MAYORS UPSTANDER AWARDS

IDEA

Establish a Mayor's Upstander Award in your city -- Create a new generation of heroes!

In many communities it is star athletes who are hailed as heroes, but not necessarily individuals who show initiative in other ways, like transforming a school or community culture by embracing empathy and inclusiveness. As part of the Mayors' Campaign to End Bullying, you might consider creating an annual Mayor's Upstander Award, and use it to honor youth and adult community members who are change-makers. By way of example, CNN's Hero's program is a great reference.

School shootings, bullying, online abuse, and community violence have become staples of news headlines. Young people are often portrayed as trouble-makers, perpetrators and victims, not as the powerful visionaries and leaders they can be. The need to celebrate youth peacemakers— to celebrate young people leading positive change and inspire them onward—has never been greater. With time, the Mayor's Upstander Award you establish could become a powerful community tradition. Find a space to publically honor this new generation of heroes, for all to see for generations to come. Think about possibly leveraging local companies or foundations who might be able to offer philanthropic dollars to fund scholarship support for kids or professional development for adults.

Why a Prize?

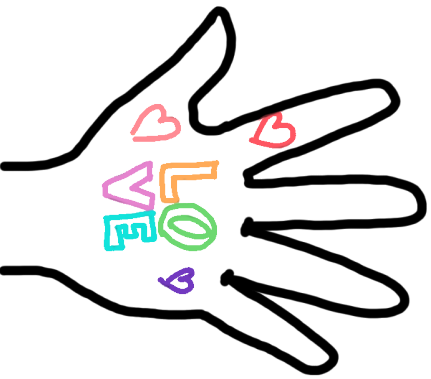
A prize competition can be an effective strategy for recognizing, celebrating and valuing desired acts or accomplishments such as leadership, citizenship, or collaboration. A prize creates a vehicle for valuing and investing in youth peacemakers, and outstanding adults, while changing the public dialogue away from what young people are doing wrong to what young people are doing right.

"Peace First" Prize Example

The idea of a Mayor's Upstander Award was inspired by the work of outstanding educators and practitioners in the field. The Bully Project partnered on this resource with Peace First, a national nonprofit that invests in young people and provides educators and youth service providers with tools to effectively teach the skills of peacemaking. The Peace First Prize celebrates young people, ages 8-22, who have demonstrated courage, compassion, and the ability to collaborate with others to create lasting, positive change. As you are thinking about creating your own Mayor's Upstander Award, here are some examples of upstanders to inspire you:

Peace First Prize Winner, Isabella (11) – At age 9, Isabella knew how big of an issue bullying could be, because she was bullied herself. She also saw other children being bullied, just for being different. After seeing a classmate with a disability being bullied, Isabella knew she had to take a stand. She launched Be a Buddy, Not a Bully, a school-based program that invites students to take a pledge to become an "upstander" – someone who is ready to stand up for anyone they see getting bullied. As a Peace First Prize Winner, Isabella's project has expanded to schools throughout Colorado— and her work is just beginning.

Peace First Prize Winner, Justin (17) - Justin experienced intolerance first-hand when, due to an episode of his Tourette's syndrome, he was disqualified from a high school track meet. Instead of walking away dejected, he used his experience as motivation to make a difference for others. He organized a first-of-its-kind Tolerance Fair, which brought together people and agencies around Cleveland to promote a message of tolerance, respect, and kindness and provided resources to help those who were experiencing discrimination for their differences. Since its initial launch in 2012, the annual Tolerance Fair has grown to over 3,000 attendees and over 125 different charities and advocacy groups as exhibitors.



Shelagh McGinn, (Adult Upstander)

As a teacher at South Side Middle School in Rockville Centre, NY, Shelagh was inspired by the adage, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," so she created the Golden Rule Award, given to a student or staff member who's actions demonstrate one or more of the Six Pillars of Character Education: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. Individuals are nominated by others throughout the school community and each recipient receives a wooden hand to decorate and label with their name, date, and favorite quote. These hands are then hung and displayed throughout the school. As this tradition continues annually, the permanence of the wooden hands on display continues to instill the six pillars of education in students.

Michelle Van Allen, (Adult Upstander)

Marcus Garvey Math and Science in Chicago, IL is a school situated in a low-income urban district that looses many kids to violence, and has struggled with bullying problems and attendance rates. Principal Michelle Van Allen saw promise in instituting an evidence-based Social and Emotional education program, that's been shown to improve student outcomes. Today, Social and Emotional learning has become woven into fabric of school-day; whether its taking a break to discuss conflict-resolution between characters in a reading, having "Monday Mentoring" group breakfasts with adult mentors, or students taking a moment to cool-down and reflect in one of the Peace Centers situated in every classroom, Marcus Garvey students learn constructive ways to regulate their emotion and reactions, and they carry these skills with them everywhere they go. Since implementation, an increased number of students report the school to be a safe, strong and orderly environment for all learners.

We think this practice could be enriched by honoring the adults in the schools and community alongside the youth who have worked to create safer schools. This could be an advocate or an administrator who for years has been struggling to implement and create support for, or maintain fidelity for bullying prevention. Often these folks give above and beyond, face cynicism to downright resistance, yet they are critical to creating safer schools.

Youth could receive a proclamation from the mayor, prize money, trophy, scholarship funds, or a micro grant to help with their projects. Adult winners could be rewarded in the same way, plus funding to attend (and be paid for their time) specialized professional development around bullying prevention.

Launching your Mayor's Upstander Award – Tips

In order to be successful, a prize should have a clear focus, a well-planned process, and a strong network and strategy for connecting to young people. Here are some of the lessons Peace First has learned.

1. Set overall goals for your prize, and use these goals to develop a clear set of eligibility requirements and selection criteria. What do you hope your prize will achieve? Recognition for volunteer leaders? Civic pride? Determine these goals in advance to ensure that the design and implementation of your prize are aligned.

2. Generate a multi-layered outreach strategy. Think about who your likely recipients will be and the best ways to reach them, whether via print, email, web, or social media. Consider how you want to establish the nomination process – our staff can help with this as well!

3. Create a plan for announcing winners and raising awareness. This could include celebration events, press releases, or a social media campaign – whatever makes sense for your municipality. Think about how this could be incorporated into pre-existing events.

4. Build the capacity for widespread community investment by creating opportunities for individuals and organizations to engage in your prize. Find and engage influencers – people that are important to young people and your community – and get them involved as a way to spark interest.

5. Prepare and empower prizewinners with the tools to create lasting, positive change in their schools and communities through networking with organizations that support youth engagement, leadership, and agency. Explore Peace First's Prize Winner Video Discussion Guides for inspiration and use the Youth Starter Guide for examples of tools that can help young people in your community take action.

6. Establish a cash award for the winner of the Mayor's Upstander Award. Consider approaching a local philanthropist about becoming the annual sponsor for a period of years. The award will be taken more seriously if financial value is attached, and it will encourage more thoughtful participation.

7. Design this to be an annual event – it will only strengthen in meaning and impact in time. Plus, this award can become a key piece of the mayor's legacy, so that it continues and becomes part of the character of your city!

For more ideas and help with implementation contact
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The BULLY Project