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Finding Solutions Newsletter

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ALWAYS QUESTION...

By Julia Butterfly Hill

We live in challenging times. From hunger and poverty to the industrial prisons and military complex, air and water pollution to deforestation and global warming, everywhere we look, there are problems facing our country and our world. It is easy to become overwhelmed when trying to find ways to make a positive difference.

When people hear that I lived in an ancient redwood tree for over 2 years to keep it from being cut down, they often respond by saying, "I could never do that." I always respond, "Well, neither could I." There is no way I could have ever—even in my wildest dreams—imagined what I lived through and experienced in those years without touching the ground. But as I look back now, I can see how I was uniquely positioned to take that stand and how each and every one of us is uniquely gifted to help make our world a better place. It is often the parts of ourselves that we are taught are bad that can be some of our greatest strengths.

For example, I have been stubborn and getting into trouble since I was about two years old. There is a joke about me that the first cry out of my mouth when I was born was, "Whyyyyyyy?????" and I have been questioning everything ever since. Because I often felt different, bad, and wrong for the way I saw, questioned, and experienced life, I became very rebellious. As I hit my teenage years, I unfortunately did some pretty stupid things as I struck out at the world I saw, the people around me, and even myself. I am lucky and grateful to be alive. Many of my friends from those years didn't make it.

But the deep questioner in me—the part of me that has always asked, "Why?" over and over until I got an answer that felt

(Continued on page 2)

About this issue...

Welcome to our 10th anniversary issue. We are celebrating by giving the newsletter a new name, *Finding Solutions*. We feel that this name reflects the articles we publish. Also this issue is 12 pages, rather than the normal eight. As you go through the newsletter, please look for the 10th anniversary icon in the title box. This alerts you to articles that deal specifically with KIDS.

We attended a conference in New York City, and had the privilege of hearing Julia Butterfly Hill speak. We were delighted when she agreed to write an article (pg. 1) for *Finding Solutions*. She explains why it is so important that we continue to ask that age-old question WHY.

Joan Dye Gussow returns to this publication (pg. 3) and describes her relationship with KIDS, and the pleasure of watching it grow.

Judy Huynh (pg. 4) explains how she put the teacher guide to work in her classroom. You will share the excitement of the students as they prepared for their International Dinner.

Stephanie Kempf, author of the KIDS teacher guide, takes us on a journey to Russia (pg. 5). We travel with her as she goes through the final stages of adopting her son and explains the difficult life the Russians lead.

Laura Grabe (pg. 7) describes how young people are assaulted daily by advertising and marketing messages, and the effect this has on them and society.

Bill Ayres (pg. 8) shares with us his thoughts on how young people can make a difference in the community and world.

Kolleen Bouchane and Leah Goldfine of RESULTS (pg. 9) outline the problem of school fees in developing countries and what you can do to help eliminate them.

Tim Kasser (pg. 10) discusses KIDS and values. For the first time we've reprinted in article from an earlier newsletter, as we felt it belonged in this special issue.

Finally (pg. 11), you learn how you can help KIDS and reap some benefits doing so.

Enjoy.

(Continued from page 1)

like deep truth—never gave up. I even questioned myself, which I think is really important. Always asking *why*, even of myself, is what eventually led me into activism. I found a way to channel my rebellious, stubborn, truth-seeking nature into positive ways of being. I have learned how to use exactly who I am to help create a better world.

This is something that lives within each and every one of us. Who we are, is exactly who we are meant to be. We grow when we find the courage to find answers through asking really difficult questions of everyone, including ourselves. So often, we want someone else to give us the answers. We look to see what others—our friends, teachers, commercials, or movies to name a few—are doing or saying to decide what we should do. And even though it is important to be able to learn from others, we should always ask if it is important and really the truth for ourselves. If we are willing to risk looking silly, not fitting in, or even being laughed at or yelled at, then we can be really powerful and make a big difference in the world.



Julia in Luna (her tree home) on top of a giant Redwood. She spent over two years in Luna.

Using world hunger as an example for all of this, when we ask the questions, “Why are people hungry? Why do people die from hunger and diseases caused by malnutrition?” The first, easy answer would be, “Because they don’t have food.” But when we ask deeper and deeper questions, we begin to realize that a big part of the reason is that too many people have taken more than their share of the Earth’s resources for too many years and even today. This causes an imbalance in our world that allows for some people to have more than they could ever possibly need, while others starve and go

without. When asking tough questions, we can also see that destruction of our natural environment contributes to food shortages, water shortage and pollution, soil erosion, global warming and so much more—all of which affect people’s access to healthy food. These and so many more answers can only be found by asking question after question until we uncover what is at the heart, the center, the reason and cause of what we truly need to know.

It is not always easy to be this kind of person. But when we choose to live our lives to make a difference, the first step always comes in being a good student and asking tough questions. For me, life itself is about always being a student. I want to be learning for as long as I am alive. I know the more I learn the more positive difference I can make in the world.

