

# PROMISE PRESS

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## The Five Promises

- Caring Adults
- Safe Places
- Healthy Start
- Effective Education
- Opportunities to Help Others

## 2010 RED WAGON AWARD RECIPIENTS HONORED

### Spencer Neitzel, Promise Fellow, Minnesota Alliance With Youth

In the work that we do, it is most likely that every one of us has come across at least one young person that shows high academic achievement, is engaged in their community and exhibits the well-rounded, exemplary qualities of a successful leader. Additionally, it's also likely that most of us would love an opportunity to celebrate and honor the many great things that inspiring young people do and who they are. For this reason precisely, the Minnesota Alliance With Youth, in conjunction with the office of the Minnesota Lieutenant Governor Carol Molnau, holds an annual award ceremony that honors and recognizes youth from around the state. The Red Wagon Awards, established in 2002, celebrate young people for their exemplary civic engagement, academic achievements and leadership skills.

On the beautiful evening of September 13<sup>th</sup>, the 2010 Red Wagon Awards were held at the Governor's Mansion in St. Paul. Honored were 11 individual winners and five groups from around the state who were hand selected by a committee of MN Alliance With Youth staff, board members and members of the Alliance's Youth Council. Each award presented was accompanied by a short description of the individual or group's achievements in the past year, which showcased a diverse range of talents and contributions the youth bring to their communities. Each award winner received a small red wagon, a symbol of childhood that could be filled with children's dreams or weighed down with their burdens. Millions of American children need help pulling their proverbial wagon along – an idea from which the Red Wagon Awards were born. The awards were given to recipients by the Lieutenant Governor Carol Molnau herself, who also delivered a heartfelt address to all youth in attendance and their families praising them for their outstanding engagement. Commissioner of Education Alice Seagren also spoke, touching specifically on the beneficial impact that these youth have on their



### 2010 Award Winners from Crosswinds of Woodbury with Lt. Governor Carol Molnau

schools and communities, as well as the future of the state of Minnesota.

The 2010 individual Award Recipients were Amanda Bierna of Fulda; Violet Skye Butler of Golden Valley; Corina Cortes of St. Paul; Ally Cross of Brewster; Miguel Jiminez, Miguel Rodriguez and Tony Singsaath, all of Worthington; Esther Lee of Chaska; Shayla Rau of Moorhead; Parth Shah of Plymouth and Bliss Thao of West Lakeland. Group awards were given to the Crosswinds SOAR Scholars of Woodbury; The Girls Book Club (part of the Middle School TORCH program) of Northfield; The Youth Planning Council of Hastings; Nobles County Integration Collaborative of Worthington and the Youth Development Committee of St. Louis Park. Lieutenant Governor, Carol Molnau was also honored for her hard work and dedication to the Alliance over the past 8 years.

Award winners this year were nominated for their exceptional qualities of leadership, academics and civic engagement. Nominations for 2011 Red Wagon Awards become available in early Spring. We encourage you to take advantage of this great opportunity to recognize the inspirational youth from around Minnesota with whom you work.

**“Peace is sharing  
Peace is caring  
Peace is filling the  
world with love”  
- P.E.A.C.E.  
Mural Theme**

## **Painting Peace: The Parkview Mural Project**

**Will Grant, Roseville  
AmeriCorps Promise Fellow**

Parkview Center School’s out of school time program, Friendship Connection, has a lounge area where students in grades 4-8 gather for snacks, homework and enrichment activities. The space has a long, large white brick wall in need of a little sprucing up. Potential was seen by Nate Syring and Molly Flynn, the site leaders, for a mural project that would engage students and be a great introduction to service-learning. The AmeriCorps Promise Fellow hosted by the Minnesota Alliance with Youth in conjunction with Roseville Community Education, Will Grant, was chosen to lead the project, based on his background in illustration and graphic design. The mural looked like a beneficial first step in starting a service-learning curriculum in the school age care program and a fun way to empower youth by giving them a greater sense of belonging and investment in their school.

