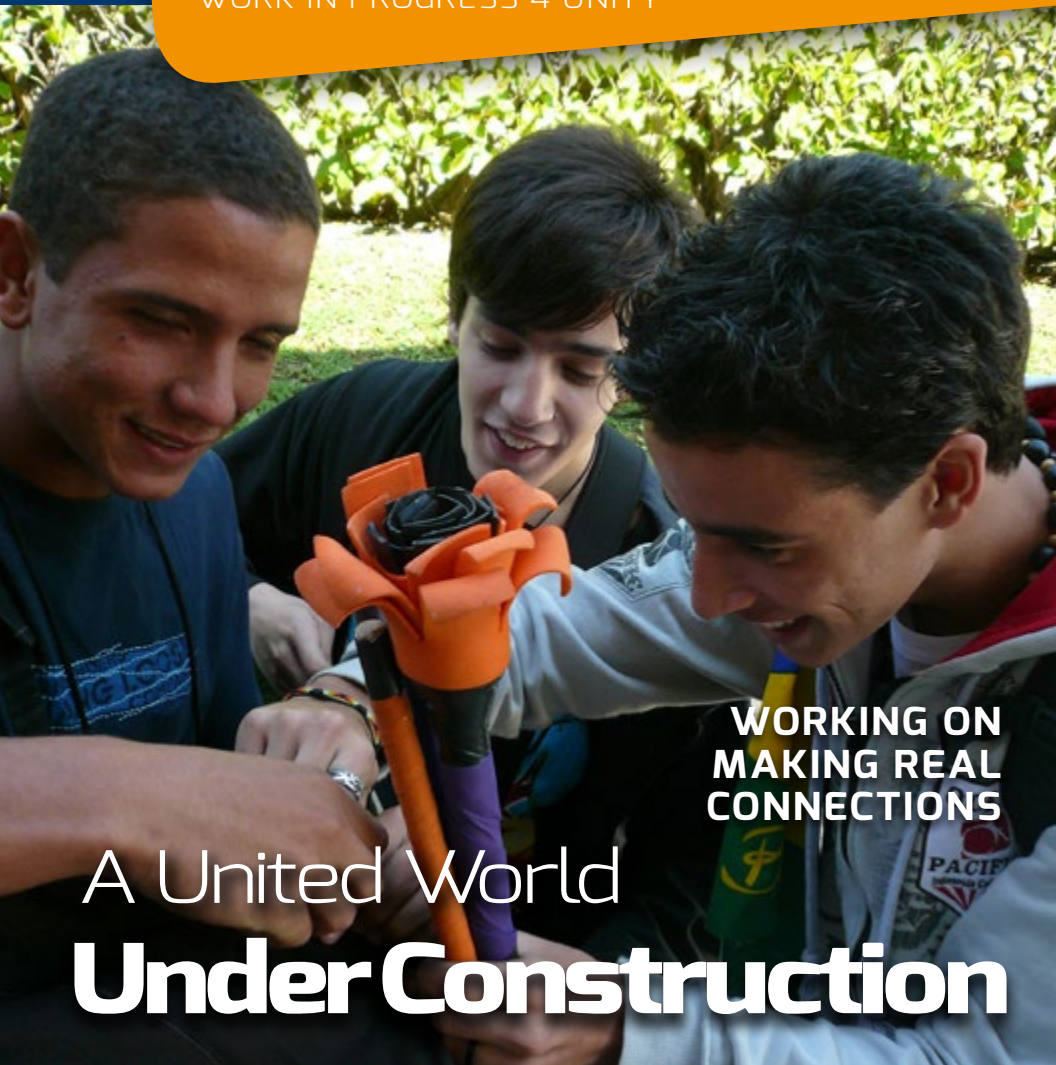


11/2014

teens

WORK IN PROGRESS 4 UNITY



**WORKING ON
MAKING REAL
CONNECTIONS**

A United World **Under Construction**

School

15 Winning Rules:
Overcoming bullying by listening

Film

Soul Surfer:
Finding hope in the midst of suffering

NOW TEENS

Why selfies?

working on making **Real Connections**



To tell the truth, just watching the news or surfing the net doesn't give us any idea of how much good is invading the world! And so this issue of Teens wants to show that a united world is really under construction in every corner of our beautiful planet. It is happening in schools with students who discover that by loving, listening and trying to understand the other person's point of view, bullies can have a change of heart. And when an entire class takes on this attitude, a whole school begins to change.