I am proud and happy to know of all the young people all over the world—just like you—who are committed to making our world a better place for

all. YOU are the ones to make the difference. It is not really a question of, “*Can* we make a difference?” Every choice we make changes the world. Each and every one of us *does* make a difference. The question we must begin with then is, “What *kind* of a difference do we want to make?”

Julia Butterfly Hill is an activist, author, educator and founder of the non-profit organization Circle of Life. She may be contacted at info@circleoflife.org.

A Word of Thanks to Members of the KIDS Advisory Board...

Normally we simply list the names of the members of our Advisory Board along with a brief description of their activities in the real world. We felt that after a decade of service (for most) to KIDS, it was time to publicly thank **Anne Baker, Jen Chapin, Rex Enoch, Fern Gale Estrow, Marta Flanagan, Joan Dye Gussow, Andrew Steven Halperin, Judy Huynh, Stephanie Kempf, Velma LaPoint, and Ava McCall** for all that they have done (and continue to do) for KIDS.

KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE® FINDING SOLUTIONS NEWSLETTER

A PROGRAM OF WORLD HUNGER YEAR (WHY)

Published by:

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MAKING CONNECTIONS...

By Joan Dye Gussow

KIDS 10th
anniversary

When I first began studying nutrition, I was convinced that the real issue in world hunger was whether we could produce enough food for a world population that was exploding. As I began trying to answer that question, I went stumbling across the fields—resource economics, ethics, agriculture, food science, advertising, bioenergetics, and the like—picking up pieces that turned out to be connected in often surprising ways to the deadly fact that over 30,000 children a day die of starvation in a world where there is ample food. The secret to understanding, I had come to realize, lay in making connections.

I give a one-page quiz on the first day of my class in nutritional ecology—a class that is all about making connections—and at the bottom of the page, I have for some time printed this conundrum which I call an extra point question even though the quiz is never scored. “In 1989 Bangladesh put a ban on the export of frog legs. When the first Gulf war caused Kuwait to deport its Bangladeshi workers, the frog leg export ban was lifted, resulting in an increase in pesticide use. Why was it lifted? Why did pesticide use increase?” In order to figure it out, you have to know only that both frogs and insecticides kill insects, and that when you take frogs’ legs off, they die. And you also need to understand that in poor countries, a job catching frogs is probably better than no job at all. Most students have a hard time with the question because they’re not used to making connections.

One of the students who took that quiz many years ago (I don’t remember how she did on the frog’s leg question!) was Jane Levine, an older student, very bright and hard working. Because she had a sharing marriage, she talked to her business-executive husband Larry about what she was learning in class. And Larry, victim of a takeover of the very successful mattress ticking company where he ran the marketing department, walked out on his new bosses one day and decided to turn his substantial energies into doing something that mattered more.

Jane and Larry had already begun to involve themselves in the Earth Friends program at Teachers College which Larry credits with helping him learn the connections between food and the environment. Almost simultaneously, the two of them joined the board of World Hunger Year, and quickly decided that they needed to go further. And so, with few resources other than their own passion and commitment, Larry and Jane decided to begin a program that would teach kids about hunger and help them learn how to

make a difference in an unjust world. And so was born Kids Can Make a Difference®.

Almost by accident, the Levines were invited to a school in York, Maine (where they had a summer place) and found themselves facing 100 sixth graders. They survived, and Larry discovered that he loved to teach. Armed with just a few facts, about how many children died of hunger, about how much food there was in the world, about who got it and who didn’t and some of the reasons why, he and Jane began giving hunger awareness workshops that helped young people make connections about why hunger happens. By the end of their first year they had spoken to children in 20 public and private schools in New England and Metropolitan New York City.

It’s not easy to teach children about the existence of poverty and hunger. The facts are damn depressing, and it takes energy and wit to help kids understand how they might begin to intervene to assuage the suffering of others. Through Kids Can Make a Difference, Larry and Jane found a way to empower teachers and their students. coax them into taking action rather than withdrawing into help-less indifference.

As they became increasingly aware of the lack of printed resources dealing with hunger in a way young people could relate to, Larry and Jane worked with Jane’s schoolteacher cousin Stephanie Kempf to produce a sourcebook that would provide teachers with information and resources—and memorable lessons—about hunger and poverty. The result, two years later, was the widely acclaimed *Finding Solutions to Hunger*, a Sourcebook for Middle and Upper School Teachers.

Kids is now ten years old. It’s been an amazing journey to look in on, from the time when Larry went into his first classroom and discovered he loved teaching—and could do it—to this tenth anniversary when Kids’ materials and approaches are used in thousands of classrooms across the United States. Some people don’t just make connections, they get things done. Thanks.

