



*Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students*

**“Heroes and Role Models:  
Jane Goodall”**

**by Arielle Silver-Willner  
May 15, 2010**

Role models and heroes embody many of our values. Role models are people we admire; we want to emulate them, and since we know they're not perfect, we usually believe that if we try hard enough, we can be like them. Our heroes are larger-than-life figures; we don't just admire them, we think of them as great people because they don't simply embody our values, they translate these values into impressive achievements. Heroes have flaws too, but we tend to ignore them. Unlike our role models, we don't believe we could ever be like our heroes.

Nearly everyone has heroes. My dad's hero has always been his father. He told me, "I always wanted to impress him and get his approval, which I think is very common for children. I looked at my father as somebody who was very successful and who had achieved his goals." My mom's heroes are her parents. She told me, "My mom takes care of everyone. She's one of the strongest, hardworking people I know and was a feminist before her time. When I was a kid, my dad seemed perfect to me, he was always very patient, understanding and good to me, and never seemed to notice my flaws."

My heroes include Tina Fey, Paul Newman, Louis Braille, Helen Keller and Jane Goodall. Jane Goodall, in particular, exemplifies many of my values-- animal rights, protecting the environment, hard work, and education.

Dr. Goodall was born in London in 1934. She never married and has no children. She is a United Nations Messenger of Peace, ethnologist, and anthropologist, but is best known as a primatologist who spent many years studying the chimpanzees of Tanzania.

Dr. Goodall and her sister were born with a disease called prosopagnosia, which distorts one's ability to recognize human faces. Because of this disease, it's likely that she is better able connect with chimpanzees than humans and this may be one reason why she chose to study them. During her years of living in the national park where she did her studies, Dr. Goodall became very knowledgeable about chimps and made many discoveries. For example, she found that chimps can make tools and build huts.

Dr. Goodall demonstrated her respect for chimps by studying them in their natural habitat, instead of bringing them to a lab. She understood the devastating consequences of the destruction of their habitat on chimps and has forcefully advocated for protecting nature against human threats.

Dr. Goodall once said, "The more we learn of the true nature of non-human animals, especially those with complex brains and corresponding complex social behavior, the more ethical concerns are raised regarding their use in the service of [people] -- whether this be in entertainment, as "pets," for food, in research laboratories, or any of the other uses to which we subject them." This quote reveals Dr. Goodall's deep respect for animals in general and primates in particular and her belief that their sophistication earned them the right to live autonomously, without human interference.

After many years conducting research, Dr. Goodall created the Jane Goodall Institute in Tanzania. There, she educated many children about the natural habitats of chimps and the importance of protecting their habitat. She also spoke tirelessly to adults and became known as a great teacher.

Until her recent retirement, Dr. Goodall worked non-stop; not because she needed money, or was a workaholic, but because she felt passionately about her work protecting chimps and nature. She is living proof that hard work can make a difference.