



LIVING VALUES

an educational program

Values Education for Children and Young Adults

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Living Values: An Educational Program Newsletter

November to December 1999
Issue Number Three

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Editor's Desk

This bumper double issue for both November and December is full of news of just some of the many exciting things that are happening with Living Values around the world. It is very clear that enthusiasm for LV materials and trainings is growing, and coordinators in many countries are being kept very busy trying to keep up with demand.

At the heart of the work to meet educators' needs is Living Values Coordinator of Content and Training Diane Tillman who has just returned home after a 16 week trip to 11 countries. Training educators and meeting with education officials, countries she visited include the UK, Kenya, Germany, Singapore, Thailand, Australia, Vietnam, China, the Philippines and India. News from some of these countries is below but that from others will have to wait for the January newsletter! In the meantime, Diane herself conveys the essence of her trip as follows:

"The response around the world was amazing. I really enjoyed all the wonderful people I met. Educators in every country are concerned about youth. I used to be surprised that every country had similar social concerns and problems. Now I know that teachers also share similar dreams and goals. They are weary of the pressure and stress, and know children are too. They want positive results - they want students to achieve their potential, and they want to see respect, cooperation and motivation increasing in the classroom. They want to give and have the kids be successful." She added: "Kids really care about peace. And so do their teachers. It was an amazing experience for me to see the love and enthusiasm of educators -- for the world, for children and for this program."

We hope that you too will find the stories below inspiring, and for those whose inspiration becomes action, please set aside time to tell us of your experiences! It is only by sharing them that others can know about them. This generates enthusiasm - and allows many to profit by the experience of others. The LVEP website - at <http://www.livingvalues.net> - warmly welcomes hearing from educators with one or two success stories (or even not-so-successful stories!) of values activities that they've tried in their classroom.

So read on and, as ever, we hope that you'll do more than just read: please also send us your news - and go out and make some news!

With warmest wishes for the holidays and a very Happy and Values-full New Year to all our readers.

The Editor

International Forum of the Americas in Mexico

The International Forum of the Americas took place from the 15th to 19th November 1999 in a place called La Trinidad near the city of Tlaxcala in Mexico. The Forum was supported by the State Government of Tlaxcala as well as the State and Federal Ministries of Education. Teachers and educators from Tlaxcala were very interested and enthusiastic to participate. As

the programme grew, plans also changed to allow wider participation. The programme was divided into two parts:

the International Forum held in the Hotel La Trinidad, which attracted 300 participants, and

the Values Fair and Art Exhibition held in the main square of the capital for some 400 participants.

There was a series of activities workshops, panels and talks on values, all taking place at the same time in both locations. The Forum was inaugurated with great pomp and splendour by the State Governor of Tlaxcala before an audience of over 1000 people and there was a wonderful gala concert in which the Orchestra of the Mexican Navy played popular Mexican tunes and Beethoven's 4th.

Breaking from traditional models of presentation, short plays were used to introduce the theme of values and stimulate thinking on the subject. A group of invited guests then commented on each theme. Over the three days that followed, participants were divided into twelve groups for a series of workshops. In the afternoons there were six panels on different topics such as Culture and Values, The Significance of Values in our Lives and Values in Education.

Officiating at the closing ceremony were several State officials and invited guests, each of whom shared moving experiences of the event. It was truly an international event drawing participants from the following 20 countries: USA, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, Uruguay, Bolivia, El Salvador, Colombia, Peru, Brasil, Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Kenya, Australia, Spain, U.K., France.

Barbados: Virtues and Values do grow on trees!

Myrna Belgrave, Living Values Coordinator for the Caribbean, and the Principal of a school in Barbados, has been working with values for many years and writes:

"At the school which I administer we have created a LIVING VALUES/VIRTUES TREE. Every week we select a value/virtue to explore. During the week we try to put it into practice. At the end of the week, on Friday, we hang the virtue/value in a decorated form on the tree.

The parents of children at the school donated the tree. We will continue to put more values/virtues on the tree in the new year. Other than that we are all living our values and it is creating a very lovely atmosphere in the school."

Greece: A Future for Education

A quality gathering of educators and people interested in values education met in Athens from 12th to 14th November to share their expertise for the regional forum in Greece entitled "Living Values: A Future for Education".

This was an experimental forum and the first of its kind in Greece with participants coming from Greece, Hungary, Turkey, Israel and the UK. Plenary sessions were in Greek and English and a wide selection of workshops were offered in both languages.