Joan Dye Gussow is an author, serious food grower, and Professor Emerita of Nutrition and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University She is a member of the KIDS Advisory Board. Joan Dye Gussow may be contacted at jeg30@columbia.edu.



Palo Community Schools International Dinner...

By Judy Huynh

KIDS 10th
anniversary

If you drove through Palo, Michigan, you might think that there was nothing much happening there. There is only one store (Joe's Market), two churches, and the school. However, if you visited the school, you might be surprised at what's happening. Students at Palo Community Schools, a rural K – 8 school district, are actively involved in learning about child labor, refugee issues, environmental concerns, and world hunger, and in doing something about these issues.

About five years ago, several of the teachers at Palo Community Schools wanted to educate our students about the issue of poverty and hunger in the world as part of our curriculum. While searching the web for information, I came across the Kids Can Make a Difference web site. I was very excited to find that I could purchase a book, *Finding Solutions to Hunger*, containing lessons for teaching about the root causes of hunger and giving examples of how students could become actively involved in ending hunger in the world. I ordered the book, and have used it in my sixth grade classroom every year since. I love this book! I love watching my students become informed, empowered citizens ready to change the world after participating in these hunger lessons.

Once students become aware of the problem of hunger in the world, they naturally want to find a solution to the problem. The sixth graders decided to raise funds for an organization that was involved in helping to alleviate hunger; we would do it by hosting a dinner. Our first year we hosted an "Empty Bowls" soup and bread dinner, but the next year we changed it to an International Dinner, which we've continued to host for the last three years. We host the dinner for two reasons: to increase awareness in our community about hunger in the world, and to raise money to help fight hunger. The sixth grade students coordinate the dinner, but every classroom is involved in helping with it. Our school is heavily involved in academic service learning, and the International Dinner is our biggest service project. The money raised from the dinner is donated to Heifer International. After researching several different hunger organizations, the sixth grade students voted unanimously to support Heifer and their work to end hunger in the world through community building and sustainable agriculture.



At the International Dinner, we serve food from countries in every continent of the world (including snocones from Ant-

arctica!). Part of the food is prepared by the different classrooms, part of it is donated by community members, and part of it comes from different ethnic restaurants – some donated and some purchased at a discounted price. This year we had food from France, Mexico, Vietnam, Thailand, Lebanon, India, Netherlands, Chile, Italy, Japan, China, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Korea, Australia, Zambia, Ireland, and the United States. We display posters done by the sixth graders that inform the people who attend the dinner about some of the organizations that work to end hunger (such as Heifer International, Kids Can Make a Difference, Oxfam, etc.) and give them some facts and statistics about hunger in our world. There is no charge for the dinner; we ask only for a donation.

In addition to the food and posters, we have a world market that sells crafts from SERRV (an organization that helps people in developing countries market their crafts at a fair price) and crafts made by the students in the different classrooms. This year the grandmother of one of my students donated a quilt for Heifer International. My sixth graders tied off the quilt, and it was raffled off at the dinner. It had a map of the world in the center, and blocks of material with animals that are donated by Heifer around the outside. It was awesome! Outside of the school, we have a display of young animals that Heifer donates, such as goats, chickens, rabbits, pigs, cows, sheep, and llamas. This is a big attraction for the kids.

Our dinner has become a very popular event in our area, attracting people from 30 to 40 miles away. Our first year we had 150 people attend, and we raised \$1000. The second year we had over 300 people attend, and we raised over \$1800. This year we expected to increase our numbers, but bad weather prevented that. Thunderstorms, tornadoes, and heavy rains hit our area the day of our dinner, causing flooding and many power outages. In Palo, the power went off at 1:30 that afternoon. We held the dinner anyway, and still had around 250 people attend, and we raised over \$1500. Besides educating people about hunger and raising money for hunger, we find that our dinner is a great community-building event. Each year more community members join us in putting on our dinner and helping us in the fight against hunger. This year we were very excited to win an MASB (Michigan Association of School Boards) Award of Excellence for our dinner. However, the most important outcome of our dinner and the hunger studies that lead up to it each year is the empowerment of our students. They truly believe that "Kids Can Make a Difference" in the world.

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BABY HOUSE #12

By STEPHANIE KEMPF

On a cold night in May, 2001 I pulled up to the battered gate of Baby House #12 in the backstreets of St. Petersburg, Russia with two strangers, ready to meet my nineteen month-old son, Andrei, for the first time. (Two days earlier, my husband had been admitted to a Los Angeles hospital for emergency surgery. He would be all right so we decided I would keep our appointed court date and bring our son home.) Vlad, my driver had taken every shortcut he could to get me from the airport to the Baby House before Andrei was put into bed. Alex, my translator, was preparing me for what would be the most wonderful and emotional event of my life. Both men had been through this many times with foreigners coming to their beautiful, old city to take away its abandoned children. They were extremely courteous and respectful as well as proud of their Russian heritage.

