

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

By Vanessa Christiansen

Last fall, after moving with my husband to Grand Rapids and getting settled into our new house, I began to feel a nagging sensation, like I was forgetting something. I didn't really understand it. Lovely new house, exciting new job, welcoming new friends... we had been blessed with so much that I couldn't figure out what was missing. I tried making myself feel better by volunteering in my church and community. These activities helped... but still... didn't I have more to offer than reshelving library books?



The thing is, I'm not that special. I'm not rich, or particularly brilliant, and I have more questions about life than I have answers. But I still remember the adults who somehow made a difference in my life growing up, and how I wouldn't be who I am today without their love and support. And none of them were rich or had all the answers, either. I realized that although I may not be Superwoman, I could give that same kind of love and support to another young girl

I was thrilled to meet Winter, a bubbly and enthusiastic thirteen-year-old. We've had so much fun getting to know each other in the last four months! It doesn't take long to realize that most kids just love spending time with kind, attentive grown-ups... I've never had to worry about not being fun or entertaining enough. My favorite time with Winter was the Saturday evening we spent making brownies and playing Wii bowling. During busy weeks sometimes I'll swing by her house after work and take her to Subway with me where we can eat and chat for an hour... even these shorter visits with Winter can be the highlight of my day!

I am so happy to be making a difference in my community by being a mentor. Every moment I spend with Winter, and every moment that all mentors spend supporting and encouraging our kids, makes a difference for the future of our communities. And that nagging sensation that something is missing in my life? Gone!