

UPF Birmingham, UK program - teenagers become Youth Ambassadors for Peace

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August 8, 2020



Birmingham, United Kingdom -- UPF concluded a summer program in which local teenagers earned the title of Youth Ambassadors for Peace.

The program was held on five Saturdays from July 11 to August 8, 2020. It was a cooperative venture of UPF with Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), an affiliated organization, and two local organizations, EPIC Ltd. and Teen Girls Networking.

A grant to support the project was provided by the office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, from its Active Citizens Fund. This fund consists of money that has been recovered by the police from criminals and organized crime, and should be invested into the community.

At the Women's Peace Meetings that WFWP has held in Birmingham, many participants had expressed the desire for their children to receive character education. We were very excited, therefore, when Najma Begum of EPIC Ltd. secured the grant from the Active Citizens Fund and then collaborated with UPF, WFWP and Sandra Joseph of Teen Girls Networking to deliver this program to many young people.

Around 30 young people, ranging in age from 11 to 18 years, met online, for one hour or so, on five consecutive Saturdays during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Ms. Joseph of Teen Girls Networking gave two presentations on "Mindset, Well-Being, Self-Esteem" and "Confidence Building." Dr. David Earle of UPF gave two presentations on "My Place in Society and in the World" and "Becoming a Peacemaker and Resolving Conflict." Patricia Earle of WFWP brought many children through the women involved in her Peace Group. In addition, a young participant from Uganda joined the webinar, had a very good experience, and said he would tell all his friends!

The children interacted well with the presenters and the course material, and were given a little "homework" each week. At the end of the fourth session, there was an essay competition, with prizes starting at £10 and going up to £50. The young people wrote a brief summary of what they had learned, and a short essay as to what they would do to help others, if they were to win the prize money. In addition, those who attended all five Saturdays received a certificate as a Youth Ambassador for Peace.



On the fifth Saturday, West Midlands Police Commander and Recruitment Officer Rani Gundhu, and Anthea McIntyre, a former Member of the European Parliament and the founder of West Midlands Together, presented the awards to the children.

It was a very nice occasion, very positive and optimistic, with some of the children sharing their reflections, and the first-, second- and third-place winners telling us how they would use the prize money to help others. An independent judge decided who should receive which prize, but when it came to fifth place, it was difficult to separate the entries, so in the end we gave a total of six fifth-place awards of £10 each, and everyone else who submitted an entry received £5, as well as their Youth Ambassador for Peace certificate!!

Many thanks to all the children for their commitment over these five weeks, their parents for encouraging them, the West Midlands Police for the funding, and our two excellent award presenters for their time and involvement. Also, thanks to Sandra Joseph and Dr. David Earle, who delivered the program, and special thanks to Najma Begum for so much time, effort and commitment in bringing everything together. All in all, a very worthwhile endeavor!