An old man hobbled out of the guard-house into the drizzle to check our documents. He glared at me suspiciously when I presented a U.S. passport, but I was moved by the fact that he was so protective of these children no one else wanted. He waved us through and closed the gate behind us. Inside the Baby House it was quiet, dark and chilly. Several antique wicker prams lined the entrance-way. There was a strong smell of boiled cabbage. Alex motioned for me to sit on a wooden bench and whispered with a smile, "I'll tell them Andrei's mother is here."

I had always imagined this moment with great ceremony: our baby, pink and bundled in a blanket, presented to Jim and me by his Russian "mamas" while soft music played and candles burned. A scrawny cat growled hungrily as it twirled in and out of my ankles. Down the dimly lit hall a stern woman marched a pale little boy towards me. The child was dressed in torn girl's leggings, three ragged sweaters and light blue plastic shoes (two sizes too small). He had a runny nose and his cheeks burned with eczema. As I stood, the woman pushed past me and pulled Andrei into a large dark room with burgundy shag carpet. As soon as I entered she closed the door leaving us alone. I switched on the light.

Andrei stood there smiling, his eyes twinkling mischievously. I sat on the floor and reached out my hand to him. He lowered his eyes. I pulled some toys out of my bag and placed them all in front of him. He stooped down, picked them up one at a time and placed them in my lap, still smiling. I laughed and held out my hand again. This time he put his little hand in mine and I took this as a sign

that he accepted me. Then, he ran away and hid behind a purple velvet couch. For the next half-hour we played hide-and-seek from a distance while I fought the urge to hug him tightly.

There was no heat in the house and Andrei, like all the children, had a chronic cold. He was unusually pale. I would learn later that he was seriously anemic and had rickets, a vitamin D deficiency which causes the bones to soften. He had never been outside in the sunlight and his meals consisted mainly of potatoes, porridge, bread, cabbage and a little milk. Meat and fruit were available in small quantities only on holidays. He also suffered from intestinal parasites because of the lack of clean drinking water. In spite of all this, a lively, even defiant, spirit shone through. I was in love!

When the stern woman came to take him away I asked Alex if I might see where my son sleeps. I was led upstairs to a small room with twenty-five miniature twin beds sitting low to the floor. At the foot of each bed lay an old, rolled blanket. The wood floor was cold and bare. Outside in the dark hallway twenty-five toddlers sat on little blue potties--not one made a sound. One woman was in charge. I blew Andrei a kiss and left.

On the way to my comfortable hotel in St. Isaac's Square Alex graciously answered my many questions. (According to Human Rights Watch there are approximately 600,000 abandoned children throughout Russia and the number is on the rise. Last year 5,209 of them became part of U.S. families). Many of these children are left as infants in a *dom rebyonka* (Baby House). They remain here until they are six years old, then they are moved to an orphanage. Most of the orphans have at least one living parent, but for various reasons--poverty, sickness, unemployment, trouble with the law, etc. the parent can't take care of the child.

Since the collapse of Soviet rule in 1991 many individuals and institutions have been caught up in the country's economic transition. Orphanages were once totally funded by the government. Now their staffs--overworked and underpaid (some not paid at all)--plead for donations of food and clothing from adoption agencies and church groups outside the country. Another reason for the prevalence of child abandonment has to do with an entrenched Soviet ideology which favors collective organization over individual care

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

and the belief that the State could replace family. Working and unemployed parents view orphanages as temporary boarding houses for their children. They hope to go back for them once they get on their feet. Unfortunately, after awhile most parents simply stop visiting their children.

For the rest of that week I visited Andrei twice a day in the Baby House. At lunch I watched him run to grab his bib, a dirty rag hanging from a peg, and place it over his head. The children all fed themselves, eating very quickly and quietly. In between visits I spent my time getting to know Andrei's native city and culture. Alex and Vlad told me colorful stories about its history and took me to the ballet, palaces, Dostoyevsky's house and the Hermitage, an art museum with three million exhibits. Together, we climbed to the top of St. Isaac's Cathedral where music by Tchaikovsky played from loudspeakers, ringing out over the entire city. It would have been glorious had I not been so aware of the quiet desperation that surrounded us--those hungry little faces of the orphans, the Russians on the street who made the most of what little they had. Vlad wore the same shirt everyday. Alex told me the Russian people may own one coat and one pair of shoes but they take very good care of them. Grocery stores were very small and did not carry much variety--especially those outside the city. I visited a toy store to purchase a *matreshka* (nesting dolls) and some Russian books for Andrei. It was clear that this was a shop that only wealthy customers would enter, even though the prices were what we in the U.S. would consider average. Once I asked Alex about a medieval-looking structure across the Neva River. He explained that it was the prison and that most of the older boys from the orphanage would end up there after leaving public school at the age of fifteen. Without guidance and financial support many of them fall into the wrong company on the street and become involved in drug use and other illegal activities.

