



Greater Lynn YMCA

*Lynn*Peabody/Lynnfield*Saugus*

We build strong kids, strong families, strong communities.

January 8, 2009

Dear Friends of Children,

My name is Tony Bellerose and I am the School Age Child Care Director at the Lynn YMCA in Lynn, Massachusetts. I am in the process of trying to coordinate a global effort called, **the Children Stand for Peace Initiative**, as a way to give children around the world an opportunity to have a voice when it comes to the significance of world wide peace. I would like to extend an opportunity where children might have a voice. My goal is to have children around the world **“Stand for Peace”** by simply having groups of children representing as many parts of our globe as possible, stand and form a peace sign and then forward a picture of it to me at the address (*or email address*) below. Secondly, children are encouraged to write letters describing why it is important to live in a peaceful world. I would like to collect as many pictures and letters as possible and coordinate them into a book that would be professionally bound and then forwarded to President Barack Obama.

I ask you for your help in this matter. Please send along this letter to as many agencies, organizations, foundations, etc., that work with children. It is my hope that such collaborations involve places not only close to you, but across the nation and around the globe. If you are not interested, I still ask that you might pass along this letter in the hopes that someone else will respond. I look forward to your responses and thank you all from the bottom of my heart. We all try to build a loving and peaceful world for our own children, let’s now try to wrap our arms around the shoulders of all children and give them what they so desperately want, need and deserve.

In closing, it seems that war, violence, abuse, and a basic intolerance to humanity is overwhelming and everywhere. They witness and have become the casualties caused by acts of war, violence due to drugs and alcohol, world hunger, genocide, domestic violence, and countless other ways that children around the world are suffering. When I started working with children 24 years ago, I never dreamed that children would be forced into a world where there is such a lack of humanity, acceptance, understanding, and dialogue regarding our own differences. Although our cultures, beliefs, and religions may be different, the one constant that is overwhelmingly prevalent is the fact that children want to be loved and taken care of. Children want a world that is peaceful. They quite often feel that they are victims of a world that makes up its own mind and that the choices of the world are out of their hands. I don’t ever want the results of war and violence to desensitize children, rather, that it encourages them to be a part of the solution rather than a part of the problem. Many feel that children should be seen and not heard, quite the contrary, I feel it most necessary at this crucial time in our world’s life, to use the simple, honest, and idealistic view from children when it comes to solving some of our most difficult problems.

“One day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal we seek, but that it is a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means.” ~ Martin Luther King Jr.

Most sincerely,

Tony Bellerose

School Age Child Care Director

Greater Lynn YMCA

20 Neptune Blvd.

Lynn, MA 01902

USA

(781) 581-3105 / Ext. 245

tbellerose@lynnymca.org

www.lynnymca.org