

## The 12-Year-Old That Bishops Admire

**Meet Zack Goodman, young pro-lifer.**

BY JOSEPH PRONECHEN

| Posted 1/22/11 at 9:00 AM

Zack Goodman is not your typical 12-year-old. He just organized the third pro-life march held in the Diocese of Colorado Springs, Colo., an event he initiated in 2009 as a 10-year-old.

Zack is no less than a pro-life powerhouse.

After his dad Phill Goodman's assignment in the U.S. military brought the family to Colorado Springs, Zack and his mom, Christina Huschak, were watching the March for Life and the Walk for Life West Coast on EWTN. He thought it would be great to go in person. When his mother said it was too far and it was too bad they didn't have anything in the area, Zack took only a moment to think about it.

As he describes it, "I came back 30 seconds later and said, 'Well, I have to start something here.'"

Talk about initiative. Zack designed a pro-life logo, worked up a presentation for Colorado Springs Bishop Michael Sheridan, and e-mailed Walk for Life West Coast founder Dolores Meehan for advice on how to start a march in Colorado Springs.

He also started working under the diocese's Respect Life director, Father Bill Carmody.

Zack basically talked about Martin Luther King Jr. and civil rights "and equated abortion as the basic civil-rights issue of the day," remembers Father Carmody. "That's outstanding. He gets it. I've been in the work 20 years but never made the concrete connection."

The first year Zack invited Alveda King, Martin Luther King's niece, to speak. She couldn't attend because of a prior commitment, but she sent a videotaped message to play at the event. To continue the civil-rights connection, for each of the three years now, this march has been scheduled for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Father Carmody calls the timing providential. "This was Zack's idea, his vision," he says. "He gets all the credit."

With Father Carmody's direction, Zack presented his vision to various diocesan committees and organizations like the Knights of Columbus and Serra Club. Then he launched Youth 4 Truth, an ecumenical youth group getting young people active in pro-life activities by helping with the march and organizing the youth rally held on the day before the march.

That first year, at age 10, Zack wrote a pro-life play titled "God Is Calling. Are You Answering?" It was performed several times, including for the Catholic Daughters state convention.

This year, at his invitation, following the Holy Hour of Eucharistic adoration that started the day's events, bishops from all three Colorado dioceses concelebrated the March's Mass at St. Mary's Cathedral: Colorado Springs Bishop Michael Sheridan, who has attended every march, Denver Auxiliary Bishop James Conley, who was at last year's event, and Pueblo Bishop Fernando Isern.

Hundreds more joined the march to the city's Acacia Park for the outdoor rally with speakers headed by Pastor Walter Hoye II, founder and president of the Issues4Life Foundation in California. Then everyone marched to the old Planned Parenthood facility for prayers.

Home-schooler Zack is tireless in his pro-life work. After this Mass and at his parish, he distributes "Precious Feet" pins. He gets plenty of help giving them out for what he calls the "Precious Feet Challenge" from the Squires, the Knights of Columbus order for youth, who also led the march. Zack keeps the "Precious Feet Challenge" going well beyond the march. This year, 2,000 pins were distributed to approximately 10 churches, including a Protestant church.



In fact, Zach is not only a member of the Squires, but has achieved the program's highest rank, Squire of the Body of Christ. Only 26 members worldwide have achieved this distinction, according to the Knights of Columbus. He is the youngest Squire ever to earn this honor.

He and the Squires also hosted a pro-life contest for the diocesan elementary and high schools and home-school students as well.

He credits Father Carmody with the "I Survived Roe v. Wade" T-shirts that were distributed to everyone at the rally under 38 years old.

"It basically shows [that] everyone under 38 literally did survive after *Roe v. Wade* was passed," Zack says, adding extra emphasis: "Wow! I really *did* survive." Plans called for 1,000 shirts to be handed out at this year's march.

Father Carmody says it's powerful to see all the youth wearing these shirts.

"They get it," he says. "They understand it. By the grace of God, they survived. They had a 1-in-3 chance of making it. They recognize one-third of their generation is gone, and I find them truly on fire for life."

Results from the marches speak for themselves. "I've seen a lot more young people do a lot more pro-life things in their churches," Zack relates. "We have a walk for life for a local pregnancy center, and one 10-year-old girl went out and collected \$500 for the pregnancy center because she couldn't let the babies die."

Zack sees the Precious Feet pins making a difference too. People are "getting it," he says.

The Youth 4 Life are working together on the Life Chain, where they display fetal-development posters from conception to birth.

Zack's original plan calls for the march to be regional, not just local.

"He wants to do something for the Mountains area," says Father Carmody of Zack's vision. "We're getting people from Pueblo now. We'll keep it growing. His vision is awesome."

Denver's Auxiliary Bishop James Conley met Zack after the young march organizer invited him to participate. He sees Zack as remarkable.

"He exceeded the whole event. He very articulately introduced each one of the speakers," Bishop Conley says. "You can tell he has a great passion for life. When he invites people to come to speak, he commands a lot of authority for a little guy. ... It's a great tribute to the parents to have children like this involved."

In fact, Zack says he and his mother made up his motto for the march, related to the song "This Little Light of Mine."

"If we all let our little light shine, we can set the world on fire," says Zack. "Basically, you can sum up me and what I've done in that. In the pro-life movement, if we all do something small, like giving out Precious Feet pins, we'll light the world on fire with God's fire of love and truth."

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