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# IT'S YOUR TURN TO HELP NOW

Allison Tomlinson wasn't always the best of students. She in fact struggled in classes when she entered Manual High School in 2006. But along the way she decided she wanted to attend college and study to become a social worker.

Allison was given a great advantage in turning that dream into reality in September. That's when Jan Gildner, a faculty member at the Indiana University School of Social Work, read about Allison and her friend Kelly Leatherbury in a column by The Star's Matthew Tully. Gildner volunteered to mentor the girls, who recently were offered full-ride scholarships to Vincennes University.

Kay Sauer, also inspired by Tully's work on The Manual Project, found her own way to help students at the school. She has on several occasions donated carloads of groceries to students from low-income families.

You have an opportunity to follow the lead set by Gildner and Sauer. You can, as they have, make a lasting difference in the lives of at-risk children in our city. And we at The Indianapolis Star, inspired by the community's response in meeting needs at Manual, want to help you connect with those children.

For the next year and beyond, The Star, as detailed on today's front page by Editor Dennis Ryerson, is committing to sustain a campaign designed to significantly improve our children's academic achievement, not just at Manual but throughout the city. One goal of the initiative is to inspire an additional 10,000 people to serve as volunteers serving the city's children.

Why take on this challenge? Because we believe that nothing

short of the city's future is at stake. That's why we're calling the campaign, "Our Children, Our City."

Consider that one local elementary school sends home 2,000 pounds of food each Friday so that students will have enough to eat over the weekend.

Consider that about 1,500 children in Indianapolis Public Schools are classified as homeless.

Consider, too, that beyond food many schools regularly provide such basics as clothing and health care so that children have some chance of concentrating on their studies.

But isn't it up to parents to make sure their children are fed and clothed and that homework is completed? Yes, of course.

Yet, what do we as a community say to a hungry 8-year-old, a pregnant 14-year-old or an illiterate 16-year-old who needs help but whose parents are either absent or preoccupied by their own problems?

In preparing for this project, Star editors and reporters talked to community leaders who are actively serving the city's children. One message they delivered over and over again: The engagement of a caring

adult in the life of a child can make the difference between that student's success or failure in school, and in life.

In short, mentors, tutors, reading coaches and other volunteers matter — a great deal.

Our city is filled with children like Allison Tomlinson. They face enormous challenges. But they also have great potential, and with help, in the right ways and at the right times, they can build for themselves and for a generation to come a much brighter future.

You can help secure that future — not only for our children, but for our city as well.

## OUR CHILDREN OUR CITY

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