Let's continue together to be a living, healthy cell in today's society. Let's continue to focus on making real connections

with everyone we meet, whether at the grocery store, in the subway or on the bus. Let's do it even if we know we'll probably never meet that person again. And yet, in that second, in that minute of interaction, let's have the courage to look the other person in the eyes. For that moment when our paths cross, let's make a difference in that one person's life. Let them really feel God's immense and unique love for them, through our presence.

Everyone is a candidate, everything is an opportunity, everywhere is the right place to build unity. So, let's keep on working on making real connections!

the editors

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teens

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Like Living Cells

In this reflection, Chiara Lubich (1920-2008), founder of the Focolare Movement, shares her strategy for building meaningful relationships with everyone.



« If you look around you in some cities you pass through, you are left dismayed, and it seems to you that a Christian society is far off. The world with its vanity seems to dominate...

And you would call Jesus' prayer to the Father – "May they all be one" (Jn 17:21) – a utopia if you did not think of him. He saw a world very much similar to this one, and at the climax of his life he appeared to be overcome by it, defeated by evil.

He, too, looked at all those people whom he loved as himself. He came to bring the family together again: to make all one . . .

Instead, despite his words of fire and truth – that burned away the frivolity of vanity, uncovering that which is eternal, that which is present in every human being – people, many people, even though they understood, did not want to know. And they remained with lifeless eyes because their soul was dark.

This was because he had made people free. Having come from heaven to earth, he could have saved them all with just a glance. But he had to leave the joy of freely winning salvation to them, who were made in the image of God. He

looked on the world just as we see it, but did not doubt . . .

We, too, should do as he did and not be parted from the Eternal, from the uncreated that is the root of the created, and we must believe in the final victory of light over darkness.

We have to pass through the world and not wish to look at it. We have to look at the heaven that is also in us and attach ourselves to what has being and value . . . Then you will notice, with eyes which are no longer lifeless, that you look at the world and at things, but that it is no longer you looking at it. It is Christ who looks, and in you he sees again the blind needing sight, the dumb to make speak, the crippled to make walk, people who are blind to the vision of God inside and outside them, people who are stuck and crippled because they are unaware of the divine will which, from the bottom of their hearts, spurs them on to the eternal movement [of all things], which is eternal love.»

Taken from *Living City Magazine*, November 2014

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(Scritti Spirituali, Rome 1978)

15 WINNING rules

OVERCOMING **BULLYING** BY LISTENING

edited by
Mattarello Middle School
Students (Trent, Italy)

An entire school in the province of Trent, Italy, was involved in a unique kind of course. Here is what the participants have to say about it.

« Two years ago, one of the classes in our school had an experience which today involves the entire school. Ms. Barbara, the literature teacher at a middle school in Trent (northern Italy), explained what happened.

"I was very concerned about my eighth grade class because there had been some patterns of behavior among the students that could have easily developed into serious bullying. I made some attempt to stop for a moment and try to understand what was going on, but my colleagues just told me: "Leave it alone! It's not so bad, and they're eighth graders! They're always like that!" That very evening we had a parents' meeting scheduled. For me I felt it was the moment to get them involved, not by telling them about a situation requiring disciplinary

measures, but by inviting them all to share the responsibility together. At first they were scared and alarmed, or just didn't believe it. But then they got into action and decided on a meeting with all the students and teachers.

By listening to one another, we found the way to change direction. In the following days, the students asked me to have a class meeting "to set up some new rules." They themselves proposed as a basic principle: "Do to others as you would like them to do to you". I told them that this is the "Golden Rule" which is found in the Gospel and in various holy books of other religions, the very same principle that they had drawn out of their own experience.

THE STUDENTS HAVE REQUESTED A CLASS ASSEMBLY TO ESTABLISH NEW RULES.

Some of the students then asked the principal to send out a memo to tell everyone about this project and proposed an assembly to involve their companions in the other classes, where acts of bullying had already become a way of life.

