

# Angela's acceptance



>> Angela (shown on ladder, top right) poses with members of a church youth group on a mission to the Red Lake Nation Reservation in northern Minnesota, owned by the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians.

Angela Decator is not afraid to step outside herself.

The Reed City teen's outgoing spirit endears her to people she's known all her life, as well as new-found friends.

A childhood rooted in faith has given Angela a head start. It's not always easy: Faith can be the root of rejection by others. And yet, that same faith helps teens to deal with rejection; to use it as a way to connect with God and with other like-minded teens.

"Some of my friends aren't religious, so they don't always understand what I'm talking about or why I go to church," Angela said. "With friends who do go to church, it's easier."

But Angela plows through any rebuff, accepting all. That's the other side of faith, acceptance and kindness toward everyone, whether they accept you or not.

Her confidence is fueled by her faith, but it comes full circle: In giving of herself, she receives.

"Getting to know people makes you closer to God," Angela said.

Angela is the daughter of Dan and Anne Decator of Reed City, and has three siblings. She is a freshman at Reed City High School – a time of transition when everything can seem confusing and in flux. It's a time when parents pray their sons and daughters will come out on the other end of these wonder years as balanced, loving individuals.

In July, Angela joined a church youth group on a mission to the Red Lake Nation Reservation in northern Minnesota, where, by some reports, about 40 percent of residents live below the poverty line.

Angela traveled with six other teens and four adult chaperones from St. Philip Neri Parish in Reed City, and nearby mission parish St. Anne, Paris, to help paint and repair homes on the reservation and build porches. About 300 teens from across the U.S. participated in the Red Lake Workcamp Mission Trip. That week, new friendships were formed, some of which continue on Facebook.

"It was a lot of fun – I met a lot of people. But what I learned the most is the mission revealed by God through others. At times, it got emotional," she said.

Devotions and group gatherings happened every evening. A youth-group discussion that stands out in her mind had to do with this question: "What keeps you from seeing God?"

Angela's answer?

"Being selfish, self-serving – putting ourselves ahead of relationships with others – that keeps us from seeing God," she said.

# You can volunteer!

>> Volunteer opportunities of many different kinds are abundantly available throughout the Diocese of Grand Rapids. To find opportunities to help in your area:

Visit **Catholic Charities West Michigan's** Web site, [ccwestmi.org](http://ccwestmi.org) and click on "Give Hope"

Visit [dioceseofgrandrapids.org/faith\\_action/volunteering/Pages/Volunteering.aspx](http://dioceseofgrandrapids.org/faith_action/volunteering/Pages/Volunteering.aspx)

Visit the **Volunteers of America** Web site, [voa.org](http://voa.org)

Contact the youth ministry office of your local parish



>> Angela, along with (from left) Ashleigh, Cheyanne, Savana and Cristina take one of their regular strolls through downtown Hersey, Mich.

“ I try to remember what Jesus did for us and use that to figure out what is right or wrong,” she said. “Being a freshman, I’m kind of scared ... but I know that God will help me get through the year.”

Angela strives to put family and friends ahead of herself.

“I try to treat people with the same respect that I want to be treated with, and honor them with how I think God would want me to, following the commandments,” she added.

At the end of the week, some of the reservation’s residents joined together to celebrate and to share their culture with the youth. One Native American sung *Amazing Grace* in his language.

“The experience made me realize there are a lot of people





>> Angela and her best friend Ashleigh Hubbard play in a stream near her Reed City home.



>> Angela pets one of her family's goats.



>> Angela and Ashleigh take a spin in the family's go cart.

out there with real needs. It also helped me to see how other people see God," Angela said.

## On the cusp

After returning home from the mission trip, Angela began preparing for her new role as a youth leader for St. Philip Neri's and St. Anne's combined youth group. Earlier this year, she, along with other seventh and eighth graders throughout the diocese, made their confirmation at the Cathedral of Saint Andrew. The experience filled her with the grace of the Holy Spirit, which, she says, will help her in her new leadership role.

She'll be responsible, along with other youth group leaders, for organizing activities. But, to Angela, it's more than that.

"It's important to be friendly, to talk to people, interact – especially with those who are shy, less talkative."

She also says it's important to talk about God – something that's not always easy or "popular" to do – and to pray to God, talk with him.

She relies on her faith to help deal with peer pressure.

"I try to remember what Jesus did for us and use that to figure out what is right or wrong," she said. "Being a freshman, I'm kind of scared ... but I know that God will help me get through the year." ☩



>> Angela along with friends and family following a visit to their home parish, St. Philip Neri in Reed City. (From left) Ashleigh Hubbard, 14, Angela's best friend; Angela, Angela's mother Ann; her sister Cristina, and cousins Cheyanne and Savana Streen.