

THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR • INDYSTAR.COM

---



---

## conversations

---



---

# Camp helps kids pick peace over violence

It is hard to come to terms with the crime happening in our own community. The good news is that crime statistics are telling us only part of the story.

We, along with many other community agencies, have been working tirelessly to empower kids in our community to be peacemakers and to take a stand for peace in their schools and neighborhoods.

Thanks to support from the Summer Youth Program Fund, the Brave Heart Foundation and Lilly Endowment, this summer more than 850 new students were able to participate in a full-day Peacemaker camp at Peace Learning Center. Due to a partnership with Indy Parks' Supervised Play Program, a free annual summer camp program that serves thousands of local youths in neighborhoods with some of the highest rates of poverty and crime in the entire city, we were able to bus the campers into Eagle Creek Park to enjoy nature while also gaining new skills to resolve conflicts peacefully and make healthy choices. Many of these children otherwise would not have had the opportunity to leave their neighborhoods this summer.

During Peacemaker camp, students completed a "Pledge for Peace" and returned to their neighborhoods with a new understanding of the power of their own actions. Planting these seeds of peace early is an investment we make in our community to ensure that we give our young people the understanding and skills to foster peace rather than violence.

We also seek out youths who need our services the most: in juvenile detention settings, in alternative schools and in our most

### **Kristina Hulvershorn**

MY VIEW

underserved settings.

In our partnership with Indianapolis Public Schools' Alternative Schools program during the 2012-13 school year, 89 percent of students we worked with believe there are things they can do to resolve conflicts and build relationships, 80 percent learned new skills to resolve conflicts peacefully, and 85 percent believe they can resolve conflict without violence.

This is incredible progress for these students and necessary work that benefits all of us who want a healthy and peaceful community.

We hear our students talk about trauma and violence on a daily basis. Sadly, we are no longer surprised by violence. What is surprising is when kids are expected to make positive, healthy and peaceful choices but are never shown how. We must try not to be weighed down by the sadness and violence in our community but, instead, use it as an inspiration to work that much harder to prevent the pain and suffering that victims of violence and their families endure.

To learn how you can get involved in supporting peace education in our community, visit Peace Learning Center. Our children and youths need a village full of peacemakers to give them hope for a better and more peaceful future.

All of us have the opportunity to make a difference to stop the violence.

Please do something today to make a difference for tomorrow.

★ Hulvershorn is youth program director for the Peace Learning Center.