That's when students started to talk! Those who had been hurt by bullies had the courage to talk about it without accusing anyone, and those who had been doing the



bullying got up and told the whole class they were sorry. It was almost like a contest to see who could be more honest about the situation. At the end of the year, the eighth graders were moving on to high school, but they had the desire that this project would continue for all the students. So on the last day of school, at the school assembly, they passed on the 'flag' to the younger students! With the beginning of the next school year, the Golden Rule had become part of our school's Rule Book for all the students."

WE IMMEDIATELY LIKED THEIR PROPOSAL TO LIVE THE GOLDEN RULE

«It all developed from our determination to resolve a series of conflicts," **explains Giacomo.** "The proposal to live the Golden Rule was immediately accepted by everyone, so we have tried to put it into practice and the atmosphere in our class really become very pleasant.

We then spelled it out in 15 rules of behavior and wrote each one on a card, like road signs, which we hung up along the school corridors with the help of the school janitor.»

Martina: «Then we went two by two (so we could support one another!) into all the classrooms and explained this new way of life. We suggested that everyone show that they accepted the proposal by signing a huge card that was then posted at the entrance of the school. To our great joy practically everyone agreed and signed. »

Elena: «Since we were familiar with the experiences of the Teens for Unity, we realized that by putting our time and talents in common, we could make the commitment to support several study grants for youth in poor countries, and specifically for a school in Cochabamba, Bolivia.»

Nicolas: «We held two fundraisers, one at school at our school assembly when all the parents come, and another



in the town square on market day. »

Sofia: «At the seniors' club we received lots of praise because they had never seen young people so involved to help other children we don't even know. With their contributions, our fund really grew! »

Alessia: «Many mothers and grandmothers got together to set up a table to sell coffee and cake during the parent interviews at school, and this brought in more income. Even some of the dads, inspired by our project, went to the local pastor and asked for tables and chairs to set up a booth at the town market. This went very well, too. Now, the only thing left to do was to get to know our peers in Cochabamba so that we can go ahead together with this experience that has given us so much joy. Isn't this another way to "do to others what you would have them do to you?" »

Beatrice: «Besides all of this, we also looked around to see the needs of our own city. We contacted the day center for the elderly and spoke to the administrator who seemed very happy to work with us. »

Valentina: «We started to go to visit the people at this center just before the Christmas holidays, and now we go back once a month to visit with them. We hope we can bring them a little happiness! »

Nicolò: «We learned that even though we are only 12 years old, we can take positive action and make a difference in society. All we need is

a big heart!»

Crossing the line

At the beginning of the school year, I tried out for student council. I was elected and so were a lot of my friends.

Our first meeting was a retreat together with the high school council representatives. We were allowed out of school to participate in a program on bullying. We did many exercises, but one stood out to me. It was called "Cross the Line". The rules were simple: everyone stood on one side of a taped line and the instructor would ask a question. If the question applied to you, then you would step to the other side of the line. They were not simple questions, like asking about your favorite color or food. One question was "Do you think you're not beautiful?" A lot of my friends crossed the line for that one. I wanted to tell everyone who crossed the line that they ARE beautiful. But one question stood out to me the most. It was "Are you a bully?" I thought about this question. I have never physically or purposefully hurt anyone, but I knew it would be lying to say I've never thought about someone badly before I even knew them. So I crossed the line, but as I looked down the row, I felt kind of anxious because there were only five high school students standing beside me. I wondered if I'd made the right choice. The instructor had never asked anyone for an explanation, except on this question. I told everyone about how I may have thought about people badly, and at times even shared it with friends. Even



Siena (right) and her teammate

though I didn't directly hurt someone, I knew it was wrong and kept me from living a full life, one that was free to love all of my neighbors. The next day, one of my friends on the basketball team told me that the girls on the team gossip about a different person every day while they are getting dressed. Though it made her uncomfortable she had never said anything, but, after listening to me at the retreat, she put it to a stop. She told them that they needed to stop talking about other people because if that person were present, she would be hurt. She told me that now they don't talk about anyone any more. I knew then that, when I crossed the line, I had made the

right choice.

Siena Rodriguez, Tennessee

nowteens

TOWARD A UNITED WORLD THROUGH
PICTURES, EVENTS AND TESTIMONIALS

© Official White House
Photo by Pete Souza

WHY SELFIES?