The project started with a discussion of what murals are and their function in society, along with the boost they provide to a community’s sense of identity, beautification and aid in curbing graffiti. Examples of famous murals from Shepard Fairey’s street art to Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel were shown to get the student’s creative wheels turning. Students were then asked to brainstorm a theme for the mural, as well as individual ideas for their own unique brick to make a border around the larger mural. A theme that arose naturally in the students work were images of peace, which also happened to be an acronym in Parkview’s new school motto: Peace, Equity, Action, Community, Environment. The mural team had their theme, and painted a few practice murals on large paper, which they then presented to the school’s principal, Kristen Smith-Olsen, who gave the go-ahead to paint the final version on the wall.

Further elements were added in the final version, including a painting of the school building, set in between the Twin Cities in the background. A rainbow arching over the school unites Saint Paul on the left side and Minneapolis on the right, along with famous area landmarks included in both skylines. The P.E.A.C.E. acronym and what it stands for runs through the grass of the school playground in large multi-colored letters. 4<sup>th</sup> grader Daley Tubbs painted another Peace statement inside the rainbow along with extra peace signs. A yellow sun with the words, “The Sky’s The Limit” written inside hangs over the scene, painted by 4<sup>th</sup> grader Sarah Bergman.

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**Parkview Center School is a K-8 school located in Roseville that values innovation, high achievement, and cultural competency**



Students working on the P.E.A.C.E. Mural at Parkview Middle School

## AmeriCorps Promise Fellow Spotlight: Jack Stroessner, Hopkins High School

**Lana Peterson, AmeriCorps Promise Fellow, NYLC**

Many people know Jack Stroessner as a Lacrosse buff who played on Marquette's Lacrosse Team through college and now coaches for his alma mater, Hopkins High School. Few know Jack Stroessner's recent path to service as he begins his second year as an AmeriCorps Promise Fellow.

In high school at Hopkins Jack mainly focused on his academics, lacrosse and being what he calls Hopkins High's "AV nerd". It was actually through being on the Marquette Lacrosse Team Jack experienced the power of service through Habitat for Humanity and Hunger Clean Up. Jack sees his path as coming full circle, as he was not involved in service in high school but now post college, Jack has dedicated two years of service to his community.

As a leader Jack's strengths are being levelheaded and never losing his cool (which could be related to his great sense of humor) and seeing the big picture. One of his biggest role models is Martin Luther, "a man who saw injustice and stood up to it" says Jack. Jack received his degree in Journalism from Marquette and would love to be a successful writer but is also realizing that his passion for service was not just a fad from his time in Milwaukee, but perhaps a career path.



Pictured above: Jack Stroessner with canine friend

His hope and dream for his second year of service at Hopkins High School is to get youth engaged in service as opposed to simple tutoring or test prep. Jack tutors and supports student's academics during the day and facilitates a service-learning club after school.

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A river running underneath the word "Community" in the P.E.A.C.E. title was painted by another 4<sup>th</sup> grader Mackenzie Carlson, adding further nature metaphors to the piece. While not all of the student's individual bricks included obvious peace images, all of the students agreed that they were embodying the spirit of the mural by working collaboratively, with over 20 students participating over the course of the project.

After about a week and a half of painting 1-2 hrs a day, the mural was complete. Principal Smith-Olsen, along with Dean of Students Jake Von De Linde and Friendship Connection Manager Stacey Dahlstrom were invited to an official unveiling celebration. The students made welcome signs, streamers and rolled out a red paper carpet for their special guests, and covered up the mural with banners to add some theatrics to the event. When the administrators arrived, the students yelled "Surprise!" and tore down the wall covering, revealing the finished mural. They then answered reflection questions posed by Mr. Grant, and shared their thoughts on what they'd learned from the project. 4<sup>th</sup> grader John Wolf mentioned how painting on a brick wall requires many layers and that the bumpy surface texture presented challenges.



