

Peace Begins with You and Me

LKPY Turns One

Have you ever got off your cushion after meditating on loving-kindness, switched on the news and seen a story about a school shooting, or picked up the newspaper and seen an article about a young suicide bomber, and wondered: "Where's the loving-kindness in young people of today," and "What can I do?" An international organisation instigated and set up by young people is working on just that.



Shyla Bauer

hadn't been taught the basic principles of loving-kindness or "the good heart". These children weren't given the opportunity to nurture their basic qualities of love, compassion, tolerance, kindness and understanding. Without these basic qualities, disturbing and vicious acts, words and ideas develop, resulting in such incidents as a school shooting.

The LKPY concept is found in its name – it describes a cause and effect principle. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has said that, "You teach young people loving-kindness, the result is peaceful youth. Since young people are the next generation, the big result is a peaceful world."

But how do you actually translate the principles of loving-kindness into something that any young person from any country or culture can understand and take on? That's where Shyla Bauer, the director and original instigator of LKPY, comes in.

Shyla is a 29-year-old student of Lama Zopa's and a second generation Western Buddhist from Australia who has been volunteering in FPMT centers around the world since she was 17. While she was volunteering at the Mongolian FPMT center in 2004, she had a meeting with Lama Zopa Rinpoche and they discussed setting up LKPY. [See *Mandala* June-July 2007.]

LKPY: Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth celebrated its first birthday in June 2008. In the past year its youthful members have inspired thousands of people of all ages from all around the world to creatively contemplate the meaning of peace and the power of one individual to make a difference. The momentum seems to be building.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche first spoke about the LKPY concept in 1999 after seeing the Columbine High School massacre on the news. For weeks Rinpoche watched as politicians, school principals and parents blamed brutal video games, bullets sold in supermarkets, heavy metal music and violent movies as the cause for the school shooting. But no one was talking about more subtle causes: the fact that these children



An image from LKPY's "Pieces of Peace" project

"The LKPY concept seemed so logical and really made sense. The first thing was to develop projects and make it easy to get involved and relevant for young people today," says Shyla.

And so with the help of her family, friends – and "the fantastic four other LKPY board members" – they did just that. "We decided to get rid of the religious connotations and focus on the peace side ... everyone wants peace. So we've labelled ourselves as an international peace organization for young people and what makes us different from all the other peace organizations out there is that LKPY believes that peace comes from the inside. Everyone has heard the old saying 'a waterfall starts from just one drop of water' – well, LKPY believes that, similarly, peace starts from just one person and each person can influence and inspire their community, their environment and ultimately the whole world. That's why LKPY believes that world peace really is possible."

The first steps to creating that peace have already begun. The five projects with which LKPY initially launched has grown to seven, and the HABIT project in particular is starting to take off. HABIT is what LKPY describes as their "heart project".

Shyla explains: "HABITS are open discussions regularly held in cafés and other comfortable places worldwide. LKPY concentrates on our similarities rather than our differences – no matter what your beliefs or appearances are. HABITS involve nurturing peace inside and out through discussions with authors, musicians, actors and other inspiring people, as well as learning about others and yourself, and of course there is always

plenty of time to chill out with a cup of chai ... tea time for the soul as we call it."

LKPY has spent the last year developing a comprehensive HABIT coordinators booklet [available on request] to help people set up a HABIT in their own hometowns. LKPY believes peace is a constantly growing process: starting with ourselves and then emanating outwards to our families, neighbors and friends, to our community and our environment.

The other LKPY projects are designed to nurture peace building, education, positive dialogue, intercultural and interfaith understanding, peer-to-peer support, non-violent expression, environmental awareness, community commitment, celebration of creativity, personal integrity, empowerment and mindful living.

The idea is simple. We all want to make a difference. We all want to be happy. And we all want peace. LKPY just nourishes what is already within you and me.

Everyone involved with LKPY is a volunteer. All LKPY projects are supported by donation, "because we believe that people should give according to what they think we are worth," Shyla says.

LKPY is growing quickly with volunteers all over the world and already they have future project ideas, including working with incarcerated young people, developing a LKPY magazine, setting up youth halfway houses and opening cafés.

Shyla believes that LKPY is only limited by their imagination. And with this much enthusiasm behind them they just might reach their goal: to help create a peaceful world. Go to www.lkpy.org

PEACEFUL YOUTH