



Mission and Vision

As a nonprofit organization that nurtures and relies upon the passions and leadership of our youth, Team Kids never strays from its motto: “*It’s all about the kids!*” Our mission is to empower our children to change the world. We educate and inspire youth to become responsible, resilient, socially conscious citizens through experiential character development programs, which leverage innovative community collaborations. Our vision is not only about the future—we give young people the opportunity to improve the lives of others today *and* encourage them to become the next generation of compassionate leaders, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists.

Through the Team Kids Challenge, a youth-led, elementary school-based program, and related community-based service programs, like Lemon Aid and Youth Council, thousands of participants learn about leadership, teamwork, and making healthy choices for themselves and others in real-world situations. The parents, teachers, police officers, fire-fighters, business leaders, and other community members who volunteer to assist with the implementation of our programs recognize the need to increase the confidence of our youth by emphasizing their importance to society and their ability to make a difference regardless of age or socioeconomic status. By building up the positive assets of youth, Team Kids protects them against harmful behaviors, such as substance use, gang involvement, and other delinquent activity.

Team Kids relies upon community collaboration to protect and inspire young people. Stakeholders from education, government, public safety, and business are uniting to secure successful outcomes for our youngest citizens across the nation. Together, our communities can support the healthy development of our kids by encouraging their positive efforts to empower America’s future.

A History of Team Kids

In 2001, 600 students at Vista Verde Elementary School attended an assembly as a part of a pilot project for what would become Team Kids’ flagship Challenge program. There, they met Jeremy, a three-year-old boy who suffered from a rare heart condition that required serious treatment. His family needed \$20,000 to fly him to Minnesota’s Mayo Clinic to receive life-saving heart surgery, and his story inspired these students to help.

From selling popsicles and hosting coin drives to organizing a pancake breakfast with fire-fighters, kids did everything they could to support Jeremy and his family. As media stories about their commitment appeared in the *OC Register* and the *LA Times*, the whole community began to take notice. Readers sent in checks; an anonymous celebrity gave a significant donation, and a local pilot offered his jet to fly Jeremy to Minnesota. Thanks to these students and the community, Mayo Clinic doctors performed successful heart surgery on Jeremy and sent him home to Irvine, where he is living happily today!

The entire process demonstrated that when the community comes together, miracles truly can happen and—what’s more—*kids* can make them happen! It was the passion and power of the student participants that saved Jeremy’s life and made the project a huge success. Their excitement sparked the birth of Team Kids, officially founded in 2001 by current CEO Julie Hudash, a group of board members, and our first youth participants—many of whom are now graduating from college! Since the original group of 600, Team Kids has worked with more than 50,000 students in Orange and Los Angeles Counties. With the first leg of our national expansion in Arlington, Virginia secured, 18,000 young people will participate in the Team Kids Challenge this year at no cost to the school or students.

Prevention and Empowerment through Service Learning

The United States is home to nearly 75,000,000 people under the age of 18, which represents nearly 25% of the total population. Oftentimes, programs and professionals are forced to focus on the struggles and challenges these youth face, whether poverty, academic failure, or gang involvement. There are clearly challenges to address: although improved from past years, the high school dropout in the United States is approximately 25%, and schools in economically disadvantaged areas are still performing below par. Other statistics highlight alarming trends: from 2001 to 2011, there was a 178% increase in youth receiving publicly funded services for alcohol and drug abuse, and gang membership for youth aged 8 to 17 increased 50% from 2002 to 2011. Suicide rates also significantly increased over a similar time period (2012 Conditions of Children in OC).

In response to these challenges, many organizations deliver interventions to redirect youth’s lives. By contrast, Team Kids’ programs are based on research showing that many social problems can be *prevented* if community stakeholders collectively build developmental assets, such as positive peer influence, adult role models, caring neighborhoods and schools, and opportunities for service, for our youth from an early age (Search Institute). Likewise, Team Kids’ philosophy is to focus on cultivating what is *right* with youth. By building on their strengths through service learning and positive adult role models, we believe youth will be prepared to make good decisions and avoid harmful risks. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures Strengthening Youth Policy, “Kids who feel safe, valued and connected to caring adults are more likely to be positive about life, engaged in school, and emotionally healthy. They are also less likely to participate in destructive or delinquent behavior.”