The Parkview P.E.A.C.E. Mural after unveiling

6<sup>th</sup> grader Alhana Bellandi talked about the many ways Peace can be depicted symbolically, from painting a yin-yang from Eastern cultures on one of her bricks to a continental map painted on her other brick to represent world peace. Mrs. Smith-Olsen noted the progression from the student's practice murals to the final product and was pleased that they were able to integrate the mission statement of the school into the mural's theme. Daley Tubbs shared her hopes that the mural would be up for many years to come and that this project was a way for the students to literally leave their mark on the school. The mood of the room was exuberant, and a few of the students even sang a song to their guests, which included a verse that summed up their excellent teamwork as well as the mural's theme, "Peace is sharing / Peace is caring / Peace is filling the world with love."

## Youth Spotlight: Pajnucci Vue, Highland Park High School

Lana Peterson, AmeriCorps Promise Fellow, NYLC

Her passion for service is what drives sixteen year old Pajnucci Vue from Highland Park High School in St. Paul, Minnesota. Pajnucci's motivation for serving is deeper than just wanting to help people, "Doing the right thing is important, but doing the right thing in a meaningful manner is essential" says Vue. Pajnucci is on the Math, Speech, and Swim Team as well as Student Council, National Youth Leadership Council's Youth Advisory Council and board member, Minnesota Youth Council, AND she is a founding member of the St. Paul Service-Learning Youth Advisory Council.

I asked Pajnucci, in all of these roles what makes her a strong leader, "I'm a very passionate person and I feel that I lead with a lot of energy and enthusiasm to get things done. I wish and hope that my leadership empowers others to lead and to do their best." Pajnucci contributes her achievement to having her parents as role models, "They've shown me the true definition of sacrifice so that I can be where I am now. They're such hard workers and are so selfless for our family. They support me wholeheartedly in whatever I do and let me explore who I want to be and what I want to do".

Just as Pajnucci involves service into many of her extracurricular activities she also plans on having a career related to service, and she has a particular interest in third world development. Her favorite quote comes from the servant-leader that has inspired her most, Ghandi, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world".

When asked how her culture plays into her service she responded, "The Hmong are very modest, hard-working people.



Pictured above: Pajnucci Vue, Highland Park High School '12

We work for the community and do a lot of ceremonies and rituals talking collectively to figure out what's best for the community as a whole. Growing up with that mindset, it has influenced me to think more of what's best for the big picture and how can I serve to fit myself in that picture. Also, seeing how much the Hmong people serve and help each other, it makes me want to parallel that idea and work/serve cohesively with others to get things done".

## Community Spotlight: Prairie Seeds Academy, Brooklyn Park

Kaylie Burns, AmeriCorps Promise Fellow, Prairie Seeds Academy

The service learning program at Prairie Seeds Academy is in full swing! Tuesday, October 12 found 50 kids and 15 adult volunteers packing meals at Feed My Starving Children in Coon Rapids, Minnesota. This year, the group of students is focusing on green concepts, zero-waste, and helping people through these ideas. Feed My Starving Children is fit very well with the groups goal this year, as it is focused on helping children in areas of the world where food and wealth are not as plentiful. The group saw FMSC an awesome opportunity to help children less fortunate than themselves and also think about how to remedy the waste that Americans create every day. Many of the students (and volunteers) were touched by the event. In her post field trip reflection, ninth grader Bao Vang said, "I really liked it because I got to be a part of something big. Everyone was kind and encouraging." Ginseng Thao, also a ninth grader, wrote, "I loved it! I wish to go there again. I only wish that it lasted longer. I never worked so hard in my life before, so this was a very good thing for me." Sandwiches and drinks donated by local Subway restaurants and picked up by trusty volunteers rounded out the day.

The effect of Feed My Starving Children's message was not lost on any student, and many were grateful for the opportunity. Sixth grader Raymond Lee felt "good, and excited, because lots of food was able to be packed with everyone's help." The staff and volunteers at FSMC helped everyone feel valued and important to the final product and created a wonderful service-learning environment for the 120+ adults and children participating on Tuesday. Though not the first service-learning opportunity the students have had, it may have been the most effective. Martin DeLeon asserted, "Our cohort is helping the world. I love saving lives and helping the environment."