It is customary in Russia to give gifts for favors. The adoption agency had advised me on what to bring for the "mamas" in Baby House #12 who had taken care of Andrei--Tylenol, instant coffee, stockings, shampoo and cosmetics. These are luxuries and they were very grateful. I had also brought a large suitcase filled with medicines for the children, vitamins, clothing and blankets. On one visit to a department store Alex helped me purchase shoes for Andrei's little friends. I preferred the sneakers but he insisted we get thirty pairs of the blue plastic shoes that the salesman kept hidden in the back of the stockroom. "It is important that they all have the same," Alex explained.

Snow fell on the morning of my adoption hearing. The courtroom was full: the judge and her many attendants, the prosecuting attorney, Valentina, the head of Baby House #12, a representative from the Department of Child Welfare, a government inspector and several others--all

women! For one hour I was asked questions about the details of our financial circumstances, how my husband and I met, our families, religious practices and access to medical care. I was embarrassed to have to describe our New York apartment. The typical Russian family lives in a tiny one or two bedroom apartment. A washer-dryer is an unimaginable luxury. Alex would tell me later that the average Russian earns around \$150 a month and that the judge's annual salary was only \$2,100.

In spite of our vast economic and cultural differences there was an understanding between us. I had come half way around the world to claim a little boy who had nothing and no one to call his own except his name. There were tears, hugs and congratulations all around when the judge finally announced, "You may take your son home today." I rushed back to the Baby House. Andrei's "Mamas" undressed him (they wanted to keep his ragged clothes!) and passed him around, kissing his smiling face and holding him close. They asked that I send photos of him as he grows. I promised. I quickly dressed him in clothes that his U.S. cousins had outgrown and we were off to Moscow to process his paperwork. We said a tearful *spaziba* (thank you) to Alex and Vlad at the big train station at midnight and exchanged addresses. We were on our way home.

For three months after he was home Andrei held onto food inside his cheeks, refusing to swallow it for hours. This is typical of children who never get enough food. It was interesting watching him taste crunchy, sweet or tart foods for the first time. He ate anything and everything! He had never developed a strong sucking instinct because as an infant he was given watered down milk in a bottle with a very large hole in the nipple--a fast way to get several babies to finish their meal. Some exercises took care of this problem in a month or so.

Today Andrei is a healthy, energetic, articulate and affectionate five year-old. An expert on dinosaurs and trains, he loves to snuggle and tell knock-knock jokes. A lovely, young Russian woman visits him each week to encourage him to speak Russian and to tell him stories about his homeland. Alex has visited us and taken back photos to Andrei's Russian "mamas." We celebrate Russia Day every June 1st--the day Andrei arrived in the U.S. We eat Russian food, tell the story of how we became a family and look at photos of the children and "mamas" in Baby House #12. I think of them everyday and of the mothers and fathers who will never see them.

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CONSUMING KIDS...

One only has to visit a household where young children between the ages of 4 and 7 reside to see the impact media has on the kinds of foods being offered in the home and causing temper tantrums in the grocery store. These days it's not VISA that's everywhere you want to be, it's McDonald's and this fast food behemoth will go where the children do, which explains why those prominent golden arches can be found plastered on everything from Barbie dolls to video games. Peruse your local grocery store shelves and you'll find SpongeBob SquarePants Popsicles and Flintstones chicken nuggets. Packaged in eye-catching colors with bubbly typefaces and silly cartoon characters, these products look like they belong in a toy store, not sold along side a box of Fiber One.

The intense marketing efforts of food and soft drinks manufacturers contribute to obesity much in the same way smoking contributes to lung cancer. The difference here being that schools and the government go to great lengths to protect children from tobacco but don't do much in the way of protecting them from non-nutritious foods. Obesity rates are rising rapidly among children and adolescents and there is a direct link between the rise in marketing to those kids and the rise of the numbers on their scales. A study done in 1997 indicated that children obtained half of their calories from added fat and sugar and that a measly 1% of those children ate diets that resembled anything close to what's outlined in the Food Guide Pyramid. Another recent study done by Gerber, of the Gerber baby food conglomerate, said that 1/3 of kids ate no fruits or vegetables at all but instead preferred hot dogs, French fries and bacon. It's obvious that to many children, a square meal is something that comes in box with a smiley face on it and not off a proper or practical nutrition guide.

According to research done at Texas A&M University, the amount of money big food makers like McDonald's spent marketing to children and their parents rose from \$12.5 billion in 1998 to \$15 billion last year. Kids are targeted because they influence a lot of the purchasing that goes on within a household--\$188 billion in fact, according to recent studies done on children aged 4-12. While food marketers maintain that their ads help parents make nutritious and informed decisions, the kinds of foods they advertised sang a largely different tune. In doing my own research watching after-school cartoons such as Pokemon and Barney, the commercial breakdown was as follows: 40% for sugary cereals, 30% for outrageous toys, 20% for unhealthy snacks

and 10% for upcoming programming promotions. What food marketers are doing is depending on parents to be too preoccupied and too exhausted to have the energy to deny a request for fast food meals or sugary, fat laden snack foods.