Service learning in particular can help youth increase their sense of self-efficacy as they learn they can impact real social issues, and it also helps them develop problem-solving, teamwork, and planning skills and interest in further education and civic engagement (Roehlkepartain, Search Institute, 2007). Service learning can also benefit and enrich academic performance with real-world application of classroom skills. Committed participation in service learning has been linked with higher academic achievement, character, and leadership development, and supports 21st Century Learning Skills and the new Common Core Standards being implemented in California in 2013-2014. These new academic standards were created to be “relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers,” and service learning provides an important link between academic learning and practical application.

Team Kids' Programs

Based on this knowledge, Team Kids offers both school- and community-based service learning programs for 18,000 youth from elementary to high school age each year. Incorporating best practices, such as giving youth active and meaningful leadership roles and meeting real community needs through service learning (RMC Research 2007), Team Kids helps youth develop the values and skills that enable them to make positive choices in their own lives while making a difference in the lives of others.

Team Kids Challenge: A School-based Program

Initiated as a pilot project even before the organization's founding, Team Kids' core program is the school-based, four-week **Team Kids Challenge**, an innovative, research-based, and empirically validated approach to youth development. The Team Kids Challenge empowers an average of 650 students at each elementary school as they learn about community needs and work alongside police, fire-fighters, parent volunteers, and Team Kids mentors to do something about them.

Over the past three school years, Team Kids has hosted a Challenge at 30 schools, harnessing the collaborative efforts of nearly 22,000 students, their families, volunteers and community partners. Team Kids works with schools for free at the request of the principal, PTA leadership members, or students themselves. Kicking off with an assembly led by Team Kids staff, police officers, and fire-fighters, the program delivers four lessons about critical community issues, such as homelessness, hunger, safety, and the environment. Every student is invited to participate in a weekly challenge such as collecting food or clothing. Furthermore, fifth and sixth graders can volunteer on the Leadership Team once a week during lunch recess, further enhancing their skills and abilities in a leadership role. This Team plans a school-wide carnival fundraiser for the last week of the Challenge to raise funds for a charitable cause, providing real assistance to children and families in need of food, shelter, and other care.

To give students an even greater sense of impact, Team Kids ensures that 100% of the funds and resources raised are donated directly to a nonprofit identified and selected by students. Past recipients of students' efforts have included the Red Cross, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Families Forward, Human Options, Illumination Foundation, OC Rescue Mission, Orangewood Children's Foundation, Second Harvest Food Bank, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Oak View Renewal Partnership, and several schools. Since 2001, Team Kids Challenge participants have raised more than \$420,000 in cash and in-kind donations for nonprofits such as these.

LemonAID, Shop with a Cop, and Team Kids Youth Council: Community-based Programs

In addition to our school-based Challenge, Team Kids also facilitates community-wide service learning projects for youth, including three main components:

LemonAID: Natural disasters and large-scale catastrophes generate an imperative call for the community to respond and make a difference, big or small, in the lives of those who have been impacted. Team Kids empowers youth to do just that through our LemonAID stands, created in

2005 to raise donations for those in need around the world. In its first year, 1,200 youth hosted 220 homemade LemonAID stands, raising \$11,700 for New Orleans residents affected by Hurricane Katrina. Since then, youth LemonAID stands have supported victims of California's wildfires and the earthquakes in Haiti and Japan, along with local causes such as the OC Human Relations Council's youth diversity programs. LemonAID occurs as a community-wide event twice a year: over Martin Luther King Day weekend and in the summer.

