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Finding Solutions Newsletter

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WE, THE POWERFUL...
By Jen Chapin

It's probably not Election Day as you are reading this, but chances are that you have already voted today, multiple times. Not because you engaged in election fraud, but because you engaged in consumption. Chances are, you paid a bill, filled up your tank with gas, or just picked up a bottled beverage at the corner store. So you made your voice heard.

Really? Well, yes. In our imperfect democracy, it often feels as though our voices are not being heard (didn't we clearly say on the last election day that we wanted to end the war?), yet in our imperfect capitalist economy, we are constantly stating preferences for the kind of world we want to live in, whether we mean to or not. And because of this, each of us has more power than we are willing to acknowledge. Each of us has more responsibility than we are willing to fully inhabit.

We might complain about the Bush administration's unwillingness to confront global warming; and then get into our big cars, alone, to drive to our newly constructed second homes, along a route that could conveniently be reached by train. We bemoan the crassness of our culture, then click on YouTube to see the latest celebrity meltdown. We don't like pollution, but we keep buying those plastic water bottles and sticking them in the plastic bags that flutter in all our treetops.

Alternatively, when we shop at the farmers market or purchase a share in a CSA, we vote for better nutrition, less urban sprawl, healthy family farms and true homeland security. When we take our local power company up on its offer to provide our household's energy in renewable form, we vote to give our climate a chance. When we resist our children's pleas for the sugary beverage encased in an animal-shaped plastic animated movie advertisement, we vote against diabetes and obesity, and for true family values.

Somehow, Adam Smith's famous hand is so invisible we often don't even see it holding our own wallets, and we can easily disassociate from the impact of our consumer actions. This is

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About this issue...

With this issue we bring 2007 to a close. Please check out page 5 and take action to guarantee your receiving another year of the newsletter.

Jen Chapin makes another appearance (pg.1) and challenges us "to vote with our values, every day of the year."

Daniella Boston (pg.2) poses the question "If youth are the future, then what is the outlook for Northern Uganda, where an entire generation of children has grown up knowing only turmoil and hardship?"

We are always pleased when the Executive Director of WHY, Bill Ayres, finds the time in his busy schedule to address our readers. He describes the power of the KIDS program and addresses the reasons why KIDS is an important program of WHY. This article serves as a wonderful "lead-in" to our annual fund raising message.

For years we have been watching the growth of the Fair Trade movement with great interest. Kelsie Evans (pg.6) explains that after 21 years of working hard at communicating the meaning of Fair Trade to adults they are now reaching out to an audience composed of young students.

YouthInkwell Publishing inspires young writers and illustrators to express their artistic abilities and help the less fortunate. LeAnne Bagnall (pg.7) takes us inside this unique nonprofit and explains how their mission is to create leaders out of our youth in order to establish a better future.

Enjoy

(Continued from page 1)

especially true for the large number of people in this country whose grip on the American Dream is so tenuous that consumption of disposable (and often poisonous) goods seems to be the most vivid expression of that Dream available to them. It's expensive to be poor, even/especially when there is so much stuff around that is so very cheap -- stuff that in turn holds our very lives to be cheap. In this country, and increasingly around the world, people can struggle tragically to pay for essential housing, health care, and education (whose costs have all risen astronomically in recent years, as incomes have stagnated) yet can always manage to find the solace (or the illusion of it) in the purchase of cheap designer knock-off sunglasses and cell phones.

It's not just the kind of spending we engage in that sends a message, but the mind-blowing quantity. Infinite growth, it seems, is the only way to go. The people of this country have managed to buffer our economy through tough times with our insatiable need for stuff, and naturally our leaders have only encouraged this. We have shopped our way through the aftermath of 9/11 and the Iraq war, and economists could argue that our survival depends upon the insatiability of consumer spending that we are now spreading throughout the developing world. Yet our innate collective wisdom tells us the opposite -- if we stop shopping and worrying to listen to it.

