

**This Essay Received a Special Humanitarian Award &
Second Place Award for Hamden Middle School**

Defining A Hero

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Have you ever wondered what a hero is? Are you one? Well a hero is someone who is admired because of their extraordinary act of dedication, courage and sacrifice. Heroes are not just celebrities who are well known for their looks and talent. Actually, celebrities can be heroes too. Celebrities including Bono and Oprah Winfrey are considered to be heroes, but usually heroes are regular everyday people. They can be found any place in the world. Maybe the guy who bags your groceries at the supermarket could be a hero. Your dentist might be a hero, or the little old lady that lives down the street. What I'm saying is that anyone can be a hero.

One person I know that I consider to be hero is my dad. Not only is he my dad but he is also the singer/song writer of the band "Ten Shekel Shirt." Not to long ago he co-founded the charity entitled **Love146**. These are the reasons to why he is my hero.

Lamont Hiebert, my dad, grew up in the small town of Grand Forks, British Columbia, Canada. He taught himself guitar at the age of 19. He spent his early twenties serving with Youth With A Mission or YWAM, (similar to the Peace Corps) down in Texas. There he started a family and continued to practice his musical ability. In 1999, he moved up to Connecticut. He formed his band and released 2 albums. Ten Shekel Shirt toured the country, sold nearly a quarter of a million albums, and had a #1 hit -"Ocean."

After a successful start to his music career, he decided to put his band on "hold" to start **Love146**. This charity seeks to end child slavery and exploitation around the world. Their job is to care for survivors by providing "safe homes" and therapists. After visiting Southeast Asia with undercover investigators where he saw children being sold by human traffickers, he knew that something had to be done about it. According to UNICEF, 2 children are sold into slavery every minute. Some are as young as 5 years of age. I know a little 5 year-old girl that lives in our neighborhood. It's heartbreaking to think of her being put to work and beaten.

Children that end up in slavery are sometimes abducted right off their village streets or sold by desperate parents. Most often they are tricked into captivity. For example, human traffickers offer false opportunities for education, employment, entertainment, and even romance, and then sell the children off into a life of abuse and shame. One girl thought she was being offered a chance to work at a hair salon. An 11-year-old boy just assumed he was being taken to see his first movie in a theater. A teenage girl believed her boyfriend was taking her to a new country to get married. Although the legal slave trade ended more than a century ago, criminal gangs continue to prey upon the most vulnerable citizens of our world. It is estimated that there are 27 million slaves in our world today, most of them women and children. That is double the amount of slaves that were extracted from Africa during the 300 years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Thankfully, Love146 has been able to prevent numerous child abductions in recent years through their prevention efforts. They have built safe homes for many children rescued from slavery. **Love146** won the 2007 MySpace Impact Award for Social Justice and they have been honored in GQ Magazine and other national publications. Many famous people support **Love146** including actor Alec Baldwin, PGA golfer Ben Crane, and the band Paramore.

Presently Lamont continues to raise awareness and funds for **Love146** and release new music. He just came out with his 3rd album, called *Jubilee*, and is currently working on his next album. Recently, Lamont sang the Canadian National Anthem at the 2008 NBA All-Star weekend, and has opened for major artists like Toby Mac, Natasha Bedingfield, and John Legend.

Even though he travels around a lot, my dad is still my hero. He has touched a lot of hearts and helped many people in different ways because of his music and the charity he founded. I have even had people I don't even know come up to me and tell me what a great dad I have. Do you have someone in your life who you regard as your hero?