Shop with a Cop: Besides facilitating opportunities for youth to make a difference, we also believe in creating space for positive experiences with adult role models to build trusting relationships. One way we do this is by partnering with the Irvine Police Department to break down barriers between youth and law enforcement at our annual Shop with a Cop event. Every December, Irvine police officers take 50 children from Human Options, a shelter for battered women and children, shopping at Target, followed with a dinner for families and police. The event helps build positive relationships between police and children and families who may have had negative experiences with law enforcement in the past. One mother has said, "It helped my children experience police officers as fun and loving people who care about us." We rely on the support of the Irvine Police Department and Police Association (books for each child), Target, Stonefire Grills (dinner), and Chuck Jones Center for Creativity (cartoon art) to hold this event.

Team Kids Youth Council: Knowing that older youth learn best through hands-on, experiential learning and believing in the power of adult mentoring and modeling of values-based behaviors, Team Kids invites middle and high school students from all over Orange County to participate in our Youth Council, a service group independent of schools that continues the objectives of the Team Kids Challenge. Adult coaches train, mentor, and support Youth Council members as they assess community needs, plan youth-driven service projects, and engage others in their passion for community service. Past Youth Council projects have included a 72-hour Servathon, an Earth Day Watershed Watch, organizing a Relay for Life team to support the American Cancer Society, a project in Mexico City, and conference presentations at a Teen Summit and Peace Jam.

Our Impact

Young people are always asked to provide feedback about the Team Kids activities in which they participate. They consistently respond that they have learned new skills, had fun, and feel good about themselves and their visible contributions to the community. Younger youth often say they learned that anyone can make a difference, no matter their age. Eight-year-old Alex says, "Team Kids helps kids change the world," while fifth graders Scarlet and Stephanie say, "Team Kids has inspired me to do more volunteer work," and, "I learned that helping others can be really fun in life."

Even preschool-aged children can grow as a part of our programs. Three-year-old Audrey was one of our youngest LemonAID stand volunteers. She enthusiastically sold lemonade along with her parents, and her mother says that Audrey's eyes light up like Christmas morning when she remembers her LemonAID stand. We hope that we can inspire this excitement for all children and youth who participate, empowering them with a sense of charity as automatic as breathing. One of our board members

appropriately states, “Team Kids engenders a culture where it is everyone’s right, regardless of age, to be a powerful agent for change.”

Another reason youth value Team Kids is that our programs break down barriers between kids and parents, police officers, fire-fighters, and other adults, through the working combination of youth leadership and adult support. And it’s not only the kids who learn—one teacher said that the Team Kids Challenge “proves what kids can do if we give them the chance.”

In addition to the voices of our youth, Team Kids also evaluates the impact of our programs through pre- and post-program testing measuring the change in youth’s confidence, awareness, and new skills. An evaluation conducted by WestEd, a leading educational research firm, consolidated these results and demonstrated the program’s effectiveness for promoting positive identity, community engagement, and prevention of high-risk behaviors. Covering the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years, pre-/post-program survey tools were administered to more than 440 students in seven elementary schools and one middle school. The results showed that students who participated in a Team Kids Challenge:

- Developed stronger feelings of self-efficacy;
- Showed more confidence in their capacity to be a leader;
- Increased awareness of and empathy for the needs of others;
- Strengthened desire to help others; and
- Improved perceptions of being an important contributor to their school and community.

Again, these results are critical not only for the short-term benefits they bring, but also for the preventive factors they strengthen. As Irvine Police Chief David Maggard states:

“Team Kids’ programs provide our young people with opportunities to learn about community, leadership, teamwork, compassion, and making healthy choices. This is prevention, as kids who feel connected to their community and are involved in positive social action are less likely to engage in destructive behavior. Team Kids’ programs build self-respect—and respect for others in need.”

Our Team: Staff, Volunteers, and Community Partnerships

Team Kids has been able to provide such effective support for youth participants through a unique collaborative effort that includes Team Kids’ board and staff, a force of volunteers, and a broad range of education, government, law enforcement, business, and other community stakeholders. By working in partnership, rather than isolation, Team Kids directly impacts youth *and* strengthens communities as developmental assets for them. Youth grow to see parents, police, and teachers not as those who tell them what they can’t do, but as supportive role models and mentors. This TEAM effort is still all about the kids—but it takes everyone working together to truly make a difference.

