



Jeff Hanson, 16

Horizon Academy

Mission: Every act of kindness helps create kinder communities, more compassionate nations and a better world for all ... even one painting at a time.

Here's a guarantee: Meet Jeffrey Owen Hanson, a visually challenged wunderkind and prolific artist from Overland Park, and your outlook on life will never be the same. The first thing you notice on meeting Hanson is an unshakeable optimism that surrounds him like a colorful aura.

A one-kid fundraising machine who also carries a full load at school, Hanson has rubbed shoulders with iconic pop stars, Hollywood directors and one of the world's most famous businessmen. Sir Elton John (who commissioned Hanson for a project at his South African orphanage for children with AIDS and dedicated a song to him during his March concert at the Sprint Center); director Harold Ramis (who cast Hanson as an extra in his movie after he heard about his fundraising efforts); Warren E. Buffet (who personally invited Hanson to attend the Berkshire Hathaway Annual Meeting in Omaha); and countless Kansas City CEOs, business executives, high-end contemporary art collectors and philanthropists are captivated by the young Kansan's infectious personality and talent.

Hanson has raised more than \$150,000 for global and local charities with his electric canvases and note cards, has been a featured artist at First Fridays in the Crossroads Arts District and gifted art to Whole Foods Market for their nationwide 2010 eco-friendly grocery bag (proceeds will benefit a children's charity). Along with his mom Julie and dad Hal, Hanson is a regular fixture on the charity auction circuit, looking dapper in a tux and hand-painted cummerbund and bowtie to match the painting he's donating. His blog, www.artistjeffhanson.blogspot.com, reads like a seasoned businessman's accounting of accomplishments, goals and dreams and his Web site, www.jeffreyowenhanson.com, is a creative panoply of his art.

During an interview last year, Hanson offered this advice for teens wanting to follow in his charitable footsteps. "Just go do it," said Hanson. "Give to the world and it will give back."

Indeed, Hanson is a giver and doer of magnanimous proportions. And as he likes to say, "I'm in the fast lane on the inspiration interstate."