

kids  
can make a  
difference®

# NEWSLETTER

Spring 2003 VOLUME 8 NUMBER 2

## Nutrition—Body and Soul...

by Elizabeth Simpson and Henning Sehmsdorf

**I**t is frightening to think that students depend on schools for nutrition, given the existing system by which schools purchase food from commodity sources and price is the main factor determining what foods are purchased and from whom.

Rates of juvenile diabetes, obesity, heart disease, cancer and various learning disabilities are climbing steeply. These young peoples' future social contribution will be seriously undermined by health problems that will pursue them into adulthood. Numerous press articles say Americans eat too much and exercise too little. But they don't discuss the low quality of the food available in supermarkets, restaurants, from wholesale suppliers and in school cafeterias. Food sold to the general public is, on the whole, nutritionally deficient; poisoned with high nitrate levels, herbicides and pesticides; and travels, on average, 1,400 miles from field to plate. The cost of poor quality food is not only poor physical health but also intellectual, emotional and spiritual starvation.

### The Hidden Costs of Food

The food supply of the global food system fosters impersonality, ignorance and numbness to social responsibility. Children come to school in order to learn. They graduate knowing about science, mathematics, literature, history and foreign language, but ignorant about the most basic human need: food. They don't know the corn chips they enjoy are probably Frankenfoods, created from genetically engineered corn. They don't know the poor little chicken that contributed its nuggets to their cafeteria lunch plate was probably fed arsenic to increase its appetite. They probably don't know their mid-morning cookie contains so many preservatives that its shelf life is longer than their own. They don't know which of 52 possible pesticides rides on that strawberry from California.

### About this issue...

A first for KIDS—a mother and daughter writing articles for the newsletter! Kathy Baker (page 6) describes life as a Peace Corps volunteer in the over 60 category. Her daughter, Anne Baker, (page 5) explains why the Peace Corps has been part of her life from childhood.

Elizabeth Simpson and Henning Sehmsdorf (page 1) were kind enough to edit a talk they delivered at a national "*Farm to Cafeteria: Healthy Farms, Healthy Conference*" for this issue. A very important article.

Anne Neuberger (page 4) explains that "if you want peace, you must work for justice." A freelance writer deals with the challenges of raising four children in an affluent country.

Do not neglect to read and respond to the explanation of being a subscriber rather than a "subscriber." ACTION is required on your part to insure receiving future issues of the KIDS Newsletter.

Finally, KIDS will be moving from Maine to Connecticut in June. We will notify you of all the contact information by e-mail and regular mail.

We wish you a happy summer and will see you in the fall.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

They don't think about rainforests burning in Latin America when they bite into a hamburger. They aren't taught to calculate the fuel it takes to raise a pound of asparagus and transport it from Washington to Maine. They don't think about the dead sea, now the size of New Jersey, spreading through the Gulf of Mexico, created by runoff from pig and corn farms along the Mississippi. They ingest it with their bacon and corn-flakes.

We tell our students to count the social cost of the foods they eat. We tell them as they drive through the Skagit Valley to look at the farm workers picking cucumbers, to think about the pitiful wages these people earn and the toxins they ingest from those fields every day.

### Eating Food from Local Sources

Food from local sources, on the other hand, fosters intimacy, knowledge and a sense of social responsibility. Students from local schools come to our farm as interns, hired help and as members of an agricultural science class. Some of their families buy meat, vegetables and milk from us. They transplant the seedlings that, just a few weeks later, becomes the salad on their plates. They buck the hay that feeds the cows and sheep through the winter. They smell how sweet it is, and know their labor keeps the animals well fed. They pet the milk cow, feed her apples from the orchard and drink her milk, poured into their glasses only a few hours after the morning milking. They pick up the chickens, gather their eggs and know these birds were not kept in dark cages and force-fed antibiotics and arsenic.

There is an unfortunate notion in our country that organic foods, responsibly and sustainably grown, are a privilege of the rich because they cost too much for poor and middle class families and school cafeterias to buy. But the cost of health care for heart disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity must be factored in. The cost of malnourished children, whose learning ability is compromised by poor diet and whose sense of connectedness and social responsibility are dulled, is high.

School lunch programs supplied by ecologically and socially responsible local farms are not a luxury but a necessity.