The elites of the West are now blessed with new consumer choices -- we can spend a little more now and buy a better future -- with hybrid cars, fair trade organic hemp jeans and

biodegradable laundry detergent. These are great options if you can afford them, but we will need to take a hard look at quantity, not just quality of the goods we buy. It will take some adjustment, but we know it is time to start. Time to fully embrace the ethos of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Time to enjoy leisure in nature instead of at the mall. Time to acknowledge that we are being suffocated by stuff, that technology has taken away as much time as it has given us, and that our spirits are smothered by shopping lists and tacit competitions.

There has been a spiritual spasm across the world, with the deeper yearnings of Muslims, Christians, Jews and other Believers being exploited by political warmongers, and clergy who always have something to sell. That so many millions have been manipulated by perverse interpretations of holy texts does not erase the underlying, camouflaged fact: people are crying out for truth, simplicity, peace and time. We need to sooth our spirits by choosing a new -- or really an ancient -- path. We need to spend more time in reverence for creation and less in reverence for objects and machines. We need our economies to blossom with innovation and green solutions, and not continue to ride on endless production of weapons, inefficient machines and disposable plastics. We need to vote with our values, every day of the year.

Jen Chapin is a songwriter, singer, the former Chair/current Secretary of the Board of Directors of WHY (World Hunger Year) and a member of the KIDS Advisory Board. To hear her music and read more, see www.jenchapin.com.

WHERE THERE IS LIFE THERE IS HOPE...

by Daniella Boston

If youth are the future, then what is the outlook for northern Uganda, where an entire generation of children has grown up knowing only turmoil and hardship?

Onek, who is twelve, was with his sister collecting firewood along the camp perimeter when they encountered a rebel ambush; he escaped but his sister was taken into captivity and hasn't been seen since. Jennifer, who was thirteen at the time, was raped by a gang of government soldiers, who forced her to watch on as her sister suffered the same fate. She has since discovered that she is HIV-positive.

Onek and Jennifer were among the children I met on my most recent trip to northern Uganda. My name is Daniella Boston and I co-founded **uNight: for the Children of Uganda** (www.unight.org) in collaboration with the Ugandan Diaspora as an advocacy group to bring peace and sustainable development to the blighted north of their country.

Since 1986, northern Uganda has been afflicted by a civil war, which has culminated in a humanitarian crisis that ranks among the gravest tragedies in the world today. For over two decades innocent civilians have been caught in a violent struggle between the Ugandan government army

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(UPDF) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels. Innocent civilians have been systematically tortured, raped, and murdered with impunity; their children taken and forced to fight, to kill or be killed. In Acholi, the epicenter of the crisis, the Government forcibly evicted approximately 1.6 million people from their homes and herded them into concentration-like camps. The camp populations were condemned to live in conditions so severe that at the height of the conflict over 1,000 people died each week; the majority were children. In 2006, the Government and the LRA signed a tentative peace agreement and the fighting has ceased. However, after two decades of civil war, an entire generation of children and young adults know nothing but life in camps – and their hopes and dreams are likewise bound by this reality.

Youth constitute over fifty percent of the population. It will be impossible to rebuild northern Uganda without their participation. These war-affected young people have neither adult role models nor a network of peers to sustain them through their personal development. By building relationships with a concerned global network, including student-led chapters at high-schools and colleges, uNight works to create a platform for people like you and me to know northern Uganda not only for its tragedy but for the humanity, vitality and promise of its people.

In Uganda, the uNight team will build local training centers where these war-affected children can gain the skills they will need to reconstruct their society. We have established a mentoring program to provide after-school training in literacy, numeracy, technology, leadership and entrepreneurship. These programs will leverage the ability of young people to solve their own problems and will promote the agency and dignity of the very youth we set out to support.

For as long as they can remember, Onek and Jennifer have lived with war; they have never known the opportunities peace brings. Despite all they have gone through, Onek and Jennifer are determined to receive the education and life-skills necessary to succeed and help others. Onek wants to become a journalist and Jennifer a doctor.

uNight youth centers will seek to provide teenagers like them with the chance to realize some of their hopes and dreams.