**\*\*The service learning group at PSA is run by Promise Fellows Kaylie Burns (7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades) and Kati Lundell (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades)\*\***



Above: members of PSA at Feed My Starving Children Event

# Minnesota Youth Council 2010-2011

The Minnesota Youth Council (formerly MNYAC) seeks to recruit a diverse group of youth who represent the changing face of the state of Minnesota. The MYC provides a forum for these youth to exercise their voice, mobilize youth action, discuss policy issues and advise the work of the Minnesota Alliance With Youth and its partners. The MYC is made up of youth and adult sponsors.



## The 2010-2011 Minnesota Youth Council Members

**Apoman Abella** : Worthington

**Sagal Ali** : Minneapolis

**Ananaya Alwal** : Worthington

**Manny Garcia** : Northfield

**Viri Gonzalez** : Northfield

**Mercedes Heffner** : Morton

**Safia Hirsi** : Robbinsdale

**Lauren Hynnek** : Hastings

**Adyiam Kimbrough** : Worthington

**Esther Lee** : Chaska

**Mackenzie Lucas** : Hastings

**Muna Mohamed** : Minneapolis

**Falastin Motiamed** : Minneapolis

**Joana Pedroza** : Marshall

**Hemant Persaud** : Richfield

**Edward Roberts** : Fergus Falls

**Nadine Rosas** : Northfield

**Pajnucci Vue** : St. Paul



2010-2011 Minnesota Youth Council

MYC's orientation retreat was held Oct. 9-10th at Camp Ihduhapi. MYC engaged in team building exercises and leadership skill assessment. To close the retreat, MYC members participated in the Children's Defense Fund's 10-10-10 March for Children and Youth held at the State Capitol. The MYC is excited and ready for the year ahead of them—watch for more soon!

**For more information about MYC contact:**

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MYC members Esther Lee (left) and Pajnucci Vue (right) participating in the 10-10-10 march in St. Paul



## Engagement. Voice. Success.

The Minnesota Alliance With Youth is the leading convener, collaborator and capacity-builder for youth development in Minnesota. works to ignite the spark in all young people in Minnesota to become actively engaged, develop strong voices and acquire skills needed for success in school, work and life.

The vision of the Alliance is that all young people in Minnesota are highly connected to their communities, have hope for a brighter future and are able to fulfill their dreams.

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## Upcoming Events

### Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota Annual Conference

8:00 am - 5:00 pm  
Oct. 25, 2010  
St. Paul, MN

### Boys Adrift, Girls on the Edge

8:30 am - 4:00 pm  
October 26, 2010  
St. Paul, MN  
To register: [mnyipa.org](http://mnyipa.org)

### Why Gender Matters

*The Importance of Gender in Early Interventions with At-Risk Youth*

8:30 am - 4:00 pm  
October 27, 2010  
Rochester, MN  
To register: [mnyipa.org](http://mnyipa.org)

### Giving a Fish a Bath: The Untold Story of the Adolescent Mind

8:00 am - 4:00 pm  
November 2, 2010  
Duluth, MN

### Search Institute Big Tent Conference

November 18-20, 2010  
Houston, TX  
For more info: [bigtentconference.com](http://bigtentconference.com)

## 2009-2010 Stats

**70 Promise Fellows** accomplished the following across **50 communities** (includes Fellows serving through Recovery Funding and regular AmeriCorps\*State funding):

**Youth Served**  
10,674

**Adult Volunteers**  
2,820 served 42,204 hours

**Youth Volunteers**  
3,467 served 44,625 hours

**TOTAL Volunteers**  
6,287 volunteers served hours 86,829 (\$1.81 million worth of volunteer labor, according to The Independent Sector/Hands On Twin Cities)

**Keep up the good work!**