### What Are the Obstacles?

But there are impediments to a farm-to-school stream of nutritionally wholesome, flavorful, fresh foods produced in a manner fair to farmers and farm laborers which builds community food security, protects our groundwater from depletion and toxic poisoning and preserves the forests upon which the climate system of the whole world depends.

The first impediment is ignorance. Most people in the US, including state politicians, school board members, administrators, teachers, parents and students, have been indoctrinated by advertisers and other opinion makers to prioritize price, convenience and choice over quality, nutrition, freshness, seasonality and social responsibility.

Another impediment to healthy foods in school cafeterias is government policy and regulation, which requires school food purchasers to choose food on the basis of price only, without considering quality.

To improve not only the physical but social and spiritual health of children, legislators, county commissioners, school administrators, cafeteria personnel, teachers, parents and community members must make children's health a priority. Individuals must value food differently. All of us need to learn to think differently about food budgets, and federal and local regulations that prevent purchasing the best local food available must change.

What is needed is not only decent food in the school cafeteria but food for the mind, heart, classroom and community. We need school gardens and school farms,

(Continued on page 3)

### KIDS Advisory Board

**Anne Baker**-*Global Education Director/National Peace Corps Association*

**Jen Chapin**-*Songwriter, singer, teacher. Chairperson of the Board of Directors of World Hunger Year (WHY).*

**Jane Darby**-*Teacher (NYC)*

**Rex Enoch**-*Global Education Director for Heifer International*

**Marta Flanagan**-*Minister (Unitarian Universalist)*

**Joan Dye Gussow**-*Professor Emeritus, Teachers College, Columbia University, author.*

**Andrew Steven Halperin**-*Attorney*

**Stephanie Kempf**-*Author (Finding Solutions to Hunger:), teacher*

**Olivia Iffill-Lynch**-*Educator, Founder and principal of The School for Academic and Athletic Excellence (NYC)*

**Ava McCall**-*Professor and Department Chair, Curriculum and Instruction department, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh*

**Julianne Rana**-*Program Coordinator World Hunger Year (WHY)*

*(Continued from page 2)*

as much as local farms, to supply school lunches and a deep, participatory knowledge of how needs for food and fiber are met.

The three most fundamental human needs are food, shelter and love. Food is more than carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals and protein to fuel body and mind but a sacrament connecting us profoundly to the soil and water in which it was grown and to the sun, wind and rain that supplied the energies to grow it. The ways we grow food should celebrate that connection.

This is possible. The responsibility lies with all of us: legislators, farmers, school administrators, teachers, par-

ents, students: the entire community. The responsibility is ours, and it is yours.

*Henning and Elizabeth's address is: S&S Homestead Farm, 2143 Lopez Sound Road, Lopez Island, WA 98261, e-mail: [sshomestead@rockisland.com](mailto:sshomestead@rockisland.com).*

*These remarks were prepared for the opening of the national "Farm to Cafeteria: Healthy Farms, Healthy Students," conference held in Seattle, Washington, on October 4, 2002. They appear here in an edited form for publication. Elizabeth and Henning are both farmers and teachers and have an insider's perspective and strong personal views on the topics of farm health and the health of students.*

## **Thanks to All Who Make KIDS GO...**

It is very rare when we have the space to thank all the folks who contribute their time and effort to make the program prosper, so now is our moment. Alas, we don't have enough space to thank everyone, but here are a few we have singled out for special thanks.

We start with the members of the KIDS advisory Board. These individuals exhibit their love and support of KIDS in so many ways—willingness to contribute articles to the newsletter, advice when asked (and sometimes when not asked), and their eagerness to give of their varied talents in the belief that "kids can make a difference."

Our two pro bono graphic artists, Mara Levine and Todd Morrissette. Mara (our daughter) is responsible for the original design of the KIDS web site. This design garnered an award from Education World in 1998 for excellence. In addition, she is responsible for the design of our logo and stationary. She continues to lend her expertise when asked. Todd is our web master and has added "bells and whistles" to the site. I can attest to his teaching ability as he has taken the time to teach me (Larry) how to maintain the site. So far, we have not had any disasters, but I feel better knowing that he is there to help.

The dedicated staff at WHY is always there to lend a hand. For example, Peter Mann was responsible for bringing our lead article in this issue to our attention. Noreen Springstead continues to make our relationship with the office in New York City a well functioning one. She is the principal conduit between KIDS and WHY.