Living Values Coordinator for Greece, Sue Emery, takes up the story:

"We had the pleasure of welcoming some very distinguished plenary speakers including: Professor Ervin Laszlo, president of the Budapest Club and advisor to the Director-General of UNESCO who spoke on the subjects "The Challenge to Education in a Changing World" and "Education for Values and Vision" and Psychologist and Sociologist of international repute, Dr Maria Sagi, presented a special contribution called "The Value of Sound".

From Greece, we were honoured with the presence of Dr Costas Ballas who spoke about "Ancient Values in a Modern Context". Dr Ballas is an Associate Professor and Consultant Psychiatrist who is a member of the Social Work Synodic Committee of the Church of Greece and has been awarded the St Mark's Golden Cross of the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

Other speakers included Maureen Goodman (Programme Coordinator at the International Centre of the Brahma Kumaris in London), Neil Hawkes (School Inspector and ex-Head Teacher of West Kidlington Primary School in Oxford), Teresa Valavani (Clinical Psychologist), Debbie Valencia (Founder of the Union of Filipino Migrant Workers in Greece), Lilika Couri (Director of Educational & Training Consultants), Susan Baird-Tounis (a British Business Consultant) and Dr Bena Gul Peker from Turkey (Assistant Professor at the University of Gazi in Ankara).

A wide variety of workshops were offered by special experts in their field and included a five-person international team from 'Clean-up Greece', a non-profit environmental organisation in Greece, and a special seminar on Conflict Resolution.

A special exhibition of values materials had been prepared by Ninetta Halkia, Despina Samlidou and Olympia Basklavani and these materials will be presented again at forthcoming LVEP events in Greece. Quality of entertainment also had its place during the forum. After the welcoming speeches on the Friday we were entertained with music and song from Tania Roumkou and Angelos Lambropoulos and a special guest appearance from internationally acclaimed musician Ross Daly who provided his services free of charge in the spirit of the whole forum.

The finale touched the hearts of everyone. Forty children from the Munting Day Nursery run by the Philippines Association in Greece sang 5 songs in English, Greek and Filipina, including the one of the values songs they have learnt. Dressed in their black and white outfits, aged from 5-10 years old, the children sang to the accompaniment of their teachers who have been receiving values training for the last eighteen months in Greece.

The final song was sung by professional singer Karen Solomon. She had written a special song many years ago in Australia and had not performed it publicly, believing that sometime, somewhere there would be a special place for her special song. She announced that the forum was the appropriate place for her and treated us to a beautiful rendition of the song, entitled "Cosmic Lullaby". We are currently discussing with Karen the possibility of adopting this song as a signature song for the Living Values programme.

Special thanks go to everybody who contributed their time, energies and talents, their good wishes and subtle support for the success of the forum.

Watch this space for forthcoming events!!!"

Brasil: Living Values Reaches 640 Sites!

Brasil's capital, Brasilia, was graced with a visit by Pilar Quera Colomina, a respected educator from Spain and a pillar of Living Values, and Barbara Calderon of the Spanish Committee for UNICEF.

In their short visit, an eight-hour seminar was held for about 160 educators and representatives of various organizations working with children and youth such as: UNICEF, UNESCO, ANDI (News Agency for Children's Rights), SINEPE and IPAM.

Living Values is now taking place at 640 sites throughout the country and, during Pilar and Barbara's visit, more seeds were planted for its further expansion. Brasil has now been divided into sectors for Living Values activities, each sector having its own coordination, and so an "Information Central" is being created to collect data periodically from all over the country.

The LVEP Team in Brasil has met on a couple of occasions in the last month with the First Lady of the State of Sao Paulo and the State Minister of Education. They are planning a training for the 6000 State school directors; the training will take place in groups of 200, starting in January 2000.

India: International and National Training by the Seven Stars

At Rajasthan's hilltop resort of Mt. Abu, India, there were two trainings hosted by the Academy for the Better World, part of the Brahma Kumaris Headquarters. The first was a three day Educator Training involving fifty educators from 21 countries. The second was a six day Train-the-Trainer seminar for 122 Indians from 14 states in India.

Different state governments within India are interested in values education in response to increasing problems with students and teachers. The six day training was done by what the participants began to call "the seven stars" - Diane Tillman, Diana Hsu, Salud Odio, Vangie Ram, Mila Ramgoolam, Helen Sayers and Annie Waltham to whom many thanks are due. The quality of interchange, learning, involvement, love, and fun were exceptional.

