Celebration Toolkit: Tips for Honoring Youth Peacemakers

Join us in building a society that celebrates and values youth peacemaking.

The Peace First Prize showcases young people, ages 8-22, who have demonstrated courage, compassion, and the ability to collaborate with others to create lasting, positive change. Peace First’s goal is to celebrate these powerful stories and to inspire others to make peacemaking part of their daily lives.

Each fall, Peace First selects five young people as Peace First Prize Winners, awarding each individual $25,000 and a two-year fellowship to support their peacemaking work.

But the Peace First Prize is not just about winners. The Prize is about recognizing the thousands of young people across the country who are taking a stand, confronting injustice, and working together to build a more peaceful world through incredible acts, both large and small.

Please join us in building a youth peacemaking movement. This January, nominate a young person in your life for the Peace First Prize. Then, use this toolkit to join us in celebrating their peacemaking work.

Why Celebrate Youth Peacemaking?

Peace First believes that young people are natural peacemakers with the power and creative energy to make change— not when they grow up, but today. Celebrating peacemaking shows young people that their efforts are noticed and valued by the greater community, and emphasizes the critical role youth play in building a safer, more just and peaceful world.

How can I get started?

This toolkit introduces several ideas to help you celebrate youth peacemakers in your school, youth service organization, religious community, or scout troop. Use these ideas as a guide, or as a jumping off point for designing your own celebration plan!

Looking for more in-depth support? Set up a free phone consultation at dac@peacefirst.org.

Peace First’s Top Celebration Ideas

1. Host an assembly, award ceremony, or celebration tea
2. Invite youth peacemakers to share their work
3. Create a nomination wall-of-fame
4. Recognize youth peacemaking year-round

Find additional toolkits, lessons, activities and more at Peace First’s Digital Activity Center http://www.peacefirst.org/digitalactivitycenter/.
Honoring Youth Peacemakers: Celebration Ideas

Celebrations mark important moments in our lives, and in the lives of our communities. They also send a powerful public message, highlighting what we notice, what we value, and who we aspire to be.

Meaningful celebrations take many forms. Whether elaborate or simple, lavish or informal, what matters is taking time and making space to bring people together around a clear message that says: **we honor the role that young people play in building a more just and peaceful community.**

Getting started is easy. Try one of Peace First’s favorite celebration ideas below, or use these as inspiration for creating a celebration plan that’s right for your setting.

**Host an assembly, award ceremony, or celebration tea**
Think about the celebrations that currently exist in your setting. What has worked well? Award certificates? A powerful speaker? Time for honorees and the community to talk together and share a meal? Build these structures into your peacemaker celebration. Be sure to include young people in the preparation and design process, and emphasize thoughtfulness over cost. Remember: some of the most powerful celebrations happen over cookies and juice in classrooms filled with student-made decorations.

**Invite youth peacemakers to share their work**
Reflection and learning are central to peacemaking work. Build a bridge between young people’s academic and peacemaking skills by inviting them to share lessons they’ve learned with the broader community. Try hosting a poster fair, where honorees present their work visually and answer questions as guests walk from table to table. Did young people write a booklet or create a short film as part of their peacemaking work? Hold a book release party or film screening, and invite honorees to sign copies of their work for friends, family, and community members.

**Create a nomination wall of fame**
Turn a wall, corner, or bulletin board into a space for celebration. Begin by creating a sign that reads, “We Celebrate the 2015 Peace First Prize Nominees at _________!” Then, invite adults and young people to nominate youth peacemakers in your school or community for the Peace First Prize. Each time someone nominates, add the nominee’s name and a description of their peacemaking work to the Wall of Fame. For added sparkle, snap a photo of each nominee and add it to the wall by their name.

**Recognize youth peacemaking year-round**
The Peace First Prize accepts nominations and applications each year from January through March. But peacemaking doesn’t stop when applications close! Consider implementing a “Peacemaker of the Month” program, or simply start a tradition in which individuals write a note of appreciation whenever someone in your community demonstrates courage, compassion, or collaboration. Before you know it, everyone in your school or youth group will know just what to say when you ask, “how were you a peacemaker today?”

CELEBRATE TODAY! Nominate a young person for the Peace First Prize at [www.peacefirst.org/prize](http://www.peacefirst.org/prize).