with giving and with thanks. It is not always easy to let go of a detail that matters to us, or to put aside our differences – but it is always worthy. This month, before we take a breath to complain about *anything*, let us pause, and consider *something* that is worthy of giving thanks.

Learn more about Mattie & the Foundation
www.MattieOnline.com

