

Three Easley students selected for International People to People Program

By Amanda Foster
Staff Writer

Forty-eight years ago, President Dwight D. Eisenhower had a dream.

That vision is now impacting three Easley students as they plan to join 40 other students in the Upstate participating in the People to People Student Ambassador Program.

Jordan Gates, Brooks Gray and Blake Hedrick will all be traveling to Australia this summer for what they are considering the experience of a lifetime.

Either a teacher or educational professional nominated the students, anonymously, for the national program that has helped 100,000 young Americans travel the globe.

Students will leave June 16 for Australia and return June 30, experiencing 14 days of the culture.

Before leaving for the trip, students are required to read national and international news articles about Australia, attend People to People meetings and create a cultural brochure that would describe the culture they are going to be visiting.



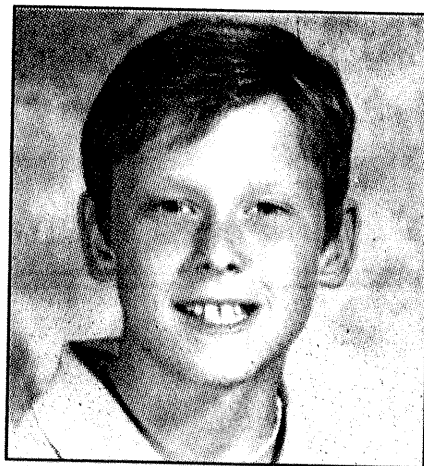
Jordan Gates

During the event, they will be required to keep a journal everyday that records facts of their journey.

The group will begin the tour of Australia in Sydney and end up in Brisbane, visiting government officials, the Outback and other cultural events in Australia.

"I am very excited about the event," said Brooks, a fifth grader at Forest Acres Elementary.

Brooks' mother Robin said that

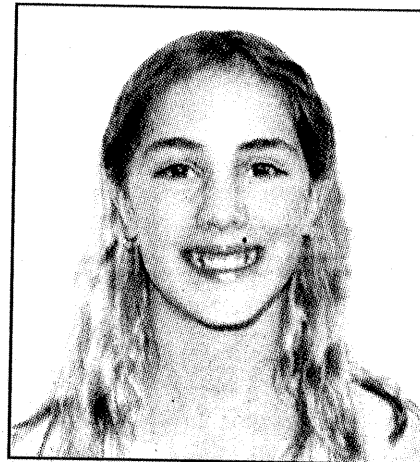


Brooks Gray

when she got the letter that Brooks had been accepted into the program, she knew that her family had to raise funds to allow him to go.

"He's such a responsible child, and it's a once in a lifetime opportunity, so I want him to go and have every opportunity life offers him," said Robin.

Susan Hedrick, mother of fifth-grader Blake, said that she almost threw the letter away when she read it.



Blake Hedrick

"I wasn't sure what it was, but the more I researched it, I knew Blake would enjoy it," Susan said. "We figured there was no way she was not going."

Susan said her daughter is very deserving of the award.

"Blake is a really good person, she has such a good heart. She's always gravitated toward the underdog, the person that wasn't accepted," Susan said.

Carrie Gates, Jordan's mother, said she was excited to hear that her sixth grader had been selected.

"We felt it was something we needed to do for Jordan," Carrie said. "Jordan makes me see people in a different view because she tries to be friends with everyone."

All parents began raising the \$4,300 amount for their children to go, and they all said they are continuing to raise funds through saving pennies.

Founded in 1956, the People to People program's intention is to allow young people one-to-one cooperation in global understanding.

Eisenhower believed, "the people want peace. Indeed, I believe they want peace so badly that the governments will just have to step aside and let them have it."

For more information about the People to People program, visit the Web site

www.studentambassadors.org.

To give to the three Easley students' trip, call Robin Gray at 855-5911.

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