

That Landmine Thing: Students Take on the Landmine Crisis



Adopt-A-Minefield and Landmine Survivors Network developed a program called “That Landmine Thing” to raise money to help solve the worldwide landmine problem. Middle and high school students from all over the world have raised more than \$180,000 (U.S.) for the cause.

by Zach Hudson [Adopt-A-Minefield] and
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Adopt-A-Minefield® and Landmine Survivors Network have joined forces to create That Landmine Thing, a student campaign involving thousands of young people from across North America interested in mine action. That Landmine Thing is an international fundraising campaign created for and by students to help clear minefields, assist survivors and raise awareness about the landmine problem. Since its inception, the campaign has been incredibly successful, involving nearly 1,000 schools and raising over \$180,000—clearing four minefields in Cambodia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as providing survivors with appropriate medical care and the means to establish a livelihood.

The collaborative venture of AAM and LSN was born out of the crossover between the philosophies and missions of the two organizations. Adopt-A-Minefield clears minefields so roads can be rebuilt, land can once again be farmed and refugees can return safely home. Landmine Survivors Network assists survivors in obtaining appropriate medical care, rehabilitation, peer support, job training and human rights advocacy training. There is a natural symbiosis between these two objectives, and AAM and LSN have found a way to work in cooperation, benefiting each organization, the students, and the mine-affected communities they serve.

AAM and LSN, along with the International Baccalaureate North America Office,¹ invited IB

schools throughout North America to participate in a region-wide creative and action-oriented service project to raise funds for mine action. The response from IB students was so successful that a minefield was cleared in Pursat, Cambodia, and various LSN survivor assistance programs were funded as well. Thanks to the efforts of the students, 60 families in Pursat were able to return to their previously mined land to farm the rice fields that serve as their main source of food and income.

The two organizations have demonstrated that the landmine issue is a natural draw for students. By participating in a fundraising campaign for mine action, students are developing critical thinking and leadership skills, tapping into their creativity, and learning about community, teamwork and service. By studying the impact of landmines around the world and doing something to solve the problem, students become true global citizens. Many have written to tell us how they feel empowered by making a difference in the world at such a young age. One student even wrote to say that her involvement with the campaign gained her access to every college on her wish list. Teachers have reported that they love the campaign as well because they are able to incorporate campaign material into academic subjects such as geography, social studies, cultural studies and political science.

Each year, students across North America think of new, imaginative ways to raise money for global landmine clearance and victim assistance. Students have held dinners in their homes to raise awareness about landmine issues, run coin drives and hosted benefit concerts such as the “Rock In the Music, Roll Out the Mines” concert, planned by the students at South Salem High School of Salem, Oregon, featuring five local rock bands. During the concert, the students also held a silent auction to raise additional funds. Two schools in Florida beat the heat by holding car washes to raise funds in their battle against landmines. Children from Canada and California stayed up well past their bedtime during “Stay-Awake-a-Thons.” We heard reports of all-night movies and ice-skating parties to raise money for the cause, and one group showed a PowerPoint presentation on their school’s television station.

But our very favorite campaign story is the one of the innovative young men at Upper Canada College (Toronto, Canada) who worked with an herbalist to develop, produce

and market their own line of all-natural and organic creams, lip balms, and lotion (Blue Crush Creams). These boys learned not only how to create their products from scratch and package them using minimal, recyclable packaging, but also how to run their own business and use cause marketing to perform community service at the same time. By incorporating science, math, business and economic principles into their program, they were able to raise an impressive amount of money while expanding their abilities, knowledge and experience.

These stories are only a few of the amazing programs conducted by schools across North America in the past four years to support Adopt-A-Minefield and Landmine Survivors Network. With each school event, support for the issue grows, and more importantly, awareness for this worldwide crisis builds. In just a short time, That Landmine Thing students

have become models for how we can work together to educate our communities and make a difference.

That Landmine Thing is now in its fourth year of working with the IB students and is expanding to other schools. Its newsletter—also named That Landmine Thing—helps teachers incorporate the material into their curricula to expose students to fresh information. Funds raised in the program clear minefields and help landmine survivors regain their lives. The campaign strengthens schools, allows students to act as a collective force and creates global citizens. But perhaps most importantly for these students, the campaign allows them to actively participate in eliminating one of the world’s most pressing humanitarian challenges before even graduating from high school—the global landmine problem. ♦

See “References and Endnotes,” page 107



Zach Hudson is the outreach and communications coordinator for Adopt-A-Minefield. In this capacity, he is the main contact for all of the ongoing national grassroots AAM campaigns. Zach also heads the AAM student campaign, a network of schools working together across the world to raise funds to clear landmines and assist survivors. Additionally, Zach manages the AAM communications, including the AAM seasonal newsletter, *The Deminer*.

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That Landmine Thing: Students Take On the Landmine Crisis, Hudson and Fuentes [from page 77]

Endnote

1. For more information about the International Baccalaureate North America Office see <http://www.ibo.org/ibo/index.cfm>. Accessed Nov. 1, 2005.