Consider this scenario: Onek and Jennifer have begun a literacy class, and things have begun to change. Onek's grades in school have begun to improve, and he decides he wants to go to university, just like his mentor, the young man who helps him with his writing assignments. Next week, he will begin a computer class. He hears that he will be able to send his letters instantly through space to other people who have heard and care about his experiences. He is glad to have the opportunity to be a voice for his people. At the youth center clinic, Jennifer receives the antiretroviral treatment necessary for her to survive into adulthood. Jennifer's school does not have well-trained teachers nor does she have any adult role-models to look to for guidance. Through uNight's technology lab and mentoring program, uNight links Jennifer with a medical-school student in the United States, who can tutor her online and send her additional materials to read.

When you listen to children like Jennifer and Onek, one is not struck by a sense of haplessness, but by the tentative optimism and hope that they exude. Children like these are the solution. However, northern Ugandan youth do not have the self-confidence or education, and lack the resources, professional training and market access necessary to create their own opportunities. uNight hopes to play a role in changing these circumstances.

Children like these give me confidence that the work I am doing with uNight is worthwhile and important. When I meet young people with the strength of character of Onek and Jennifer, I know that the help uNight provides will be humble in comparison to the potential contribution such children will make to society at large.

Daniella Boston is Executive Director of uNight: For the Children of Uganda. She may be reached at daniella@unight.org. For further information, go to www.unight.org.

KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE® FINDING SOLUTIONS NEWSLETTER
A PROGRAM OF WORLD HUNGER YEAR (WHY)

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KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE: A PROGRAM OF ENPOWERMENT...

by Bill Ayers

Everyone of us who are parents want our children to have the inner power to succeed in their work, their families and their lives. We want them to know that they can make a difference with their lives, not simply become a cog in a wheel, an unimportant part of some large or small profit-making institution, even a highly paid part.

So many of our young people seem to be bereft of meaning and passion and yet others are passionate about their work and beliefs and find joy in their lives. What is the difference? Where is the magic potion for success with happiness?

Fortunately, there is no magic potion but there is some wisdom that can lead to a richer more fulfilled life. It starts with empowerment, a person young or old who feels that s/he has some power over his/her life and some power to do good to make a difference.

Interestingly, that is also right at the core of the solution to hunger. At WHY (World Hunger Year) we have always believed that the root cause of hunger is poverty and the root cause of poverty is powerlessness. Our mission involves helping thousands of grassroots organizations that help to empower people, to give them the proverbial hand-up not merely a hand-out. Kids Can Make a Difference (KIDS) does not simply give children information about hunger and poverty. It helps them to ask the WHY questions. Why is there hunger in a world that can feed itself? Why is there so much hunger in the United States, the richest country in the history of the world? Why are women and children the ones who suffer the most from hunger and poverty? Why are millions of Americans who work full time all year still poor? Why? Why? Why? When children learn to ask the WHY questions they will not be prey to the rantings of ideologues or the ex-

cuses of politicians.

KIDS helps children to ask the WHY questions but then to take one step further and act in their schools, churches, temples, mosques and in their neighborhoods. People who join others to act on a problem feel less powerless. They begin to have hope that they can do at least some small actions that can relieve hunger and poverty: working in a soup kitchen or food pantry, collecting food for a food drive, bringing a meal to an elderly person, all the while asking the WHY questions. Why do these people need to eat in a soup kitchen? Why is this elderly person living alone?

The next set of questions are the WHAT questions. What are some other options besides a soup kitchen and a food pantry? What can the community do to help poor people? What should the government do? What can I do? What can I do when I am an adult?

For years KIDS has helped teach many thousands of children about hunger and poverty but that is just the beginning. This wonderful program, when used creatively, helps children to experience their own power to make a difference. In an age when so many people young and old have tuned in on themselves and rarely look beyond their own self interest isn't it a great gift to help children grow out of that self-imposed shell and become caring productive members of communities? That is the gift that KIDS offers to children and their families. May it grow in its power to empower children to take one important step in becoming their best selves.

