

# A Single Drop of Water

by Robert Freeman



A story of how a high school  
teacher and his students  
set out to change the world,  
with a dollar

“Even the greatest waterfall starts  
with a single drop of water.”

~ African Bantu Saying

## Chapter Eight—Student Heroes

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Touch your arm. Go ahead, try it; just a gentle brush of your fingertips across your arm. Did that hurt? Didn't think so.

Now imagine a newborn baby for whom that type of touch is excruciating. However, their misery isn't limited to touch; other senses have been affected as well. Light is agonizing, and the slightest sound causes the child to cry out in pain.

This is what life is like for a child with maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT). The child will be placed in a quiet, dark room until the torment is finally soothed only by death.

This disease claims a child every 11 minutes; but we have the power to change that. UNICEF and Kiwanis International have teamed up to stop this monstrous disease. The campaign is called The Eliminate Project. It takes a mere \$1.80 to immunize a mother and protect her and her children for five years. This means that we can literally rid the world of maternal and neonatal tetanus.

Last year, I served as president of my school's Key Club (an offshoot of Kiwanis). Our club did our traditional fundraisers—bake sales, collecting donations in front of local grocery stores, selling candy, etc.—but this time we were looking to do more. One day, our Kiwanis advisor, Mr. Carter, introduced us to One Dollar for Life, or ODFL.

We didn't know anything about ODFL so we investigated. We watched a couple of videos and looked at the online Toolkit they had created to help Key Clubs with Eliminate fundraising. Everything was laid out for us. We liked the fact that ODFL emphasizes not just the project but empowering teenagers *through* the project. We decided that this would be a good fit our school and community.

Cloverdale High School only has about 400 students, and our Key Club has just over 40 members. We decided on a campaign that would engage our student body by showing them how much of an impact they could actually make in the world. Since \$1.80 saves a life, we decided to make ours a "Two Dollars For Life" campaign.

We made sure all of our club's members knew about Eliminate and ODFL. This was crucial because it enabled us to speak credibly and tell others why *they* should care and how *they* could make a difference.

The next step was to get the CHS staff on board. That wasn't a problem. The Cloverdale staff is incredibly supportive and loves to see students blossom. They wanted our efforts to succeed.

We sent teams of presenters into every classroom to explain in person what we were doing and how they could help. These presentations made a world of difference! This wasn't just an announcement over the intercom; it was students speaking to students.

We decided that a class competition would create a positive vibe in our school, so we executed this using ODFL's "box" method. This sent a ripple of excitement through the school that soon developed into a wave. Everyone was talking about how they, as individuals, were changing the world.

We collected the money every day and reported which classrooms were "winning"; this was a great way to keep people motivated. We also announced how many lives the students at our school would be saving. This, too, was incredibly motivating.

Toward the end of our in-class fundraising efforts, we held a One Dollar Day. Students who donated that day received a sticker and a chance to get a See's candy lollipop if the money in the box at least equaled the number of students in the classroom. By the end, we had collected over \$900, or \$2.25 per student in the school. We had made our goal!

But we didn't stop there. We asked our school's Interact Club and asked if they would contribute. They gave \$400! We approached adult clubs in Cloverdale, and continued to do outside fundraisers. When all was said and done, we had collected nearly \$3,000 for the Eliminate Project. With our efforts combined, we had managed to save the lives of over 1,500 babies!

It is truly incredible what can be done when a group of inspired, dedicated young people have the opportunity to show that they care. We had married the ODFL method with the Eliminate cause, giving students the chance to save the lives of children around the world.

The beautiful thing about ODFL is that it emphasizes that we are all part of a global community. Even though people live on the other side of the world, they are still our neighbors, and every single one of us can help by giving the smallest bit. Man is a neighbor to mankind. We reap the rewards of what we sow. In this case, we are creating a generation of people who can harness any power they truly desire. One Dollar for Life instills confidence, nobility, and virtue into those who really allow themselves to be touched by it.