

## Kids can change the world

*Using literary media to promote global awareness*

For parents of students in grades 6 and up

### Adult mentors – the key to creating global citizens

As an adult mentor you are a valuable and essential partner in the effort to equip youth with the skills to become social change-makers. Literacy plays a crucial role in enabling youth to understand global issues and celebrate cultural diversity, and can effectively encourage them to take action.

### Inspiring awareness and action

If at 12, Craig Kielburger had not stumbled upon an article detailing the harrowing realities of a young Pakistani child labourer, Free The Children would not exist.

Utilizing literary media resources such as newspapers, magazines and resource books, adult mentors can encourage youth to inform themselves about global issues. Inspiring generative discussion and motivating youth to take action through volunteerism, mentors can extend what they have learned to tangible actions, enabling youth to believe that they have the capacity to not only understand issues but also impact positive change.

### Helpful resources

- *Free The Children*

Chronicling Craig Kielburger's early years as a children's rights activist and his first trip to South Asia at only 12 years of age, *Free The Children* is an in depth look into the journey that shaped his life and work.

This is an exceptionally useful resource as young people are able to relate more easily to someone of their similar age. Extremely inspiring, it is also a real life example of how a young person can make an impact on a global scale.

- Global Voices column in the *Toronto Star*

Free The Children's Global Voices program includes Craig and Marc Kielburger's column in the World and Opinion Section of the *Toronto Star*. The weekly column presents social issue

stories often based on Marc and Craig's eyewitness accounts and personal experiences.

Linking articles into discussions gives youth a human context through which to understand broader global issues.

- *Me to We: Finding Meaning in a Material World*

Craig and Marc Kielburger argue that by helping others and refusing to ignore the injustices that occur all around us by taking steps to enact positive change, we can find true happiness.

Best suited for high-school students, adult mentors can generate discussion, inspiring youth to challenge their previously held opinions on the meaning of happiness.

- *Take Action! A Guide to Active Citizenship*

Inspired by the vision, spirit and activities of the thousands of youth involved in Free The Children campaigns, the guide offers valuable tips, strategies and examples on how youth can take action to make a difference.

- *The Making of An Activist*

A perfect resource for younger children, *The Making of an Activist* is a visually stimulating collection of submissions from young activists and documents the evolution of Free The Children.

- Voices International Newsletter

Free The Children's monthly online newsletter highlights key events in the global community, especially in the arena of children's rights.

Written in youth friendly language are inspiring stories from our Youth In Action groups, country offices and tangible actions young people can take – the newsletter is an effective resource to encourage socially aware literacy and global citizenship.

## **Making abstract concepts a reality**

Exploring social issues and human rights require a special kind of strategy. Students need to explore and critically understand issues, but they also need to see themselves as capable of affecting positive change. This is truly *active* global citizenship.

Creating this experience requires a high level of involvement and use of engaging materials that appeal to today's technologically savvy youth. Newspapers and resource books are definitely an asset, but we must also embrace online literary resources whose speed and accessibility have large appeal.

*Current events discussions:* We cannot shield young people from the negativity in the broader world, but we can give them the skills to interpret what they see.

Discuss conflict stories and encourage students to look for alternate points of view, generate ideas on how situations can be resolved in different ways and consider peaceful alternatives. For younger students, start by discussing smaller scale issues that happen within the family or school.

*Make abstract concepts concrete:* If you ask youth for examples of broad terms like "conflict" and "peace," you will likely receive a list of vague responses. Bring these concepts closer to home by asking them to identify how small actions exemplify peace (i.e., including others, accepting all points of view during discussions, cooperating rather than competing).

## **From literacy to volunteerism – creative ways to take action as a family**

Adult mentors are essential in motivating youth to believe that they play an important role in building a culture of peace. Setting the example by encouraging family volunteerism is the first step. Volunteerism, spreading awareness about peace initiatives within the family circle, their schools and communities and taking tangible steps—even small ones—helps cement the idea that youth actions are powerful and important.

### **Volunteer as a family**

*Get involved with Adopt a Village*

With its integrated and holistic approach to community development, the Adopt a Village campaign provides youth with the chance to make a lasting difference in the lives of children in the developing world. As active global citizens, youth and their adult mentors raise awareness about children's rights through literary media and fundraise to create positive change.

Through Free The Children's development projects—which include schoolbuilding, alternative income, health care, and water and sanitation—youth can support a rural village in Kenya, Sierra Leone, China, or Sri Lanka to help some of the most marginalized children and their families meet their basic human needs while freeing them from poverty and exploitation. Adopt a Village has three main projects to support: Brick by Brick, Alternative Income and Clean Water.

### *Celebrate for Change campaign*

The Celebrate for Change campaign is a fun opportunity for the family to throw a party for children everywhere. With resources such as invitations and thank you cards, along with a poster to visually track your fundraising, parents and youth can have an amazing time raising awareness and funds that will change the lives of children and their communities.

### **Family fun**

Our partner organization, Me to We, offers unique *International Volunteer trips* to Arizona/Mexico, China, Ecuador, India and Kenya. Volunteer in local communities as a family and share in the experience of creating change, learning about new cultures and take action for a better world.

Even while on a family vacation to other destinations take the opportunity to visit cultural sites, such as museums and art galleries, experience the local communities and taste local dishes, while encouraging discussion about the country's history and role in a global context.

*The Me to We board game* is a creative way to switch onto a family experience that is fun for everyone! A board game that creates family bonds and sparks global change, the Me to We board game shows young people that learning about global issues and taking action to enact change can be as entertaining as it is important.

*This tip sheet was originally prepared by Audrey Cherryl Mogan – Free The Children*