

## “The Millennialists” – The Most Pro-Life Generation Yet

BY Dave Andrusko

Any parent who has more than one child knows that you make generalizations at your peril. Add innate disposition to birth order to parenting “styles” to changing family economics, etc., etc., and you’re quickly reminded that each of your children is a priceless, unique individual.

But this considerable array of differences within families has not prevented best-selling authors from making collective assessments about entire generations! For example, “Generation Y” (or “The Millennialists”), born between 1982 and 2000, have been described by Neil Howe and William Strauss (as one reviewer put it) as “a nurtured generation, slightly conservative, trustworthy, hardworking, cooperative, dependable.”

Joleigh Little passionately agrees with the conclusion. If anything, she’d go further in her praise of the young people she works with everyday as director of Wisconsin’s Teens for Life.

“They are less ‘me, first’ than my Generation—Generation X—and far less so than the Baby Boomers,” said Little, who is also Co-Advisor of National Teens for Life. “They are smart, idealistic, and really **do** want to work on behalf of a cause greater than themselves.”

Does that mean they would be receptive to the Pro-Life Movement? “And how!” Little said. “They are not about to fall for ‘that ‘my body, my choice’ garbage.”

Little said that when she was in high school in the 1980s, probably three out of 23 students were pro-life. “Nowadays, she said, “It’s not uncommon to have a majority in a classroom that is pro-life.”

And not just in religious schools. “Our largest chapter is in a public school.” Little said.

Little told **NRL News** that today’s teenagers are more cognizant of abortion than any group of teenagers to come along since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision.

“And it’s not just that they know more about abortion and euthanasia—that’s clear—it’s that they are passionately pro-life,” Little said. “They have thought through the issues to the point where they can not only stand their ground in a classroom setting but also bring students over to their side.

“There’s a tremendous amount of peer-education taking place.”

It takes all of about a nanosecond and a half to realize that Little loves her work. And she better be because there’s plenty of it for a woman who is involved in Wisconsin, regionally, and at the national level.

For example, in addition to her day-to-day duties in Wisconsin, Little puts together camps (Camp Esther—the beginner’s camp— and Camp Nehemiah) where pro-life teens come together in an intense environment. Affectionately dubbed “boot camps,” in fact they joyfully combine fellowship, camaraderie, and education.

This combination is irresistible, and explains why over 3/4 of the speakers at Camp Esther (many of whom are teens themselves) are graduates of previous camps. These times together turn young people into leaders

Along with NRLC's Derrick Jones, Little also organizes the National Teens for Life Convention which runs in tandem with the annual NRLC national convention. Next month she will co-host the second annual Youth Summit in Washington, D.C. In her spare time she writes a monthly column for *NRL News*.

Little said she was not really surprised that teens "get it" on abortion. "After all, they know that between a quarter and a third of their peers is simply not here," because of abortion. "It directly affects them," she said.

What did surprise Little was how teenagers grasp euthanasia, which does not directly affect them, at least not in an obvious way. So what explains their level of sophistication on an issue few adults understand?

"Terri Schiavo," Little said without hesitation. "I remember a talk we had for pre-teens at the last Wisconsin Teens for Life Convention," she said. "I started to talk about Terri and this **nine-year old** said, 'The media really got that one wrong,' and then proceeded to explain where the coverage went awry."

You could almost hear the smile in her voice when Little added, "Obviously, some great education at home."

She also noted that Terri's sister, Suzanne, and brother, Bobby, had come to their events. "Their presence personalizes what happened to Terri in a way that nothing else could match."

As our conversation wrapped up, Little said she wanted to emphasize two additional important points.

"I know that when you're putting out fires [alluding to the daily emergencies pro-life groups face], it's hard to think about fire prevention, but it's really important that local and state and national groups put renewed emphasis on reaching out to, educating, and incorporating the input of younger people into the Movement," Little said. "It's a cliché, sure, but it's also true: They are the future of the Movement."

The other important item for Little was to remind those who work with young people to go where teenagers congregate. And in today's technological world, that definitely includes being on-line.

"To kids today, e-mail is passé," Little said. "They are into Instant Messaging, producing *You Tube* videos, and visiting their friends—and getting information—at locales such as *My Space*." (*You Tube* describes itself as "a free online video streaming service that allows users to view and share videos that have been uploaded by our members." *My Space* is an online site that allows teens and others to personalize their own "page" and communicate with friends by accessing their pages.)

The advantage to pro-lifers, whether pro-life teenagers or pro-life organizations trying to reach them, is that the cost of accessing young people through such avenues is extremely low.

"I have my own *My Space* site," Little said. "And a member of our Wisconsin RTL leadership team, who is a technological genius, will eventually help with *You Tube* stuff."

Our conversation had lasted nearly an hour but Little's enthusiasm had been clear in the first 30 seconds.

"This generation is pro-life,'" she said with utter conviction. "And why not? We have a life-affirming message, a positive message, and a message of hope. What do the pro-abortionists have to offer?"

But, she cautioned, what the Movement does with this enormous potential resource is up to us.

"As the Bible says, the 'fields are white unto harvest,'" Little said. "The question for us adults is whether we will provide the workers."

