



YMCA - YWCA

We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.

YMCA-YWCA OF WINNIPEG

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

WINTER 2008

YMCA Peace Week

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- 2007 YMCA Peace Medal Winners
- 2007 YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg Girlz Jam

YMCA World Peace Week is an annual event to celebrate and promote peace and peace building within our communities. Every year, the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg dedicates a week in November to explore and facilitate peacemaking. Peace Week provides an opportunity for the YMCA-YWCA to teach children, adults and youth about the many dimensions of peace.

YMCA Peace Week is unique to Canada and was launched in 1984 by YMCA Canada. Each year, over 40 YMCAs and YMCA-YWCAs in Canada celebrate YMCA Peace Week. Each association celebrates Peace Week by offering daily activities and events or by offering 1 - 2 major events.

This year, Peace Week was November 19 - 25, 2007. During this week, the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg held various events and activities.

On Thursday, November 22, the YMCA-YWCA West Portage Branch hosted our first Peace Breakfast. Staff and volunteers were invited to come for breakfast and listen to Kevin Freedman speak about his work with Peace Brigades International. Kevin's fascinating presentation illustrated the on-going struggles in Indonesia and gave just a taste of some of his every day challenges. The YMCA-YWCA Leaders celebrated Peace Week by holding a Peace Jam at the West Portage branch on Saturday, November 25. The day

started with a presentation from Kevin Freedman, the YMCA-YWCA Adult Peace Medal Recipient, about his work with Peace Brigades International. The leaders and staff also participated in a peace activity in the gym.

To wrap up the Jam, Tara Law, recently returned from an exchange to YMCA of Tijuana, conducted an educational game that taught the Leaders the significance of natural resources and economic power.



**3 Generations of Peace Week Participants
Don, Dustin, Marion and Dave Fraser**



As an ice-breaker activity, groups of leaders formed a peace symbol with their bodies

In all four branches, colourful displays informed staff, members and volunteers about Peace Week. We also incorporated activities such as T-shirt painting into our regular programs. All branches participated in a draw where prizes were given to adults and children.

YMCA Peace Medal Recipients

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The YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg, together with YMCA associations across Canada, marked World Peace Week November 14 – 24 by encouraging kids, youth and adults to create peace by living it, every day, with family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. The week included displays and contests in all four branches, activities in regular children’s programs, Peace Week Breakfast, and LIT and Leaders Peace Jam. The highlight of this week of activities was the announcement of the 2007 YMCA Peace Medal recipients.

“The Peace Medallion recipients have led the way in showing how any one of us has the ability or power to create positive social change without special resources. They are a tremendous inspiration and role model for improving the quality of life in a community, either at home or overseas,” says David Young, Chief Executive Officer.

KEVIN FREEDMAN, recipient of the Adult Peace Medal, has always been passionate about human rights and peace. Kevin began working in the inner city at the Salvation Army Booth Centre when he was twenty, and represented the Salvation Army on the Winnipeg Homeless Committee in an advocacy role. He discovered Peace Brigades International (PBI) through a random Google search, and was accepted into the program in December of 2005.

PBI is an international grassroots Non-Government Organization (NGO) that has promoted nonviolence and protected human rights since 1981. They send international volunteers to areas of conflict, where they provide protective accompaniment to human rights defenders threatened by political violence. They also facilitate other peace-building initiatives (<http://www.peacebrigades.org/index.php>).

Celia Guilford, a Project Coordinator for PBI, nominated Kevin for the prestigious Peace Medal, describing the amazing

accomplishments and contributions he has made. As part of the PBI team, Kevin provided protective accompaniment and international presence to threatened human rights defenders. To assist in bringing peace to the region, Kevin actively networked and cooperated with high-level Indonesian government officials, a number of different embassies, and local and international NGOs to ensure the safety of local human rights defenders; monitored and dispersed information on social, political and human rights issues in Indonesia; gathered, evaluated and analyzed information on security issues and threats; contributed to the writing of bi-weekly newsletters concerning local NGOs in Papua and Aceh, and participating in writing letters of concern to local and national governments in the event of a security risk situation.

Kevin’s work in Indonesia also extended beyond PBI. In May 2006 a devastating earthquake hit the Jogjakarta region, one of the poorest provinces in the country, where he was living. 6,000 people died and over a million were left homeless after the disaster. Kevin and some friends provided emergency relief to hundreds of victims – using their own money and almost \$7,000 in donations gathered through a website created by Kevin.

