

Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies

Building Peace



Endowment for the Youth and Peacebuilding Program: \$500,000

Background

The Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies is seeking \$500,000 to establish an **endowment for the Youth and Peacebuilding Program**. The Kroc School of Peace Studies has long recognized the need to involve the most marginalized members of a community — oftentimes this is youth, women and civil society — in issues of peace and justice. One of its programs, called WorldLink, is one manifestation of that philosophy.

WorldLink is a unique, year-round program that educates and empowers high school youth by connecting them to global issues through exposure to international policy experts, recognized decision-makers and peer leaders.

Through a variety of events and activities, WorldLink reaches more than 1,000 youth annually from 50 schools on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Youth participants represent every socioeconomic strata of the region. They come from inner-city communities, the juvenile justice and rehabilitation system, as well as public, private and charter schools. More than 12,000 youth have participated in WorldLink since the program was established in 1997.

WorldLink program activities include the Youth Town Meeting, attended every year by 750 high school students and 25 experts from international NGOs like Doctors Without Borders, government agencies such as the U.S. Department of State and others, including the United Nations. All sessions of the Youth Town Meeting are moderated by students, who also serve as journalists and photographers for the bilingual WorldLink newspaper, produced on the heels of the event.

Themes of the conference are selected by students the previous year. The most recent theme was, “Global Conflicts: Human Impacts, Human Solutions.” Next year’s theme is, “Healing the Wounds of Violence.” Interns in the summer and fall semesters develop the WorldLink Reader on the year’s topic, in preparation for the Youth Town Meeting held each January.

Youth forums, workshops and internships throughout the year further engage students in timely and relevant issues in global affairs. Prominent speakers who have interacted with students at the Youth Town Meeting or other youth forums include Nobel Peace Laureate Oscar Arias Sanchez and U.N. Messenger of Peace Jane Goodall.

Objective

WorldLink activities are provided at no cost to ensure diversity of youth participants and perspectives. Many low-income schools and programs find it difficult to attend WorldLink events due to budget cuts that have drastically reduced or eliminated after-school programs, teacher release time, and basic bus transportation.

Without financial support to WorldLink, a decline in diversity will adversely affecting the program’s goal of promoting youth connections across social, economic and political boundaries.

Financial support is needed for:

- Stipends for WorldLink interns from under-served schools;
- Materials and other expenses for year-round forums and activities;
- Sponsorship of a high-level speaker for the Youth Town Meeting;
- Conference materials and audio/visual needs at the Youth Town Meeting;

- Transportation for students from under-served schools, including from Tijuana, Mexico, to participate in the Youth Town Meeting;
- Breakfast and lunch for 800 students, speakers and volunteers during the
- Youth Town Meeting;
- Travel and accommodation for local, domestic and international speakers;
- Support for year-round staff coordination; and
- Endowment for USD students and community partners.

Impact

Youth who participate in WorldLink report having broader horizons as a result of the program. As they discover how global issues have local, regional and national significance, they become informed, inspired and engaged leaders in their communities. Many join or start their own service organizations, become spokespeople for important issues, and select college majors and careers in public policy, journalism or education. After their experiences through WorldLink, many participants go on to prominent schools across the country, including Stanford, Cornell, Georgetown — and the University of San Diego.

The program uses the diverse resources of the university, school and institute — including faculty and staff experts, current graduate students and alumni, and local partner organizations in the field — to:

- Promote international awareness and understanding among youth;
- Encourage critical thinking about global dynamics shaping local communities;
- Stimulate discussion among youth, leaders and activists;
- Add youth voices to public discourse of civic problem-solving; and
- Inspire students to become responsible global citizens and effective leaders.

In a 2010 survey:

- 91 percent indicated that participation in the Youth Town Meeting positively influenced their academic experiences.
- 93 percent said they would continue researching the topics covered in the Youth Town Meeting.
- 95 percent said they would continue discussing global issues with friends and family.

For More Information

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