Finally, thanks to all of you who support KIDS through your contributions, feedback and support! Without you, none of this would be possible

**KIDS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE<sup>®</sup> NEWSLETTER**

**A PROGRAM OF WORLD HUNGER YEAR (WHY)**

**Published by:**

**Jane Finn Levine, Ed.D. and Larry Levine**

**P.O. Box 54, Kittery Point, ME 03905**

**(207) 439-9588, FAX (212-465-9274), email: [kids@kidscanmakeadifference.org](mailto:kids@kidscanmakeadifference.org),**

**<http://www.kidscanmakeadifference.org>**

# Bringing Up Children In The Land of Plenty...

by Anne E. Neuberger

**A**s a parent of four, raising my kids in the most affluent country in the world often leaves me troubled. They are growing up in the most militarily powerful country in the world, a country that uses more resources than all the Third World populations combined, and a society that works hard and effectively to turn the next generation into good consumers. They are also living in a world where the numbers of people dying of hunger are staggering, where child labor still exists, where some people live in houses made of cardboard while others live in mansions.

I want to give my children the eyes to see the whole range of human existence, the hearts to feel strongly about injustice, and the courage to solve the problems. As a writer for children, I have the same goals. This sometimes puts me in a situation not unlike a fish swimming upstream. However, I've found two 'tools' to help.

All the great religions of the world teach that humans have dignity and call upon their members to bring about social justice. I am a Roman Catholic, and have found a wealth of teachings within that tradition. From the first Christians on, there are many examples, and ever since the onset of the Industrial Revolution, Catholics have spoken out strongly on issues of poverty, safety, and dignity. Today, the work of social justice is sometimes summed up into seven principles, a tool I often use to clarify for myself what I need to teach. They are: **DIGNITY:** The human person is the clearest reflection of God amongst us so all people have dignity. **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:** People have a fundamental right to life and those things which are necessary for life (food, clothing, housing, healthcare, education, and security). **CALL TO COMMUNITY:** We realize our dignity, rights and responsibilities within the communities of our lives. **OPTION FOR THE POOR AND VULNERABLE:** Those with the greatest needs require the greatest response. **SOLIDARITY:** We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic and religious differences. **RIGHTS OF WORKERS:** Work is an expression of our dignity. **STEWARDSHIP:** We must care for the gift we call the earth.

From these I find direction to use my other 'tool', which is

story. Storytelling is our oldest method of passing on culture, history, values, etc. A story has the power to place the reader inside another's experience. It can take the listener to any part of the world, into any situation, at any point in history. So, I often turn to children's stories which exemplify the principles. Stories about the Underground Railroad, such as *Who Comes with Cannons?* by Patricia Beatty, could be discussed in terms of the African Americans being deprived of their dignity and rights, while the Quaker families who sheltered them were accepting their responsibility in the community. Books in which children are forcibly employed, such as in *Samantha Learns a Lesson* by Susan S. Adler, address the rights of workers, option for the poor and vulnerable, as well as other principles.

You never know where these books and discussion may take a child's mind and values. When my daughter was five, I read to her *Twenty and Ten*, by Claire Huchet Bishop. It is the true tale of French Christian children who choose to hide Jewish children during World War II. This slim book tells a fascinating story, but it also teaches these principles: dignity, rights and responsibilities, option for the poor and vulnerable, and solidarity. Sometime later, I found her with a pile of dolls. Some she was placing on the seat of the kitchen chair, and the others were being placed underneath it. "I'm playing like in that book," she explained. "The dolls under the chair are Jewish people, hiding from the Nazis. The dolls on the top are protecting them."

I believe that children are our greatest hope for peace and a healthy, balanced world. And to quote a prophet of old, "If you want peace, work for justice." To me that means my work is to teach children how to work for justice.

And so, with stories, I am working to give children reflective minds, receptive hearts, and courageous souls..