Colombia: Inauguration of Living Values' office in Bogota

Pilar Quera Colomina, Living Values Coordinator for Spain, came on a flying visit and, with a big smile, melted hearts wherever she went. Her first stop was Bogota where she inaugurated an office for Living Values and ran a teacher-training seminar. She then took another flight, followed by a 90 minute car journey, to get to Chinchina, where she ran a training programme for 200 teachers and business people, all of whom were immediately inspired to start implementing

United Kingdom: Empowering Young People in the 21st Century

This National Conference was hosted by the Brahma Kumaris at Global Co-operation House, London, on 2nd November 1999. The following extracts from the Conference report give a snapshot of a wonderfully inspiring day:

"There was something refreshingly different about this Conference, which was supported by 13 national youth organisations. It was ambitious in its scope, seeking to change the way young people see themselves, as well as how they are perceived by others, with a view to enabling them to feel more valued and better able to fulfill their potential and play a meaningful part in the community;

- it was designed to give participants an experience of empowerment, rather than just listening to others talking about it;
- it 'walked its talk' insofar as young people played a major and inspiring role in both the planning and presentation of this inter-generational and multi-cultural event;
- it attracted a large and diverse audience - over 250 people from many different organisations, ranging from the Scout Association and Moral Rearmament to the probation and prison services, as well as numerous youth organisations; and
- the mood of the conference was positive and uplifting. People had come together to recognise and celebrate the potential of young people to contribute to society and, consequently, they were keen to share ideas and network.

The speakers included:

- 4 young people who are active in the community. Amongst other things, they spoke about the need to get involved in the world and to take power now, rather than passively wait for it to be given at some indefinite date in the future when 'grown up'; of how young people are very aware of the issues and need to make their views known and how those in positions of authority should actively seek their opinions and act on them. This was a theme which was to be repeated throughout the day.
- Sir David Ramsbotham, H. M. Chief Inspector of Prisons, who spoke passionately about society's duty to recognise and encourage the potential of each young person, "If you dispirit your young, you dispirit tomorrow, as well as today."
- Judy Simpson, the former world champion athlete and ex-Gladiator star, who highlighted the importance of self-motivation and determination as a source of empowerment.
- Mark Hodge, aged 19, one of the organisers of the international World Voices Conference. He spoke of the desire of young people to give something back to society and how they can, and do, make a difference.
- Sister Jayanti, European Director of the Brahma Kumaris who spoke on the theme of 'self

sovereignty', i.e. our ability to empower ourselves by taking control of our thoughts, words and actions and tapping into our inner spiritual qualities and powers through the practice of quite reflection/meditation.

- Maxi Jazz, lyricist and rapper with the hit band 'Faithless'. He spoke movingly about how the power of positive thought had changed his life and the need for confidence based on "overwhelming self belief - no matter what" because we become what we think.

As the day progressed, it became apparent that the values we subscribe to as individuals are key to the issue of empowerment. If we act in accordance with our inner/core values, such as respect, integrity, humility, love and trust, we are much more likely to have self-respect, feel good about ourselves and others and be successful in our activities.

Various initiatives will follow that will incorporate these ideas. This conference did not set out to answer all the questions but to act as a catalyst and start a dialogue about the way we view and deal with not only young people but also each other.

In this dialogue it is crucial that we respect each other and recognise the needs of all people and their right to be listened to, heard, acknowledged and encouraged to play their part.

The next step in this exciting and challenging process will be a 24 hour Focus Group meeting in March at the Brahma Kumaris Global Retreat Centre, Oxford. There, conference participants, and others, will share their ideas and practices and begin working together to create a society in which all young people, regardless of their race, gender, creed, disability or sexual orientation, are able to fulfill their potential and play a meaningful and active part in the community. Through mutual respect and co-operation and the sharing of resources, ideas, power and decision-making we can make it happen. The conference was an important milestone in this process.

The time has come to notice, respect, listen to and involve young people in our future ."

For further information about the Focus Group meeting or to order a copy of the conference report, please contact Liz Corrigan, Living Values: Empowering Young People in the 21st Century.

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Thailand: Seminar for Educational Psychologists

Living Values Content and Training Coordinator, Diane Tillman, visited Thailand on her world tour and in Pattaya a Seminar on Living Values was held on 14th September 1999. It was attended by 40 top-ranking educational psychologists and guidance counselors from the Ministry of Education. They were introduced to the LV materials and took part in trying out some activities, which all participants found entertaining and interesting. Besides adopting and adapting them for use in their own classrooms or guidance programmes, they were inspired to organize train-the-trainer sessions for schoolteachers.

On 15 September Diane was interviewed on Radio Thailand. An official at UNICEF is now

interested in the activities for inclusion in some of their work there.

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