Bill Ayres is the Executive Director of WHY and along with Harry Chapin co-founded the organization . He may be contacted at bill@worldhungeryear.org. For more information about WHY, please go to www.worldhungeryear.org

READ WHAT ONE EDUCATOR HAS TO SAY ABOUT KIDS...

"Well, last week I used the *Hunger USA* lesson in my social studies methods class and also had a guest speaker from one of the local food pantries. The students and I decided to do a social action project and collect money for the local food pantry. I said I would match the money that the students raised. I hope I haven't put myself in too much debt, although it's for a good cause.

Also, 12 students in class would like their very own copy of the Hunger Curriculum Guide. Could you send me 15 copies just in case others decide they want copies too? This is the biggest interest I've ever had, even though I always offer to get the copies for students at no charge to them.

Some days, I feel encouraged!"

Ava L. McCall, Ed.D

ANOTHER YEAR HAS DRAWN TO A CLOSE...AND WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN...

by Larry and Jane Levine

In the past, we could only report the progress made through a narrow prism that included only what we saw and how we perceived the results. While we always strove to report what we knew to be true and factual, we never had any “outside” source take a close look at what problems students and teachers face in conducting year end programs to help the “needy.”

Teaching Tolerance Magazine (www.teachingtolerance.org) in their Fall 2007 issue which is distributed to 600,000 educators took a deep look at the “annual” canned food drives that many schools conduct at this time of the year. In the article, they asked teachers to go beyond the typical drive and to “turn charity into service-learning, allowing students to examine the root causes of poverty and better understand the human beings who experience it.”

The author, Brandi Neal, in her article, *Beyond The Canned Food Drive*, described Kids Can Make A Difference as a program that goes beyond just the everyday approach taken in most schools. She said, “While holiday food drives are well intentioned and usually meet a community need, they also can be problematic. Too often, holiday drives include little education about the root causes of poverty and almost no interaction between students and the community their donations are intended to help.” She goes on to describe how programs of this nature can be detrimental, as students “(1) can miss out on a chance to learn about social and economic structures under which everyone lives and (2) can reinforce negative stereotypes about poverty.”

“A program called Kids Can make A Difference, also known simply as KIDS, turns this equation on its head. The KIDS curriculum provides lesson plans that examine the underpinnings of hunger and poverty, followed by age-appropriate community service activities. The program encourages children to talk about hunger in their own communities, teach their families and friends what they’ve learned, and organize workshops for other classrooms and schools.” [To read the entire article, go to www.kidscanmakeadifference.org].

The result for KIDS was twofold: greater interest in the program and a tremendous increase in sales of *Finding Solutions To Hunger: Kids Can make A Difference*. In the first three weeks after publication over 100 teacher guides were ordered by readers of the magazine. Never in our history have we sold that number of guides in such a short period of time.

With accolades like that, it would be easy for us to sit back and say, “Look at what we accomplished.” But that is not for us! We ask ourselves (and our Advisory Board Members) “What more needs to be done.” Now we ask you to ponder this question and let us have your thoughts, so that we maximize the “good press” afforded us by Teaching Tolerance magazine.

In addition to your thoughts, we need your financial support. As most of you are aware, you are the fuel that drives this program. Nearly 100% of the money raised through individuals and receipts from the sale of the Teacher Guide get “plowed” right back into the program. Rising costs of producing and shipping the Teacher Guide resulted in an increase in both. We need you more than ever, just to deliver all the services KIDS provides today.

Take this newsletter for example. We mail roughly 2,000 issues to readers three times a year. We get many comments from readers about how much they enjoy the publication and for us “to keep up the good work.” While comments like this are appreciated, they do not contribute to defraying the costs involved in printing and mailing the publication. A very small percentage of our readers actually take that extra step by making a contribution to insure the life of the publication. Unlike NPR and PBS we never reach out to corporations for sponsorship—we count on YOU!

Now is the time for YOU to show your support for KIDS. It is time for YOU to get up and go to your desk and write that check to KIDS before other things in your life demand your attention. KIDS (while a program of WHY) is truly a grass roots movement and dependent upon your ongoing support.