So turn off the television, limit Internet access and monitor kid's magazines. Unfortunately, it's not that easy. You can run, but you can't hide. Big Food's messages are everywhere. We could develop the most comprehensive and detailed intervention program for kids but once those kids are sent back out into an environment with Britney Spears hawking Pepsi, severe cutbacks in physical education, vending machines in school hallways and Saturday morning cartoon marathons, these types of efforts are in a sense, totally worthless. Change has to start on a political level. An effective primary step to take would be to impart some sort of ban on advertising in schools and to children in general. We ought to tax unhealthy foods the same way we taxed tobacco using the money gained to promote exercise and healthy foods. We can start this effort by writing articles in local papers and publishing informative newsletters to raise awareness. We might also try giving seminars for parents and teachers and by making nutrition and health classes a mandatory component of basic education so kids are able to make their own decisions. Kids must learn that having a balanced diet does not mean having a chocolate donut in one hand and a crême filled in the other. Whether it's having Spongebob Squarepants promote broccoli or having apple the fruit, not the computer, sponsored lacrosse games, something has to be done because the problem is only getting bigger and clearly, so are the nation's children.

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HEY KIDS, YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!...

By Bill Ayres

KIDS 10th
anniversary

CONGRATULATIONS, on ten years of believing Kids Can Make A Difference and helping tens of thousands of kids to do just that, in so many ways.

This is an age in which millions of us have lost hope in our system: our political structure, big business, schools, churches and temples, the media and often the very families that give us life and nurture. What are the choices for young people growing up in our society? They can be seduced by the empty, ever pulsating promises of media for happiness through things: buy things, new things, more and more things. They can enter the fast track to success and lose their souls to the fake gods of power, prestige, and possessions. They can become so dismayed and disenchanted that they fall into one or more debilitating addictions that slowly drain the life and hope out of both body and spirit, or they can decide to make a difference. With the right support and inspiration it can happen. It does happen for millions of young people every year.

If you choose to make a difference, here are some of the things that will happen:

- You will feel a sense of satisfaction that you helped someone.
 - You will feel better about yourself. Your self-esteem will grow.
 - You will get out of yourself a bit and not be so pre-occupied with the small problems of your life that you have made bigger than they really are.
 - You will be given relief from some of the truly big problems you have and perhaps a new perspective on them.
 - You will meet some of the finest people on earth. People that you probably would not have met otherwise. You will feel a sense of community, of belonging, perhaps for the first time.
 - You may very well meet someone who will become a good friend or a mentor and have a big influence on your life.
 - You will learn compassion. That is the ability to suffer with one person or a whole group of people where you can't solve their problems but you can be there with them and for them.
 - You will often be frustrated by injustice and your failure to help everyone who is in need.
 - This may lead you beyond individual acts of kindness to working or volunteering with an organization that is dedicated to the service of people and to changing the system.
- If you choose this route you will feel empowered by the community and you will be able to utilize your passion, your creativity, energy, imagination, and wisdom, your total person for a cause, something beyond yourself.
 - You may not succeed in all you set out to do. In fact, you will often fail. You will make mistakes, but you will know that you have made a difference.

How do I know this to be true? It has been my life for 45 years, 30 of them with WHY (World Hunger Year). As a kid I wanted to make a difference with my life. Fortunately, I met another kid, Harry Chapin the singer and co-founder of WHY with the same dream and over the years I have met dozens more dreamers. We have made a difference in the lives of millions of people, but we are not finished yet. The best is yet to come. Imagine that. You can make a difference.

Here are a few ways you can make a difference for hungry people.

- Learn more about world hunger as well as hunger and poverty right here in the USA. Our website-www.worldhungeryear.org and the Kids Can Make A Difference curriculum "Finding Solutions To Hunger".
- Learn about hunger in your community and how you can help by contacting your church or temple or a local non-profit service organization.
- Take part in a food drive.
- Work in a food pantry or a soup kitchen.
- Support national and state legislation to reduce hunger and poverty such as raising the minimum wage so that working people can feed their families and childcare programs and after school programs that allow parents, especially single parents, to go to work knowing that their children are in good care. Call or write your legislators about these issues. Remember, they receive very little mail so your communication makes a difference.
- Make a donation to Kids Can Make A Difference.
- Contact Oxfam or Bread For The World to learn more about hunger throughout the world and how you can help.
- Make sure your own diet has more fruits, vegetables and whole grains and less sugar and salt.

