

**TITLE: Students for a Mine-Free World**

**SCHOOL: Union College**

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#### MINE-FREE WORLD WRITE UP

**PROJECT SUMMARY:** This Mine -Free World Project has two goals: encourage students to participate in grassroots tactics that advocate the signing of the International Treaty to Ban Landmines and to raise money for landmine clearance. The location of the project was initially on the Union College campus, where demonstrations were conducted, thousands of dollars were raised, letter writing campaigns began and public speeches were made. The project now has no limited location. Money has been spent to spread the project to other colleges and universities across the United States. The participants range from Union College students to Naval Academy students. Anyone who visits the Mine Free World website or who signs a postcard to a US senator is considered a participant.

The other funding involved in this project has come from the Internal Education Fund at Union College, which provided me with \$400. None of this money was combined with the Projects for Peace money and can be considered a separate entity. It went to online advertising and demonstration materials before I was awarded the \$10,000. The initial time frame of the project was from the summer of 2006 to the end of the Union winter term of 2007. Now the project has expanded dramatically. It has continued all summer and will continue next year. Another Union student will work to give the organization a 501, tax-deductible status. Much of the spending I have done will be promotional materials for her and I to use once we can claim that the organization is tax deductible and has non-profit status.

**PROJECT RESULTS:** The Mine Free World project has been a long learning experience filled with trial and error tactics; an overall very good learning experience. The money provided has allowed me to try one method and then change it bit by bit until it is perfected. For example, I began by having students research my topic and write lengthy advocacy letters to politicians about the International Landmine Treaty. I then addressed them and sent them myself, a process that took time and effort. With the money, I ordered postcards with pre-written statements, allowing students to simply sign their name and choose who to send it to. I then realized it would even be easier to have the address of the politicians already on the postcard so students did not have to rack their brains for political names and then guess the spelling of them. I started out with an idea and then developed it to make it as easy as possible for each person to participate. As a result, about 700 postcards supporting the treaty have been sent to presidential candidates and more are soon to be sent.

Further, 1,500 stickers with the Mine Free World logo are soon to be distributed to college campuses and students in different states. These stickers will promote the organization and the cause. They are currently in the process of being printed by a Vermont based company called Websticker. Shipments will be made to Union College, Boston University, Carlton, UNH, Rochester, UMASS Amherst, New England School of Photography, American, Northeastern, and various others to spread the cause. Many of the results that I hope to see with this project will actually be taking place in the

following years, as it is a project that is geared for college students who are just now re-entering school.

Finally, the website, which has taken months to organize, will be reconstructed within two weeks. It will be professionally done and include the logo as well as a PayPal account. This portion of the project was difficult, as many web design companies work high above the \$10,000 range. After meeting with various companies, I found a freelance designer who agreed to do the project below \$3,000. Marcus Ohanesian from Perfect Evolution studios is in the process of designing the site. I have already received emails from students as well as parents who have shown interest in donating once the site has been completed. Once the project receives 501 and tax deductible status, I expect more people to donate directly through their credit cards to landmine clearance funds.

The bulk of the Projects for Peace money went towards online advertising for the website. Print advertising was too expensive, even with the grant money. Therefore, I continued to use Facebook to advertise cheaply at the locations I wanted. With the Union College Internal Education Fund, I was able to advertise at a few colleges for a short period of time. With the Projects for Peace money, I was able to drastically expand the scope of my advertising. After designing an ad and under the slogan "A Way to Fight Terror that We Can All Agree On", I advertised at 16 schools in all regions of the United States. I chose schools which had high response rates to my previous ads (Naval Academy and West Point) and then tried to hit a large range of schools in various states. Additionally, with the expanding Facebook technology, I was able to advertise in other countries. I chose landmine effected regions and advertised in Cambodia, Vietnam, Mozambique, Thailand and South Africa. The ads for all schools and locations have been ordered but will not be placed on the Internet until October 1<sup>st</sup>, to ensure that all colleges are in session. It is during this time that students are logged onto Facebook the most. I did not want to advertise during the summer when students were working or traveling.

One aspect of the project that was not accomplished was fundraising events. By the time I had received the money and discussed doing a joint fundraiser with another philanthropic group at Union, the school year was coming to a close. Doing a campus fundraiser would have been easier than doing one in Boston, as college campuses have many students in one concentrated area. Nonetheless, it became very complicated to organize a fundraiser event. Hopefully the new school year will bring one or two fundraising events as the latter half of the project unfolds. All in all, I cannot determine exactly how successful the project was because I am still awaiting the updated website, the future advertising and subsequent donations. The new few months should be telling.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The implications of this project are to create a world with a few less landmines. Clearly it is very difficult to change a policy that is international in nature, especially through grassroots tactics. However, it is true that every bit helps, be it letter writing or raising awareness through bumper stickers, website and advertising. Additionally, this project seeks to involve college students in the political process, which I believe it has done. Hundreds of students have participated in letter and postcard writing. Hundreds more have signed online treaties and approximately 500 students made donations during the school year.