A FAD, ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE
THAT CAN BECOME AN **OBSESSION**

"Selfie: A photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media." This is how the Oxford Dictionary defines a term that officially became a "word" in 2013, and has created a genuine craze among adolescents and young adults. And yet, in actual fact, the "selfie" is more than 100 years old! In 1913, the Russian Grand Duchess, Anastasia Nikolaevna, took a selfie when she was 13 years old. She was one of the very first teens to snap a photo of herself in a mirror and then send it to a friend. On the web today we find self-portraits of President Barack Obama or Pope Francis, selfies taken from outer space or

in the middle of a parachute jump. It's become a real fad to take and post all kinds of pictures on the internet, pictures that are often cute, or unique, but sometimes sarcastic. They capture informal moments of daily life, even of celebrities or famous people.

Unfortunately, however, the selfie often becomes an obsession. For example, some people have put their life, and the life of others, in danger by taking and posting a selfie while driving! Or selfies can be used to send very suggestive pictures. Our society itself is to blame for this use of the selfie, because it encourages people to be more self-centered, conceited and vain. In these cases, the selfie is an example of how people today need to show the world that they are admirable, beautiful, or self-assured. And yet all this can be purely superficial.

by Cecilia Pietropaolo



Life without a **cell phone**

© gena96 - Fotolia

by Chiara Trentinaglio

Are we the “connected generation”? It may seem like it, but some youth are discovering other ways to spend their time.

My name is Chiara. I am almost 13 and live near Trent in northern Italy. In addition to subscribing to Teens I also subscribe to another magazine called St. Anthony's Messenger for Youth (Il Messaggero dei Ragazzi), where I read about some boys and girls who wanted to try living for a week without a cell phone or internet connection. I was impressed by how

**INFORMATION TO
KEEP IN MIND**

HAVE YOU EVER ASKED YOURSELF WHY WE CANNOT KEEP OUR EYES OFF THE SCREEN?

IT'S BECAUSE WHEN OUR EYES SEE SOMETHING THAT IS OF INTEREST, THEY SEND TO THE BRAIN NERVE IMPULSES, CALLED NEUROTRANSMITTERS, THAT TRAVEL FROM NEURON TO NEURON, AND KEEP US GLUED TO THE SCREEN. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE SURF THE WEB OR USE A CELL PHONE APP. PART OF THE REASON IS ALSO OUR INSATIABLE CURIOSITY ABOUT THE LIVES OF OTHER PEOPLE, A VERY COMMON PHENOMENON IN THE SOCIAL NETWORKS, WHICH OFTEN DESTROYS OUR ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE TO

PEOPLE IN PERSON. THIS ALSO AFFECTS YOUNG CHILDREN! ABOUT HALF OF THEM HAVE A CELL PHONE BEFORE THEY ARE NINE YEARS OLD, AND MANY OF THEM SPEND TWO HOURS A DAY AT THE COMPUTER. SOME EVEN HAVE THEIR OWN PERSONAL COMPUTER THAT IS NOT UNDER THEIR PARENTS' SUPERVISION... I WOULD SUGGEST REMEMBERING THIS INFORMATION, AND INSTEAD OF SPENDING HOURS ON THE INTERNET, TO READ A GOOD BOOK INSTEAD, EVEN IF AT FIRST IT DOESN'T SEEM AS INTERESTING.

by Federico Colonnetti

Soul surfer

edited by
Valeria
Palladini

Bethany Hamilton is a girl from Hawaii with a great passion for surfing and with a family that shares her passion. Her life appeared to be perfect: a family that supported her, a best friend who shared the same passion for a sport that they both excelled in. One day while practicing on the surf, a shark attacked Bethany, and although she survived, she lost her left arm. Her life changed from that moment on. She had no left arm, but life still had something in store for her!

Soul Surfer is a very beautiful film. It is very profound, from many different aspects, and emotional, but above all it is a story of suffering and hope, all perfectly blended together – and based on a true story!

they didn't succeed! They couldn't live without their phone for even one day! So I said to myself, "Why not try it myself?" In fact, I had recently bought a new cell phone and downloaded WhatsApp, but despite my mother's admonitions that I was chatting too much on the Internet, I just couldn't stop.

I was becoming addicted to it! I had always done a lot of reading, but a book I once could read in a week I could barely finish now in a month! So when I read that article, I immediately saw the possibility of freeing myself. I made a minor change in the proposed experience, and gave myself a deadline of four days in which I would keep the phone turned off. I left it on the table in our family room, so I would have the

temptation right in front of me. The first day I came home from school and was tempted to turn it on, but I resisted.

