



Peacebuilders Initiative - Peace Project Highlights

Since the inception of Peacebuilders Initiative in 2001, hundreds of unique peace projects have been developed and implemented by high school youth in their schools, parishes, and communities throughout the Chicagoland area. Here is a sampling of peace projects that illustrate the diversity of constituents served, issues addressed, and institutions impacted by these projects.

- **“*Servant’s Heart*” at St. James Parish** – Intending to strengthen relations between suburban St. James Parish and their inner-city sister-parish, St. Malachy, participants and their peers designed and conducted a daylong retreat for 7th and 8th graders from each parish school. The retreat focused on the biblical theme of personal and societal transformation.
- **“*Project SHEEP*” at Holy Family Parish** – Concerned with spreading awareness about global hunger, a participant utilized curriculum provided by Heifer International to educate all grade school CCD students at the parish. Through small-group gatherings, bulletin boards, and class-based fundraising, the CCD students learned about global inequality and ways they can participate in promising alternatives as an aspect of their Christian faith.
- **“*Bridges*” at St. Viator High School** – Wanting to build relationships between students at their mostly Caucasian high school, St. Viator, and a more diverse urban high school, St. Martin de Porres, participants designed a weekend retreat program for students at both high schools that focuses on structural racism and proactive approaches to addressing prejudice.
- **“*Gad’s Hill Outreach*” at Cristo Rey Jesuit High School** – Wanting to work toward reconciliation and lessen gang-related violence, a participant mobilized her fellow Cristo Rey students to create an ongoing after school tutoring program at Gad's Hill Center in a low-income community on Chicago's Westside.
- **“*C.O.A.T.E. (Caravan Outreach and Aid to the Elderly)*” at Mt. Carmel High School** – Aiming to build relationships between teenagers and underserved elderly in Chicago, a participant designed a student organization that would involve Mt. Carmel teenagers in the lives of elders living in care facilities on Chicago's Southside. Student made monthly visits to elderly care facilities of Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly.
- **“*Marian Park Peace Project*” at St. Francis High School** – Concerned with the divide between his private Catholic high school and the subsidized housing complex next door, a participant created a mentoring and tutoring program to bridge the divide. St. Francis high school students now tutor and mentor youth at the Marian Park housing complex each weekday afternoon.
- **“*Epiphany*” at Our Lady of Tepeyac Parish** – Interested in forming the next generation in his own parish, a participant engaged his high school peers in leadership with the middle school confirmation program at his parish. These high school students are creating community service and theological reflection experiences as well as planning and implementing retreats for their younger peers in the confirmation program.

- ***The Organic Garden Project at St. Dismas Parish*** – Interested in connecting parish youth with the area PADS program, this Peacebuilder worked with his parish to develop an organic garden on the land adjacent to the parish. The youth of the parish planted, tended and harvested the garden and created weekend Farmer’s Markets after Mass. Awareness was raised about organic food production and environmental stewardship and funds were raised for PADS.
- ***“Bringing Elders and Teens Together” at St. Giles Parish*** – Concerned with the loneliness experienced by elders in her community, this Peacebuilder started a committee of youth who regularly visited a low-income elderly community in her neighborhood.
- ***“His Enthusiastic Youth (H.E.Y.!)” at St. James Parish*** – Interested in opening the eyes of youth in their parish, these two Peacebuilders started an organization of youth, led by youth committed to service, breaking down social barriers and building strong relationships within the church.
- ***“Bridging the Gap” at Brother Rice High School*** – Concerned with the world’s ever growing need for understanding and tolerance of the different cultures and, this Peacebuilder created a speaker series for his high school on interfaith dialogue.
- ***“Freedom Through Song” at Nazareth Academy*** – Inspired by the work of Harmony, Hope and Healing where she served during the summer week, this Peacebuilder built a bridge between her school choir and the choir at St. Martin de Porres House of Hope. Together, they performed the school’s Christmas prayer service.
- ***“PADS Outreach” at St. Leonard Parish*** – Committed to raising awareness about homelessness among the teens in her parish, a participant developed a relationship between her youth group and the area PADS shelter. Each week, youth from the parish make and serve a meal at the shelter while building relationships with their brothers and sisters who are currently homeless.
- ***“Nothing But Net” at St. John of the Cross Parish*** – Interested in connecting with his sister parish in Uganda and raising awareness about the impact of preventable diseases on their community, this Peacebuilder designed a three-on-three basketball tournament for youth in the area. Proceeds were used to purchase mosquito nets for the community.
- ***“Switch it Up!” at San Miguel School, Back of the Yards*** – Concerned with the violence in their community and passionate about sharing the “other side of the story” of the good in their community, these Peacebuilders designed and produced a documentary about the positive impact of the San Miguel school in Back of the Yards. They aired the video at a community-wide fiesta and fundraiser where they continued the Peacebuilders tradition of collecting funds for an alumni scholarship. They based their efforts on this quote by Millard Fuller, “for a community to be whole and healthy, it must be based on people’s love and concern for each other.”

Our 2010-2011 Peacebuilders are currently designing and implementing their peace projects. They have taken their learning and experience from this summer and are designing projects that will make important contributions in their local communities. More information about current projects will be available shortly.