



# EP Newsgram

Promoting Cultural Understanding Through Communication

## Empower Peace Continues Mission Amid Worldwide Tragedy

### Message from Founder, Rick Rendon

*“Michael serves to inspire and remind us that the mission and spirit of Empower Peace must continue and grow in order to help establish a world where such acts of hate and violence have no place.”*



▲ Empower Peace's Doug Wicks (left) and Michael Butler in Cairo during the third conference.

As we come to the close of Empower Peace's third year we can reflect and be proud of many accomplishments.

Truly 2005 has been an amazing year as we have established new friendships in Egypt and Pakistan and conducted our first live international television program, broadcasting on Boston's WB56 and GEO TV into over 130 countries worldwide!

However, 2005 also presented us with the harsh realities of the world, both in terms of natural disasters and unconscionable acts of man. Just days after our amazing video conference connecting students in the United States (Boston and New York) with their peers in Cairo, Egypt and Islamabad, Pakistan an earthquake devastated Pakistan. We are so proud of the American students that quickly came to the aid of their new friends in Islamabad, by conducting a television telethon that raised \$10,000.00 from students and supporters from around the country.

However, it wouldn't be but hours after the moving international telethon, that our hearts dropped in disbelief and horror when we were informed that a dear friend and colleague was severely wounded in the Jordanian hotel terrorist bombings.

Michael Butler, who has so ably served as Empower Peace's International Chief Facilitator since our inception, was victimized by the very same acts he had committed himself to prevent.

Today, Michael is back in Boston and working hard in rehabilitation to battle back from injuries most could never have endured. We pray for his complete recovery every day. Michael serves to inspire and remind us that the mission and spirit of Empower Peace must continue and grow in order to help establish a world where such acts of hate and violence have no place.

Keep the faith and in the coming year may peace find us all,

Rick Rendon

Educators Worldwide - Join Empower Peace TODAY! Log on to: [www.empowerpeace.com](http://www.empowerpeace.com)

## World Leaders Support Empower Peace

*Former American President Jimmy Carter and Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf Encourage Students to Open up Lines of Communication*

Former United States President Jimmy Carter is lending his support to the Empower Peace program.

In a recent video address, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate said communication is the key to build bridges between cultures. He also commended students for their desire to educate and learn from one another.



“One of the things I have learned throughout my experience on the world's stage is that when people from different cultures have the opportunity to communicate in an open and meaningful way, they learn they are not so different after all,” Carter said his message.

“The beauty of Empower Peace is that you not only raise awareness of each others cultures, but you put human faces as well. The desire of young people to reach out to other young people to build bridges of mutual respect is truly universal. I wish you the best in this endeavor as you reach out to your new friends across the globe,” Carter added.



Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf became the first world leader to publicly support Empower Peace this fall.

During the third Empower Peace conference on September 29, 2005, Musharraf praised participants from around the world. The President General was also proud

his country was taking part in the conference for the first time.

“I would like to commend the efforts of Empower Peace for arranging a multi-national peace video conference being held simultaneously in Islamabad, Cairo, Boston, and New York live via the Internet,” he said in his video-taped address.

“On this occasion I would like to emphasize the need for dialogue between students of different faiths in order to promote peace and progress in our world,” he added. “Our young generation [in Pakistan] is dynamic and eager to share their knowledge, their love of music and sports, and their unique sense of humor with students in other parts of the world.”

# Third Empower Peace Conference Breaks New Ground; Connects America with Egyptian and Pakistani Students

On September 29, 2005, Empower Peace turned to two new countries as hosts for its third groundbreaking conference.

Students from returning schools in Boston and New York connected “virtually” with new participants from schools in Cairo, Egypt and Islamabad, Pakistan. The result: Empower Peace’s most impressive and far-reaching conference to date.

In total, more than 700 students took part in the 90-minute exchange. From New York, Long Beach High School returned for their third Empower Peace conference. In Bos-



▲ All smiles for these Boston students.

ton, four schools took part; Prospect Hill Academy, Stoneham High School, Al-Noor Academy and Somerville High School.

Egypt 2000 and the Modern Education School, two schools in Cairo, represented Egyptians during the broadcast. And in Pakistan, the Beaconhouse School in Islamabad added a South Asian perspective to the conference.

Like other Empower Peace conferences, this one began with messages of peace and understanding from “Student Ambassadors” from each country. These “Ambassadors” expressed their excitement in take part in Empower Peace and spoke about what they hoped to achieve during the conference.

That was followed by engaging and eye-opening introductions to each of the historic cities. Students talked candidly about their hometowns giving intimate details about their customs and habits.