I spent the following days without thinking of the cell phone, so they passed quickly. I felt free! When I turned on the phone on the fifth day, I barely used it. When the school year ended, I tried to enjoy the summer as much as possible, without the cell phone. A few days ago, I went to see my brother at the National Swimming Championships which lasted almost four days. I left the phone at home, because it seemed useless to carry it, since my mom and dad were coming, too.

In short, I saw that it is possible to live without a cell phone!



Even better than a goal

by Cecilia Dos Santos

THE KEY TO PLAYING WATER POLO

«Last year I started high school, and since I love swimming, I joined the water polo team. Almost everybody was new, and nobody knew how to play the game, except for one girl who played in the team the year before. That meant that we had to start from scratch and, above all, be patient with one another and with ourselves.

To play water polo successfully, you have to be in certain places when your team attacks and change quickly when you're on defense — and in the beginning we couldn't figure out how to do this. Each one of us had moments of wanting to give up. But we tried to encourage one another to keep on going. Water polo is an aggressive game; other players may hurt you involuntarily. You have to forgive, but at the same time, you have to go beyond it. At first I would always said, "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry," when I hit a teammate. But we were supposed to give our best, so we all agreed that we'd live the slogan, "Forgive and forget," so that we wouldn't keep grudges against one another and instead focus immediately afterwards on the game.

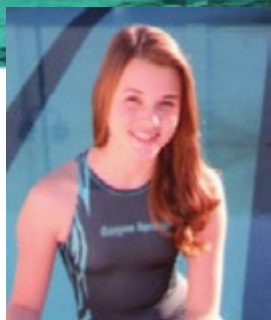
The day of our first real game against another team arrived. The girls of the other team were pushing and grabbing us, and I was getting angry, as were my teammates. On top of that, we were losing badly. Then I remembered that I can't be mad at the other team — it's like playing with my own teammates, they have to give their best, too. So I didn't take their attacks personally and congratulated them in the end for their victory.

Since we were beginners, we lost most of our games, but we gradually made progress. A few weeks ago, during the summer league,

we had to play against a really good team. We were all nervous! The girls of the other team even shared some tips with us. In the end we lost, but not by that much. We couldn't believe that we got so many goals. We decided then to always help other teams who had less experience than we did. By trying to love everyone, even those who are hard to love, we were able to improve our relationship with the other teams, but especially among us. Throughout the season, we bonded like a family.

We also discovered a key to playing better together. In the beginning, we didn't know each other and we didn't talk to each other in the pool. As we tried to become friends, we communicated during the game, and we were able to defend better and to score more goals.

The most important thing was that we didn't lose our spirit. After a loss, we remembered the good things, saying, "Good job!" to each other, and we congratulated our opponents. In this way, nobody dropped out of the team during the school year. It showed me that our relationships are more important than competition — and now I am looking forward



Good spirit. Water polo is a competitive game. Focusing on loving others, no matter what team they are on, changed the atmosphere in the pool.

to the new season. »

from Living City Magazine, October 2013

Hanging out with **Special Friends**



At the beginning of the school year, the special education teacher came to talk to us about a program we could attend during the year. The teacher explained how we could volunteer to help take care of, and hang out with, the disabled kids. After the orientation, I talked to the teacher and offered to spend one afternoon with them.

One day my friends were playing soccer and invited me to join them. I really wanted to play with them, but I realized I had a commitment with the special ed teacher and knew that I would be helping the students there.

Finally, I decided not to play soccer and to keep my promise. I went to their building and spent an hour teaching the kids and hanging out with them. Even in that short period of time, I learned a lot about those students. They were all about my age and seemed to enjoy my company. I spent 30 minutes talking to them and instructing them in math and English. In the last 30 minutes some other helpers and I played games and walked them around.

Over all it went very well and I am glad that I remembered to keep my promise to the teacher. Afterwards the teacher thanked me and told me that not many people help them out. Some of the special ed kids became my friends and I talk to them at school every day. When I went home, I was extremely satisfied with what I did and felt proud. I realized that because of this experience I made new friends, and also I have a sense of happiness and pride that I will never forget.



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