Bill Ayres, A Kid Who Wanted To Make A Difference, is Executive Director and co-founder of World Hunger Year (WHY). He may be contacted at bill@worldhungeryear.org

SCHOOL FEES...

By Kolleen Bouchane and Leah Goldfine

Background:

In numerous developing countries, millions of poor children are denied a basic education due to the devastating effect of school fees. School fees are a form of user fee that families in many developing countries are required to pay before their children are allowed to attend public primary or secondary school. According to UNICEF, 121 million children around the world are not in school; the majority of these are girls.

RESULTS is a nonprofit grassroots advocacy organization, committed to creating the political will to end hunger and the worst aspects of poverty. RESULTS is committed to individuals exercising their personal and political power by lobbying elected officials for effective solutions and key policies that affect hunger and poverty.

Our mission is to create the political will to end hunger and the worst aspects of poverty and to empower individuals to have breakthroughs in exercising their personal and political power. Creating the will to end hunger and the worst aspects of poverty requires working on multiple fronts to resolve complicated issues that keep hunger and poverty in place.

Providing basic education to girls boosts economic productivity, lowers maternal and infant mortality rates, increases life expectancy, and increases income. Without school fees to pay for, AIDS orphans will be more likely to be adopted. Furthermore, providing basic education to millions more children will reduce the AIDS rate because youth will have a mechanism in which to learn about preventative measures against the disease. In Uganda for example, the AIDS Commission there, has reported that the country's commitment to combating the disease through education has helped to lower the rate of new infections among 15-19 year olds by almost 50%.

Eliminating school fees is an essential part of international

development. No country has ever made any significant progress without first educating its population. Countries that have already eliminated school fees have seen huge increases in the number of children enrolled in primary school. In Tanzania for example, school enrollment rates have doubled since school fees were eliminated in that country.

Recent Developments and What Needs to be Done:

In a recent important vote, the Assistance to Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act of 2004 (H.R. 4061) passed in the House of Representatives. This monumental Act will enable communities around the world to provide better healthcare for AIDS orphans, psychosocial support for them and protection of their rights. The bill also responds to the problem of school fees by encouraging counties to eliminate their school fees and other barriers that exist which prevent AIDS orphans from obtaining a basic education. An almost identical bill has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Boxer, Smith, Chafee, and Feingold.

In the House mark-up for 2005, \$15 million was allocated for eliminating school fees. This funding would be distributed by USAID. This is NOT enough. The ideal solution to the problem of school fees would be an allocation of \$250 million to be housed at UNICEF and would be used to encourage countries to eliminate their school fees. There is still time before the Senate votes on their own budget for 2005 and this means that there is still time to push for the incentive fund to be housed at UNICEF.

Action to be Taken:

-Write or call your Senators and tell them that you believe education is a basic right for all children. Tell them you support funding in this year's appropriations bill for the creation of an incentive fund to be housed at UNICEF, which will help countries eliminate their school fees programs.

Write or call Kolleen Bouchane (kbouchane@results.org) or Leah Goldfine (lgoldfine@results.org) at RESULTS for more information

10th Anniversary offers-See page 11



KIDS AND VALUES

By Tim Kasser

KIDS 10th
anniversary

I recently became aware of the KIDS program at a consultation in New York City where a group of people were discussing the many ways in which our culture undermines children's well-being. The media portrayals of sex and violence and the constant glorification of consumption and materialism were the primary topics of our conversation, as were ideas about how to swim against the polluted stream of these cultural messages. Jane Levine, co-founder of KIDS, was one of the participants, and shared with us the excellent work this program is doing regarding issues of poverty and hunger.

From what Jane said, it was clear to me that KIDS does much more than work to eliminate poverty and hunger: It also teaches kids values which are too rarely encouraged in contemporary America. This is an area of special interest to me, for during the last several years my colleagues and I have been conducting empirical research about people's values. What I find exciting about the KIDS program is that it encourages a set of values which research shows: a) provide an antidote to the self-centeredness and materialism of consumer culture; and b) are associated with enhanced personal well-being.

KIDS aims to help children know that they can make a difference, that they can help others, and that their actions are one's which can benefit the world. In my research (e.g., Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Kasser, 1994), we call these "community feeling" or "helpfulness" values; others (e.g., Cohen & Cohen, 1996; Schwartz, 1994) have called these "conventional" or "benevolence" values, agreeing that they involve a focus on improving the state of the world. One of the clear findings emerging from all of these research projects is that individuals who are primarily oriented towards such community feeling values place less importance on materialistic, self-centered values. That is, to the extent kids care strongly about helping others and improving the state of the world, they are less likely to "buy into" the consumer values of desiring personal wealth, possessions, and popularity, and of having the "right" image. In my mind, this is one of the really beneficial effects of programs such as KIDS: It swims against the cultural stream of values.