*Anne E. Neuberger is a freelance writer from Minnesota. Among her titles are The Girl-Son; Jane Gibbs, Little Bird That Was Caught; and To Act Justly. Introducing Catholic Social Teaching to Children through Stories and Activities.*

**BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR OUR NEW CONTACT INFORMATION. KIDS IS MOVING TO CONNECTICUT WITH A TEMPORARY STOP IN NEW YORK CITY!**

## How I Got Here From There...

by Anne Baker

**W**hen I was growing up, my grandparents retired and started traveling – everywhere! I looked forward each year to their post-cards and souvenirs from remote corners of the world. I never worried about them as they blazed a tourist trail where few had been before. In fact, I relished their stories of being among the first tourists in remote areas of Papua New Guinea and in Antarctica, visiting the treasures of Iraq, and hunting crocodiles on the Amazon at midnight. Now that both have passed away, I have their wall of slide trays – thousands of slides from these wonderful adventures, in places I now fear that I will never be able to see. (I can almost see my grandmother’s tears at the bombing of Baghdad, whose historical images live on in those thousands of slides reaching back over 40 years.)

I think my grandparents planted the seed that led to my dream of living and working in some of those remote corners of the world. Each slide show led to stories of the wonderful people they had not only met, but kept in touch with over the years – Latif in Beirut, Lotte in Germany. My grandmother, in particular, remembered each person, their families, their homes and what they talked about. She could instantly bridge any cultural gap to forge life-long friendships.

When I applied for the Peace Corps, my grandmother’s response was, “if I were younger, I would do that, too!” She could have: a woman older than she was then is serving in Romania now with my father and step-mother Kathy. Throughout my two years in Fiji, her weekly letters kept me in touch with day-to-day life at home, while my letters to her told her of Sala and Vinod, and of my

many other friends in Lomaivuna.

I moved to Rhode Island upon my return from Peace Corps service and began teaching high school. My nine years in the Ocean State were wonderful, yet some of the highlights are due to my friendships with junior naval officers from other countries studying at the Naval Staff College. For six months each year, I became a civilian “sponsor” to these officers – taking them into the community and introducing them to U.S. culture and people. Since then, I have visited four of the six I sponsored in their home countries: Tonga, Malaysia, and Singapore. (I have yet to visit in Turkey.)

I, too, now have a wall of slide trays (albeit a much shorter one!) of my Peace Corps service in Fiji and of my travels to visit friends around the globe.

When Larry asked me to write an article, he suggested the theme of “responsibility”, at the time meaning our responsibilities as Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. As I write this today, I find myself thinking of my responsibilities not just as an RPCV, but as a world citizen. We may not all be able to travel the world and meet her people in different countries. For some, their world is their local neighborhood. No matter how large or small we consider our individual worlds, we can all reach out to people, learning about their cultures, countries, and customs.

My responsibility now, as a citizen of the world and as a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, is to keep these friendships and connections alive. To reach out to and bond with people in our local and global communities. To help

*(Continued on page 6)*



## Subscribe to the Newsletter

If you are not presently a subscriber, don't continue to count on the charity of others. Take this opportunity to receive this publication three times a year.

*A suggested contribution of \$9 is appreciated*

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

e-mail address:

(Continued from page 5)

those in need. To put the well-being of the world's people ahead of my personal well-being.

At the end of one class at the Naval Staff College, we attended the graduation and prepared to say farewell to our new-found friends. As we waited to say goodbye to some who were rushing for their flights home, we encountered an Egyptian and an Israeli in tears in their farewell embrace. They had become fast friends over the course of their six months in the U.S., at a

time when relations between their countries were particularly strained. We couldn't help but hope that, should any animosity arise between their countries in the years to come, they would meet up again and that their friendship would win out.

*Anne Baker, in addition to being the Director of Global Education and Technology at the National Peace Corps Association, is the proud daughter of John and Kathy Baker. She can be reached at [anne@rpcv.org](mailto:anne@rpcv.org).*

## Peace Corps Volunteers Over 60 Years of Age...

by Kathy Baker

Peace Corps volunteers of every age are asked why they decided to join, but people like ourselves, in the over-60 category, are especially objects of curiosity. Why would anyone leave the comfort of retirement to go live in a strange and perhaps primitive country for two years?

There are so many answers to that question. One is that we're not dead yet, and are still ready for adventure. Another is that we are eager to travel and learn more about the world, and while it is fun to be a tourist, only when you live in a country among its people do you truly begin to understand it. A third is that we, like you, want to make a difference in this world, and hope that through two years of Peace Corps service we might be able to do that. Yet another is that we know that we have lived very privileged lives and we want to pay back in some small part all the good fortune that has been ours. And so on, answers you might expect.