Keep in mind that a gift of only \$15 will help cover the cost bringing **you** three issues a year. Hopefully, this will allow everyone of our loyal readers to be active supporters of KIDS.

Oh yes, if the mood strikes **you**, contributions in higher amounts will help and are greatly appreciated.



A Kid's Sense of Fairness: Equal Exchange's New Fundraising Program... by Kelsie Evans

From a young child's point of view the act of trading already includes the concept of fairness. Kids have an innate sense of what's fair; and when something's not fair it doesn't sit well with them. So, for most young kids, the term "Fair Trade" is redundant. After 21 years of working hard at communicating the meaning of Fair Trade to adults, Equal Exchange is now reaching out to an audience for whom the idea is a no-brainer: young students.

Equal Exchange, the "Fair Trade" coffee, tea, and chocolate company has created a new curriculum and fundraising program that represents an innovative partnership with students, families, and teachers. The Equal Exchange Fair Trade curriculum begins with simple questions, like "How is chocolate made?" and "Where does it come from?" These kinds of inquiries spark kids' natural curiosity and encourage them to learn the origins of the food they see at the supermarket.

The Equal Exchange Fair Trade Educational Tool Kit puts the farmer front and center. Kids learn that the simple, everyday action of purchasing a chocolate bar has an impact on a farmer somewhere the world. One bar may contribute to funding child slave labor in the Ivory Coast of Africa, while another may assist the child of a Dominican Fair Trade cacao grower to attend school. The Equal Exchange curriculum attempts to strengthen the bonds between young consumers and farmers in a mutually-beneficial way.

The Equal Exchange Fundraising Program serves as a tool for outside the classroom. It allows parents and students to raise money for their school while building pride, independence, and community empowerment for small farmers in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Students sell certified Fair Trade and organic products and earn 45% in profits. Recent Fair Trade benefits include the establishment of a micro-loan project for women in Guatemala, the construction of new safe water wells in the Dominican Republic, and the

renovation of elementary classrooms in El Salvador.

A pioneer in the Fair Trade movement, Equal Exchange was founded 21 years ago with the mission of building an alternative global food system based on respect, fairness to farmers, consumer participation. One hundred percent of Equal Exchange products are fairly traded, benefiting more than 40 small farmer co-operatives in over 16 countries around the world. In keeping with its Fair Trade mission Equal Exchange is a worker co-operative, owned and democratically controlled by its over 70 employees.

Equal Exchange is a full service provider of high quality, organic tea, coffee, cocoa and chocolate to retailers and food service establishments. Major customers include Kroger, Shaw's, some Whole Foods, Ten Thousand Villages, hundreds of natural food stores, restaurants, and thousands of places of worship nationwide. After years of trading with international small-scale farmers, Equal Exchange is pleased to be trading with U.S. small-scale farmers, offering Fair Trade pecans from Georgia and organic dried cranberries from Massachusetts and Wisconsin.

The Equal Exchange Fundraising and Educational Tool Kit is an extension of this vision. Equal Exchange is excited to support the growing number of parents and teachers concerned about the conditions under which their food is grown. The Equal Exchange curriculum will be available online in the fall of 2007.

We invite students, teachers, and parents to share our vision for a better world—a vision that connects us more closely to the food we eat and the farmers who grow it.

Kelsie Evans is Fundraising Program Coordinator at Equal Exchange and may be reached at kevans@equalexchange.coop.

PRICE INCREASE OF KIDS TEACHER GUIDE...

Effective January 1, 2008, the price of the KIDS Teacher Guide will be increased to \$26. This increase was brought about by a significant increase in the cost of materials experienced by our printer in the past year. KIDS can not afford to absorb the increased costs and have passed along a portion of the increase to purchasers of the book.

At the same time, the USPS has increased their Priority Mail costs resulting in a \$2 increase in our shipping charge to \$8.

We appreciate your understanding in this matter.