A second interesting fact we know about people who strongly value helping the world and improving the lives of others is that they are happier and better adjusted than indi-

viduals who care about other, more materialistic values. Across several studies of adolescents and young adults, my colleagues and I have shown that individuals oriented towards community feeling and helpfulness report greater self-actualization and vitality, less depression and anxiety, fewer behavior disorders, and less narcissistic tendencies (Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Kasser, 1994). Similar results have been reported by other investigators (e.g., Cohen & Cohen, 1996). There are a variety of reasons adolescents who value helping others might be more psychologically healthy, but we believe one important reason is that it provides them with experiences which satisfy their needs to be connected to others and to feel competent and effective.

So when we think of the KIDS program, we can recognize that it does good work in at least three regards. First, it helps to solve problems of hunger and poverty, laudable goals in their own right. Second, by helping kids see the importance of helping others, it encourages a value system at odds with the consumer culture in which we live. Finally, the types of values encouraged by KIDS may actually help improve the quality of its participants' lives, making teens happier and better adjusted. What more could one ask?

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ED. Note:

This marks the first time we have ever reprinted an article. This article originally appeared in the Winter 2001 issue. Since many of our readers are new, and some might not remember the article we thought it appropriate to include Tim Kasser in our 10th Anniversary issue.

IT IS THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN...

By Larry and Jane Levine

We only come to you once a year to help support KIDS and this is that time. Unlike NPR and PBS we do not subject you to an endless series of fundraisers.

This is it!

The growth of KIDS is due in large measure to folks like you. As most of you are aware, KIDS has no paid staff nor does it pay rent. For the past 10 years, we have been supported by financial contributions from individuals and receipts from the sale of our teacher guide. This means that nearly 100% of all the money we receive goes directly to the program.

Because of you, the growth during this period has been robust. At the end of our first year in 1994, there were approximately 20 schools participating stretching from metropolitan New York City to the northern part of Maine. Two years later, Stephanie Kempf joined our team and developed the KIDS teacher guide, *Finding Solutions to Hunger: Kids Can Make A Difference*. This book, turned out to be the turning point for the program. After that, as Joan Gussow said in her article on page 3... "to this 10th anniversary when kids materials and approaches are used in thousands of classrooms across the United States."

We've come a long way!

But this is only the beginning!

If you have been with the program through the entire journey we hope we can continue to count on you this year. If you are new to KIDS we hope you will join in expanding the program to reach new schools, after school programs, religious schools, homeschoolers, and other venues to deliver the message that "kids can make a difference in their community and world."

If you have contributed before, you know how painless it can be. If you are new, we welcome you. In either case, all you need to do is supply the necessary information called for on the enclosed envelope. We gratefully accept donations by credit card or personal check-- and any amount is appreciated. Our largest single expense is the production of this newsletter, three times a year. If you are able, a donation of as little as \$10 will defray the cost of supplying you with a year of challenging and stimulating articles.

For those who desire to become financially more active in the program, we have some "goodies" for you in honor of our 10th anniversary celebration. This is your chance to support KIDS, and a tangible thank you from us.. As our way of thanking you for your past and continuing support we would like you to take the a few moments to see how easy it is for you to get a 100% cotton KIDS T-shirt. As a matter of fact, you can become the very first person in your neighborhood to sport this new fashion item.

KIDS 10th ANNIVERSARY OFFER



T-Shirt Models & Grandchildren. (L-R) Sophia Aquino, Oliver & Adrian Tiu

For a contribution of:

\$50 you will receive one shirt

\$75 you will receive two shirts

\$100 you will receive two shirts and a copy of the teacher guide.

The shirts are available in the following sizes, youth (Y), adult small (S), large (L) and extra-large (XL). The youth size fits middle school students, but as you can easily tell our three models have a few years to wait.

To order simply fill out all the necessary information called for on the attached envelope and write in the size(s) of the shirts you desire. Please allow two weeks for delivery.

2001 TEACHER GUIDE AVAILABLE

Contains Updated Statistics & Resources

***Finding Solutions To Hunger: Kids Can Make A Difference
by Stephanie Kempf.***

Uplifting, engaging, interactive and challenging lessons for middle and high school students on the root causes of and solutions to domestic and international hunger. Examines colonialism, contemporary development projects, the media, famine vs. chronic hunger, the working poor and more, as well as valuable ideas for how kids can make a difference in their community, and in the world around them.

Price... \$23 + \$6 shipping. Includes free one year subscription to the KIDS Newsletter!

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“If I were a teacher struggling to help students remain human in a sea of cynicism and self-absorption, I would grab onto this book as if it were a life raft and use it to bring my class to shore.”

*Joan Dye Gussow, Professor Emeritus,
Teachers College, Columbia University*



**1 Borodell Avenue
Mystic, CT 06355**

The purpose of **Kids Can Make A Difference®** is to inspire young people to realize that it is within their power to help eliminate hunger and poverty in their communities, their country, and their world.