We have been Peace Corps volunteers in Romania for a year and a half now, and we're still trying to find our own personal answers to the question of why we are here. Even now, as we walk the streets of Botosani, the city in the northeast corner of the country where we live, we sometimes ask ourselves, what in the world are we doing here? We still don't speak the language very well; we can't possibly make a dent in the problems of a country with so much poverty; we could live here for twenty years instead of two and still we would be seen as rich Americans; people have been very warm and welcoming but, in fact, we will always be strangers in a strange land in Romania. But these moments of doubt pass and we keep going on our way to work, I to the middle school where I teach English and my husband John to the company from which he does business advising.

Each day brings its learning, its surprises. We do not live in primitive discomfort here; we have an attractive two-room apartment complete with heat, hot water, television, a telephone. Romania is not a so-called third world country, although in its villages and farm areas most people live as they did a century ago, heating their homes with wood, hauling their water from wells, raising all their own food as well as the food for their livestock, traveling everywhere on foot or by horse cart. But here in town our greatest hardships have been no greater than growing accustomed to shopping for groceries in small shops and vegetable stalls, walking everywhere instead of driving locally, and traveling from city to city in trains that are too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer. There has been pleasure inherent even in these experiences, however. Train travel may have been arduous at times but we were rewarded by Romania's beautiful Carpathian mountains (by legend the home of Count Dracula), its well-preserved medieval cities, its rolling farmlands. And since few people in Botosani own cars we found ourselves on the streets with many other pedestrians, shoppers but also people out walking just for the exercise and to meet and greet their friends. Most American neighborhood streets seem empty and lonely by comparison. Romanians love Americans and we have been welcomed into many homes where we were fed 5-course meals, invited to weddings and other celebrations where we were encouraged to dance until dawn.

So whatever we may possibly have to offer Romania, Romania has had much to offer us. Romanians know how to have a good time, to live in the moment, in a fashion that some Americans would do well to emulate. The United States could learn something from Romania about education, from this country where children begin studying at least one foreign lan-

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

guage in the second grade and by the eighth are fluent in two or more. Our country could learn a great deal from Romania about suffering, and perhaps begin to realize that our September 11<sup>th</sup> horror has sister tragedies all over the world, both past and present.

So in the end the answers we come up with are two: first, to be able to bring home with us our new awareness of the world beyond the U.S. borders and to share it with other Americans. The second comes from a story about Itszak Perlman, who once, right before a concert, discovered that

one of the strings on his violin was broken. He went ahead and played the concert on the broken violin because, he said, "Sometimes it's important to find out how much music you can make with the strings you have left."

So we will keep on trying to make a little music here, and will have many new songs to sing when we return home.

*Kathy Baker is a Peace Corps volunteer in Botosani, Romania. She can be reached at [jhardeeb@aol.com](mailto:jhardeeb@aol.com).*

## **D**o Not Be Left Without Your KIDS Newsletter...

In our Spring 2003 issue, we invited all our readers to become subscribers rather than "subscribers." Many of you took the time to complete the form letting us know that you were interested in receiving the newsletter for another year.

Thanks to all who took the opportunity to contribute to KIDS and to those who purchased a KIDS Teacher Guide. A few respondents requested that we remove them from the mailing list. Their action is appreciated as it lowers our mailing costs and saves a few trees.

UNFORTUNATELY we did not hear from many of you. Before you realize that you have been removed from the mailing list (and therefore, will not receive future issues), please take a moment and let us know if you want continue receiving the KIDS Newsletter.

So we are on your case. Please fill out the form below and return it to us as soon as possible. (Please check the appropriate box if in these tough economic times you cannot afford to contribute but want to continue receiving the newsletter.) It is also important for you to let us know if you don't want to continue receiving the KIDS Newsletter—we won't be insulted, and the trees will thank you.

**Please fax (212) 465-9274 or mail to us at KIDS, P.O. Box 54, Kittery Point ME 03905**

Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone

E-Mail

Method of Payment

Check

Credit Card Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Sign me up for a subscription; \$9/1 year

I/we want to become an active supporter of KIDS. In addition to becoming a subscriber, enclosed is a contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_

I/we can't afford to pay for a subscription, but keep sending the newsletter

Please remove my name from the mailing list

# 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!**

**To Order... Send check, purchase order or Visa  
Mastercard or AMEX number to:  
KIDS, PO Box 54, Kittery Point, ME 03905  
(207) 439-9588, (207) 439-4917 FAX**

**“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*



P.O. Box 54  
Kittery Point,  
ME 03905

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.