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## MATTHEW PIERCE

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After a conversation with his Dad about wanting to do something about the oil spill, teenager Matt Pierce started a non-profit called "Teenagers Care" to fundraise for animals suffering from this disaster. This one spark of an idea has spread in such a short time that, in less than two weeks, the organization has raised almost \$5,000.

The spill just seems to get worse every day and it's the hope of Matt and other teenagers who care, that their efforts will help a little with the cleanup of the animals and beaches.

### Where are you from, Matt?

I'm from Bradenton, Florida and we live in Stone Harbor, NJ in the summers. I attend Blair Academy in Blairstown, NJ. I'm a very lucky teenager and really want to give back.

We have a local Wetlands Institute, in Stone Harbor, that my brother Kevin has volunteered at and we see a lot of wildlife and really felt we needed to do something about the oil sickened animals in the Gulf. We get turtles in our yard all the time and see incredible birds and dolphins in Stone Harbor. Sarasota Bay near our house in Bradenton is an amazing place with pelicans, dolphins and many other animals.

### How do you feel about the gulf oil spill?

It should have never happened. It's a shame that the wildlife, in The Gulf, have to pay the price for BP's carelessness. I can't imagine oil on our beaches in Florida and Stone Harbor. When I see what has happened in The Gulf it makes me really wonder what we should be doing to help with our country's energy problem. My generation has now seen the result of what can happen from off-shore drilling and why we need to find alternative energy sources.



### **What is your reaction when you see photos of birds covered in oil?**

It's hard to see such majestic animals, such as the Brown Pelican, in such a state of distress and not do anything. I hope that through my fund raising efforts and by raising awareness with teens and adults, that we can save the lives of many animals.

### **What kind of fundraisers have you been doing?**

We have received some nice donations through our website and people have responded really well to our t-shirts, [www.TeenagersCare.org/id17.html](http://www.TeenagersCare.org/id17.html) Some of the kids in Stone Harbor, NJ even had a lemonade stand yesterday and raised \$127 in just 2 hours. They handed out free Teenagers Care/Help Clean Up The Spill wristbands. People have been very generous. I hope to raise a significant amount throughout the summer.

### **We love the pelican T-shirt, who designed it?**

I initially designed a t-shirt and my Dad's old company offered to enhance it for free. The response to the t-shirt has been very positive.

### **What has the response been like to your idea to create Teenagers Care?**

With Teenagers Care just starting up in the last two weeks the response has been amazing. I have learned an incredible amount in a very short time. This all started with a conversation my Dad and I had driving on a trip to Washington, DC. I really wanted to do something about the oil spill and so far my friends and their friends have responded with great support.

### **How are you getting your friends to help?**

My friends have been helping to sell and ship the t-shirts, solicit donations, send people to our Facebook page and the TeenagersCare.org website. They also have helped with brainstorming ideas for Teenagers Care. This weekend they will be helping at 4th of July events and throughout the summer to raise money for wildlife in the Gulf area.

### **How are you getting the word out about your organization?**

Facebook has been a great resource. In just 10 days we have over 300 fans and 156,000 impressions. Our website has received 25,637 hits from over 11 countries in 2 weeks. It's amazing how easy Register.com and Facebook are to work with. We also have been handing out free [helpcleanupthespill.com](http://helpcleanupthespill.com) and TeenagersCare.org wristbands driving people to the website.

### **How much have you collected so far?**

In just under two weeks we have raised close to \$5,000. Friends from around the country have offered to solicit donations. This weekend we hope to raise another \$10,000 at July 4th events through t-shirt sales and donations. I would like to raise as much

as \$100,000 in the next few months.

### **Which animals are benefitting from your collection drive?**

Initially we will be helping the Brown Pelican, through donations to local wildlife rehabilitation organizations. We also know that dolphins are in distress and plan to support grassroots groups that are saving them from the spill. We are in the midst of finalizing the first round of donations and groups benefiting from the effort.

### **What would you say to BP?**

The oil rig should have never been placed into the Gulf, if there were not functional fail-safe systems in place. It's their responsibility to clean up the crisis that they have created and they should be held accountable for their actions. But, in the meantime, we as citizens must help wherever possible to save wildlife and clean up their habitat. BP just won't be able to handle it all and people need to realize that fact. Louisiana alone has around 7000 miles of very jagged coastline not to mention the Alabama, Mississippi and Florida coastland. BP will need the help of local organizations to find animals and nature in distress.

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