As a nonprofit organization, Team Kids relies heavily upon its Board of Directors, led by current President Craig Elliott, to help guide program development and organizational direction. Founder Julie Hudash remains as passionate as ever as CEO, working with the board, building community partnerships, and leading awareness and outreach efforts; she was recognized for her efforts with one of the Orange County Business Journal's Women in Business Awards in 2011. As an organization, Team Kids has been recognized in media coverage and was honored by California Attorney General Kamala Harris for meritorious service and powerful outcomes in 2011.

Team Kids' collaborative partners, too, are intentional and indispensable contributors to our outcomes. In particular, the Irvine Unified School District and Police Department, the Newport Beach Police Department and Fire Authority, the Newport Mesa Unified School District, and the Orange County Fire Authority have been instrumental in establishing our successful Team Kids Challenge program at schools in the Irvine, Newport, and Costa Mesa areas. Schools have opened their doors to us, and city police departments and the OC Fire Authority have provided and coordinated volunteers to lead assemblies and support youth projects. Corporate partners such as Disney, Starbucks, and Oakley have provided financial support and gone above and beyond by volunteering alongside youth. In the process, not only do these partners build Team Kids' capacity to help youth, but they are also showing students the strength generated through mutually supportive community relationships.

Our partners have chimed in with powerful statements about Team Kids. A Wells Fargo volunteer called us "a caring and giving organization," while Oakley CEO Colin Baden stated, "It's nice to see young people adopt a strong social conscience. Team Kids empowers children to help others, as well as donates 100% of what children raise to other charities." Exemplifying how much our programs inspire our partners, Captain Steve McHale of the OC Fire Authority emphatically states that working with Team Kids "is the best part of my career. If I do nothing else, here on out, I'm okay with that. This is the best."

Moving Forward

Today, Team Kids is on the cusp of major expansion. Over the past 10 years, Team Kids has developed sustainable models in Irvine, Newport-Mesa, and Rancho Santa Margarita, gaining significant community attention, trust, and support from parents, schools, law enforcement, city government, and nonprofit agencies. In the next year or two, we expect to exceed a cumulative total of 100,000 students who have participated in our Team Kids Challenges!

As we reach this organizational milestone, we are excited to pursue a number of opportunities for scaling up our model and growing our impact. Here in Orange County, we have primarily operated in the Irvine Unified School District, where our activities first started in 2001. We are eager to secure funding for more economically disadvantaged school districts, such as Anaheim and Santa Ana, to provide at-risk students with the benefits of service learning, which are all the more important as these youth face additional risks due to family poverty and lack of resources.

We have also been approached to expand our program to other states, a step toward our goal of making our programs a national model for youth empowerment and service. In the spring of 2013, Team Kids'

CEO conducted training in Arlington, Virginia. This resulted in four Challenges being scheduled at Arlington County elementary schools in early 2014. Team Kids continues to improve its capacity-development training structure for its volunteers at schools, so the Challenge can grow independently of Team Kids as an organization. This model could easily be taught in other regions, where programs could scale sustainably and thrive in an array of educational environments.

In order to expand to more schools throughout the United States and enable our CEO and other staff to engage stakeholders from all over the country, Team Kids knows we need more staff, volunteer, and development capacity to meet demand and grow sustainably. Financially, we are working to build our revenue, particularly through individual gifts, special events, and foundation and corporate grants, sponsorships, or matching gift programs.

As we seek out new funding, volunteer, and program partners, Team Kids looks forward to growing our impact and empowering more youth to make healthy choices and improve the lives of others, both today and tomorrow. Over the past 12 years, we have seen many miracles happen in the lives of children and families, as communities come together with Team Kids for the benefit of our youth. We invite you to join us and the hundreds of partners in the Team Kids' family in building the character and leadership of future generations.