FROM ONE KID TO ANOTHER: AN ARTISTIC MOVEMENT...

by LeAnne Bagnall

Who could have imagined that writing a story or drawing a picture could help provide access to clean water, improved health, lowered risk of disease, and education for children who have never stepped foot in a classroom before? And who could of thought that this creative movement was achieved entirely by children?

At each autograph signing, thirteen-year-old author Cate Hurley signs her book *How to Cook with a Pencil* with her signature quote: "It only takes one person to make a difference." Cate published her story "Kioto-Kyoto" in YouthInkwell Publishing's first anthology at the age of ten. Established in 2005 in Pasadena, CA as a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit company, YouthInkwell Publishing inspires young writers and illustrators to express their artistic abilities and to help the less fortunate. YouthInkwell encourages its local youth to become more active within their communities—whether it's becoming more aware of current issues, volunteering their time, or expressing their concerns to public officials. YouthInkwell's chief service, however, is to publish the work of young artists into professional book format and to promote their work amongst their peers. In addition to stirring up more potential writers, the sales of these books are helping other children in need. Currently, YouthInkwell books fund "The Water Well Project" in which book profits aid the construction of water wells in East Africa to help put young girls in school and to promote community health and safety. As of the end of 2007, the nonprofit will have published a total of 13 children's work, whether it is their stories, their illustrations, or both.

The YouthInkwell kids learn about other children in need and why they must help make a difference. Throughout all hours of the day, girls as young as five years old can be seen walking along dirt roads of East Africa with tattered dresses and heavy jugs strapped to their backs, heading toward dangerous, remote locations. Every day, these girls must put themselves at risk of sexual assault, abuse, and kidnapping during this trek. Because of the women's traditional familial values, the burden of collecting water falls upon the shoulders of the young girls. Most girls are unable to obtain a primary level of education simply because of insufficient water supply available to their villages. The locations the girls travel to can be regarded as highly unsanitary, the water unsuitable for human consumption. The brooks are highly polluted due to inadequate sewage control amongst the land. Yet the girls must use this water for laundering, cleaning, bathing, cooking, and of course—drinking—all things that

most of us consider as standard essentials in life. The people of these villages deal with some of the most alarming aspects of devastation including high levels of infant mortality from dehydration and diarrheal death, poor maternal health from weakened immune systems due to water-borne diseases, the spread of STDs and AIDS from assault, and extreme environmental hazards. The use of contaminated water serves as a conduit for all of these harmful factors, affecting a village's entire population.

In 2006 alone, YouthInkwell kids were able to raise over \$15,000 in book sales from YouthInkwell's previous released books *When Watute Wants Some Water* and *How to Cook with a Pencil* in which construction has begun on their first well—a borehole well located at the Kuno Kile School in Ethiopia. These works created by a total of ten kids ages 9-17 will help build six water wells in Ethiopian and Ugandan villages. Each well will be placed on school grounds not only for the sake of the female students, but also for the whole community to use. Later this year, YouthInkwell will release two new books—*Puppets*, a children's picture book written and illustrated by high school senior Shaina Lu, and *The Painted Tea Set*, a young adult book co-authored by thirteen-year-old Ashley Bae and twelve-year-old Victor Hsieh—which will also contribute to The Water Well Project's efforts.

YouthInkwell Publishing intends to create leaders out of our youth in order to establish a better future. By teaching children the hazards and concerns of today's world, we are giving them the power to sculpt their presence in the world of tomorrow. Simultaneously, YouthInkwell Publishing ensures that its kids are involved within their own communities as well. In addition to its Board of Directors, YouthInkwell is also guided by a Youth Board of Advisors compiled of authors and students who forefront the company's involvement within the community. YouthInkwell doesn't just help kids write well—it gives kids a reason to express themselves. The Water Well Project is a running theme throughout all of YouthInkwell's programs, reminding its volunteers, writers, and members why it is their responsibility to help, and that they can in fact make change now during their youth.

LeAnne Bagnall is the Assistant Marketing Director for YouthInkwell Publishing. She can be reached via email at LBagnall@youthinkwell.org. Please visit www.youthinkwell.org to learn more.

KIDS 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.

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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*



A Program of World Hunger Year

**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.