

Raising the Bar on Peace Education

"I was reading an article about teaching for tolerance and hit the roof. Is this the best we can do? Teach children to tolerate each other?" said Dr. Jacqueline Beaudoin, founder of CHILDSAFEfoundation.

Teaching for tolerance wasn't good enough for Beaudoin, in fact, it is borderline offensive to her. "We need to teach for respect, admiration and excitement about the differences that makes us unique. When we can do that, we can have peace," she said.

What began as a commitment to relieve the suffering of children abroad grew into a desire to make a difference for peace at home in America. CHILDSAFEfoundation pursues that desire and launches in the fall its latest peace education program, "Peaceful Expectations." The goal, according to the Childsafe Web site, is to instill in elementary and middle school students across the country a greater awareness and respect of peace at home and abroad.

Childsafe provides limb replacements for child victims of war and promotes peace by offering peace education programs. Childsafe's "Peaceful Expectations" is geared for elementary and middle school students and offered free to all interested schools.

A nationwide launch is slated to coincide with the U.N. International day of Peace, seeking involvement from parents, teachers, as well as students in public and private schools.

Most segments of the program are flexible, according to Beaudoin, which means teachers can incorporate projects into their curriculum and extracurricular

activities. "There's so much flexibility on how and where it can be used - language arts, English, science, history, geography."

The program begins this year with a peace poster and essay contest, helping children first become aware of what peace means to them and their visions for peace through original artwork.

The CHILDSAFEfoundation uses the message of peace through understanding, a message much desired in light of the wars abroad and violence at home, in order to nurture an environment of friendship and peaceful understanding among children spanning the globe.

"So much of this can be applied to the United States." Beaudoin said. "In this huge melting pot of humanity, we still have gender inequality, racial tension, and religious hatred, just to mention a few homegrown issues."

Beaudoin explained the goal is to see children carry over what they learn in the program into their own lives at home and in school, and to avoid bullying and violence in schools and communities.

The peace poster and essay contest spearhead the program this year. Each year following will introduce peace-themed projects such as "Peace Bells" for fifth graders, a web based scavenger hunt for peace bells around the world. Pockets of Peace for sixth graders will bring peace lessons from around the world through art, film, storytelling, and performances. The Children's Peace Council program for seventh graders models after a World Vision project in which children from around the world bonded together to share stories and attend workshops for children's rights.

"The idea is more than conflict resolution," Beaudoin said. "This is about becoming friends, let's meet and find out about each other, learn together, and see how similar we really are."

The last peace module is Peace Cranes for eighth graders, which begins with students learning about the aftermath of nuclear bombing and the efforts of children working to prevent a repeat. Peace Cranes looks to establish solidarity among children by creating Origami peace cranes to be displayed at Hiroshima Park under the Children's Peace monument, and by taking an active role in encouraging world leaders to work together to prevent another Hiroshima.

In response to the question, why teach peace to children? Dr. Beaudoin responds, "Children are purer in heart and thought. A child will be the biggest and strongest advocate for peace and if anyone has a right to peace it is a child."

To learn more or to register a school, please visit Childsafe online at:

www.childsafefoundation-usa.org.

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