

*Washington, DC (April 30, 2012) - Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) released the following statement to recognize the students at McCracken Middle School in Skokie, Illinois who created the organization Aiding Children Together (ACT) to fight for children's rights across the globe :*

"Today, I recognize the extraordinary students at the McCracken Middle School in Skokie, Illinois, who are working to improve the lives and futures of children around the world.

Through the organization that they created – Aiding Children Together, or A.C.T. – these remarkable young leaders are making a real difference – not just studying the many problems that confront children but taking action to help solve them.

Two years ago, I received letters from McCracken middle-schoolers who were moved to get involved to help address the crisis of child labor. They wrote to voice their support for the UN Rights of a Child and to speak up for children who are forced to work in often dangerous conditions in order to support themselves and their families.

Since A.C.T. was founded, the students have continued to show their commitment to providing every child with the right to education and to a safe and healthy life. They know that many children are forced to live in poverty, to suffer and sometimes die from preventable diseases, and even to be forced to serve as child soldiers. The members of A.C.T. believe that unless we solve these problems, too many children will be denied the opportunity to become productive members of their communities.

The students participating in A.C.T. are learning and they are taking action to protect individual children and to create a better future. Through fundraising efforts from walkathons to selling

t-shirts, they have raised funds for nonprofit organizations like Free the Children – groups that empower youth to promote children's rights.

Currently, McCracken students are focused on learning about and raising funds for an orphanage in Ghana, engaging with A Better Life for Kids in the effort to expand educational opportunities to some of the most vulnerable children in the world. The orphanage is a safe place and one where deaf children can now go to school, instead of being forced onto the streets.

I want to recognize this year's A.C.T. participants and congratulate them on their work. They are: Lily Shearer, Rebecca Janw, Gabrielle Younan, Mariel Younan, Alex Davood, Juliana Tichota, Nora Gaul, Tenzin Wangdak, Trisha Gandhi, Andrea Hoglund, Sean Loach, Violette Shearer, and Nathaniel Schetter.

These McCracken students are doing amazing things and they are setting an example for all those who see problems as too big or too difficult, those who throw up their hands instead of getting to work. I am so proud of them and I know that they will continue to be a powerful force for change on behalf of children.

I also want to thank Jennifer Ciok and Bethany Blades, the teacher sponsors of A.C.T., and Shelley Nizynski, who teaches at Middleton Elementary School in Skokie and is the founder of A Better Life for Kids. They demonstrate the critical role of teachers in inspiring students to learn, to solve problems and to become leaders in their communities."

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