

## Peace Jam: Inspiring a new generation of young leaders

The US based PeaceJam Foundation aims to create a new generation of young leaders committed to positive change in their communities and the wider world; they work with Nobel Peace Laureates to inspire change in young people.

PeaceJam founder Ivan Suvanjiëff began the project after learning, in a chance encounter with members of a Denver gang that, not only were young people aware of the politics of South Africa – they were also supportive of Desmond Tutu's non-violent efforts toward change.

### Community Leadership

Suvanjiëff was encouraged by the impact of this meeting. The predominant atmosphere of hopelessness and disinterest associated with young people in deprived neighbourhoods, seemed at variance with their understanding and appreciation for distinctive leadership half the world away. Suvanjiëff developed an audacious project idea: demonstrate real community leadership by enabling young people direct contact with inspirational Nobel Peace Prize Laureates.

The concept was developed with Dawn Engle cofounder and chair of the Colorado Friends of Tibet. She had been granted an audience with the Dalai Lama, where she and Suvanjiëff spoke passionately about their ideas. The Dalai Lama backed the project, suggesting other Nobel Laureates who might also be supportive. Eventually, twelve Laureates- The Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, President Oscar Arias, Aung San Suu Kyi, Jody Williams, Máiread Corrigan Maguire, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Bishop Carlos Belo, José Ramos-Horta, Betty Williams, and Sir Joseph Rotblat – were moved by the vision and committed themselves to assist.

Since its launch in 1996, more than 500,000 young people have participated in the PeaceJam international education programme, the curriculum is based on the lives and experiences of Nobel Peace Laureates who work personally with young people to pass on their values, skills and wisdom.

The goal of PeaceJam is to inspire a new generation of peacemakers to transform their local communities, themselves and the world. Over 300,000 service projects have been established by young participants, and over 120 PeaceJam events have taken place in 10 different countries to teach peace, conflict resolution, and tolerance, to young people around the world.

PeaceJam projects use a "Service-Learning model" based in the belief that that young people are a community's greatest asset; each community has a responsibility to support young people as active contributors and democratic citizens of their own community. Community-school partnerships are central to the success of Service-Learning; involving young people in community activity can increase educational achievement as well as building stronger communities. Examples include a History lesson about the 1960s Civil Rights movement where the importance of voter registration was discussed resulting in young people volunteering to work with current registration campaigns. In another project an Economics teacher wanted students to understand the economics of hunger. Examining concepts such as supply and demand, government intervention, and wage/price controls, the teacher demonstrated that hunger can be the result of various forces at work within society not a personal failing. To better understand the issue students spent time at a Food Depository project packing and re-packaging food for distribution among local food pantries for homeless people and developed ongoing volunteer connections.

### Global Call to Action

Peace Jam celebrated its tenth birthday by issuing the Global Call to Action a ten year programme focussing on ways young people can tackle the ten core problems are at the root of much of the suffering in our world

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