

CHAMPS International



--- CHAMPSkids.org launches CHAMPS International ---

CHAMPS (Children Against Mines Program), a student-lead program of The Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI), began in 2002 when Diana Enzi, wife of Senator Mike Enzi of Wyoming, heard about the Adopt-A-Dog Program, where Corporations adopt/sponsor Mine Detection Dogs (MDD's) and deploy them to mine-affected countries around the world. She believed that if school children could learn about the mine issue, had the chance to see a real MDD in action in a simulated minefield demonstration, and was offered the opportunity to affect change in the world they would respond with a resounding YES!! And she was right. That year Diana led a CHAMPS Campaign across Wyoming which resulted in the first student-sponsored deployment of a highly skilled MDD to Sri Lanka. *Wyoming* "sniffs mines" and saves lives, a gift from the students of Wyoming to the children of Sri Lanka.

Three years later, in January 2005, in partnership with the US Department of State, MLI officially launched CHAMPS across the United States and hired CHAMPS Director Kimberly McCasland. In November 2007 the 14th CHAMPS dog was funded. School children have taken the exciting opportunity to extend the tradition of civic leadership by joining other students in schools around the nation in adopting **their very own** Mine Detection Dog. Schools, Girl Scouts, and private families in Arizona, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont and more have joined Wyoming in this incredible venture.



In each Campaign young leaders have emerged. Teachers were asked to identify those students who took a leadership role in their Campaign, participated in most if not all of the fundraising events, and encouraged others to join in the effort. These teacher-nominated student leaders, in recognition and as a reward, have joined other donors on MLI sponsored Donor Delegation Trips traveling to the mine-affected country where their dogs are serving. Meeting their dogs, seeing dogs working in the field, meeting government officials who run the mine action program, and meeting other student leaders who live in that country were only some of the events the students participated in. And the results have been incredible.

Ambassador Bisera Turkovic, Bosnian Ambassador to the United States in Washington, DC, while attending a CHAMPS Workshop in Washington, requested a meeting of these young American student leaders with her student leaders in Bosnia Herzegovina while on the Donor Delegation Trip. During this meeting the students shared their ideas, feelings and amazement at just how much they were alike. **"It is amazing to me that you, you who do not know us, would spend so much time to raise such a large amount of money to help us here in Bosnia Herzegovina...to help us get rid of these landmines, and we are not helping ourselves."** This statement by one young lady from the Catholic Center School in Sarajevo was what led to the formation of the **CHAMPS International Program**.

One of the most talked about subjects that came out of those student meetings was the plight of the landmine survivors, those who have been maimed by landmines and struggle to rejoin society. Mine victims have many medical requirements such as prosthetics or prosthetic adjustments, surgery, physical and emotional therapy and job training which in many cases goes beyond what these countries can afford to provide for their people. For so many mine victims, there remains a void that needs to be filled.

"Why can't we help them? Why can't we run Campaigns that can raise the money for those things, we can do it...WE can do it!!" This statement, from young Bianca Streep of Kingston, New Hampshire, the student leader who brought CHAMPS to her 4th Grade class which led to the sponsorship of *Granite* nearly two years later, gave MLI President Perry Baltimore the idea to let the CHAMPS International Program Campaigns help mine victims around the world.

Basic Concept

- Students in the United States run Campaigns to raise funds for mine victims' medical needs.
- International students identify and befriend mine victims in their communities/schools.
- US and International students meet virtually at least monthly using Skypecasts.
- Students visit each other's countries.

To date, CHAMPS International Campaigns have raised funds to help mine victims in the country their dog is serving. But, this program is not limited to schools that have sponsored dogs. Working in partnership with CHAMPS Patron Joan Wismer, the US Department of State, and the International Trust Fund, **any school** can join in the effort to help mine victims!

By going to www.skype.com schools can download software which will allow them to log into monthly scheduled CHAMPS Skypecasts. Schools in the US and schools in Bosnia Herzegovina have been given webcams, donated by Joan Wismer, to facilitate these meetings. Discussions will include, but not be limited to, the global landmine crisis and how it affects mine-affected countries, landmine victims, and how everyone can help.

Objectives

To provide the students of the United States and in Bosnia Herzegovina with:

- Education about the worldwide landmine crisis and its effects
- The experience of helping landmine victims
- The understanding of their role in the global community
- A unique project to fulfill community service requirements
- The opportunity to develop their leadership skills by assisting others

Campaign Timeline

No timeline applies to this program. Schools can join at any time. Just contact MLI at (703) 243-9200, or go to www.champskids.org and click on "Get Involved" and then "Contact Us" to send in your request!

NOTE: The Marshall Legacy Institute would like to thank Rotarian and CHAMPS Patron Mrs. Joan Wismer for her passion, vision and financial support which has made this program possible.