Kevin returned to Canada in August 2007 to complete his BA at the University of Winnipeg. In an article he wrote for Rights and Democracy (<http://dd-rd.net/en/reseau/stories-10-papua.htm>), he describes his admiration for the Human Rights Defenders (HRD) he worked with during his time in the country: “I find inspiration in, and am fascinated by, the HRDs that PBI works daily with here in Papua, and hope some day I may be able to make an impact the way they do.”

Kevin is returning to Indonesia in January, and hopes to study law in 2008.



Adult Peace Med Recipient Kevin Freedman and General Manager Wayne Johnson

YMCA Peace Medal Recipients (Continued)

The Youth Peace Medal was awarded to the **VINCENT MASSEY COLLEGIATE PEER HELPERS**, who work to make change happen! This group has served as ambassadors, peacemakers, problem solvers and friends. The Peer Helpers is an ethnically diverse group of students from all high school grade levels. The group was nominated by Ruth Elizabeth Stargardter, Student Services Department Head at Vincent Massey Collegiate, who describes their meetings as a time of discussion about everything ranging from the co-ordination of activities to how each and every one of us can and must have an impact on promoting peace and unity. The many activities and campaigns organized by the Peer Helpers demonstrate their creative drive to helping the community at large.

Last year, the group organized the first Wear Red Campaign for World Aids Day. They encouraged students to wear red to show their support of people living with HIV/AIDS in Canada and internationally and also set up a booth during the lunch hour to raise awareness and funds, which were donated to the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

The group also organizes a Holiday party each year for students enrolled in the English as an additional language program. This past year they organized a unique pot-luck, encouraging every student to bring a dish as well as a story or tradition from their own culture or heritage that they would like to share.

After a fire destroyed the school on the Black River First Nation, one of the members saw an article on the situation and the group launched into action by organizing a Book Drive, accepting hundreds of donations of all types of young and adolescent literature to replace those lost in the fire. The Peer Helpers also made history by organizing the first ever Addictions Awareness Week to be held by the school. Their aim was to promote safety and the well-being of students in an interactive and non-judgmental approach.

Considered to be the highlight of the year, the group organized the World Vision 30-hour famine. Activities included a documentary, a thought-provoking round-table discussion, a presentation from students who'd just returned from working in Africa, playing the World Game, as well as raising several thousand dollars!

Stargardter best describes the actions of this innovative group by summarizing their work on a 50 foot mural, which they completed in one week by working every day for three to four hours after school. The mural - depicting a circus theme, elephants, laughing children and dancing lions - was completed in collaboration with the Shriners Foundation, and will be separated into portions sent to the Shriners Children's Hospital in Montreal, the Children's Rehabilitation Hospital in Winnipeg and the Shrine Temple in Winnipeg. Both the mural and the Peer Helpers serve as "a constant reminder of the incredible work that can be done when groups co-operate to make a difference in the lives of others while promoting a strong sense of community."

"Peace is a process, not a goal; a way of being, not an end. Peace prevails when we treat each other - whether as individuals or as nations - with respect, civility and fairness. People pursue peace at all levels, in all directions, all the time. Why not join them?" - Judith Berlyn



YMCA-YWCA Girlz Jam

In October 2007, the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg organized and ran Girlz Jam - The Power of Being a Girl. Girlz Jam is an event that the YWCA of Canada funds in support of YWCA Week Without Violence.

Four hundred and thirty-two girls, aged 12 - 14 years of age and their teachers from four school divisions participated in one of the four full day conferences. The topics at the conference were based around teen dating violence, self defense, body image, alcohol and other drug issues, building a secret journal, bullying and yoga.



The conference also included a key note speaker, Ang'er Ruay. As a child, Ang'er Ruay survived the atrocities of civil war in southern Sudan and was orphaned at the age of five. Her life until the age nineteen was one of wandering through jungles and taking shelter in refugee camps. Today, she is one of Winnipeg's "200 Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan". Ang'er's presentation spoke of her life and the importance she feels an education is and how lucky a child is to attend school.



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Dates to remember

February 3 - 9, 2008

International Development Week

For further information about volunteering at the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg, please contact your local branch or email

info@ymcaywca.mb.ca

If you would like to make a donation to the YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg International Fund, please call Valerie Slater, General Manager, Fundraising and Communications, at 204 831 2975 or email slater@ymcaywca.mb.ca



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