The conference then proceeded to a face-to-face discussion during the international round robin. The round robin session gives students the opportunity to ask each other questions

about their respective cultures.

The students discussed everything from music and fashion to sports and role models. The humorous and thoughtful dialogue proved students are interested in building bridges and breaking down barriers between them.

In another historic first for Empower Peace, Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf personally commended each of the students on their participation via a videotaped address.

“I would like to commend the efforts of Empower Peace for arranging a multi-national peace video conference,” Musharraf said. “On this occasion I would like to emphasize the need for dialogue between students of different faiths in order to promote peace and progress in our world.”

Musharraf wasn’t the only dignitary present during the conference. Egypt’s Ambassador to Pakistan, Hussein Haridy addressed the students live from



▲ Boston students enjoy the conference.

Islamabad. Ambassador Haridy also answered students’ questions on how to bridge the gap between Muslim countries and the rest of the world..

During the conference. Empower Peace also showcased entries into this year’s “PSA for Peace” contest. Four entries in total were aired during the conference including two from Boston, one from Cairo and one from Islamabad.

The broadcast culminated in a performance by international rock superstar Salman Ahmad of Pakistan’s popular band *Junoon*. Ahmad, who is a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador hosted the Islamabad portion of the conference and before singing one of his many hit songs.

Among the other hosts:



▲ International Rock Star & Empower Peace host Salman Ahmad enjoys a moment with his fans.

Heba Hafez Aziz from Cairo, Michael Richez from Long Beach High School and Boston radio personality, DJ Pup Dawg.

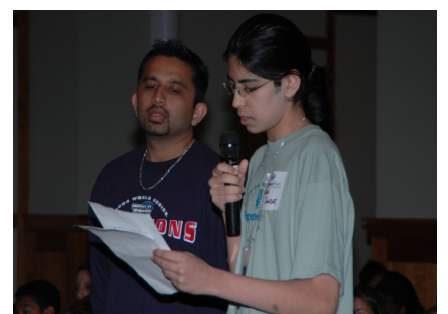
Salman Ahmad was not the only cultural per-

“Empower Peace has drawn out of our students motivation, leadership, creativity, and a desire to establish relationships with people who were at one time strangers.”

*-Robert Mond  
Principal, Al-Noor Academy*

formance during the conference. Students from Boston showcased a Caribbean style dance. Students from Egypt also performed sharing Arabic and Middle Eastern-style music.

“I can’t tell you what an impact this program



▲ Host DJ Pup Dawg listens to “Student Ambassador” Usama Sadat speak.

has had on the students of Stoneham High School,” said Sharon Chapman, a teacher in Stoneham. “It’s one thing to learn about different cultures in a text book, and its quite another to meet kids your own age, talk about different things, learn about their culture first hand, and find out what they like to do on the weekends.”

Al-Noor Academy’s Principal, Robert Mond felt much the same way. “I’ve seen how proud our students have felt by being involved in the activities organized by Empower Peace,” he said. “Empower Peace has drawn out of our students motivation, leadership, creativity, and a desire to establish relationships with people who were at one time strangers. Most importantly, through the activities our students were engaged in, it has left us with the feeling that hope is well and alive around the world.”



▲ Empower Peace students in Islamabad share a laugh during the conference.

# Boston & New York Empower Peace Students “Pledge for Pakistan”



◀ Empower Peace students excited before the telethon

thon was also streamed to classrooms around the world through the Empower Peace website.

Miguel Dias of Long Beach High School in New York summarized how he and his fellow students felt about the earthquake's affect on his new friends. “Knowing that we had met these people just nine days

ago, I felt an extreme sense of remorse,” he said. “I felt horrible that they had to experience something like that. My heart goes out to them and I’m ready to help in any way possible.”

During the telethon, Empower Peace students urged their peers to donate money to the victims of the earthquake. Students also shared ideas of how those watching the telethon in



▲ Co-Hosts DJ Pup Dawg (center) and WB56’s Lauren Jiggetts (right) with Stoneham High School teacher Sharon Chapman (left) and her students.

schools could raise money through fundraising.

Al Noor Academy in Mansfield and Long Beach High School in New York led by example, coming to the telethon with donations in hand. Stoneham High School also raised hundreds of dollars by selling hand-made bracelets around school (See “Friendship Bracelets” below). Altogether, the students raised more than \$10,000 during the telethon.

Ayesha Waqar, an Empower Peace participant in Islamabad, said the telethon brings the goals of Empower Peace full circle.

**E**mpower Peace students in Pakistan woke up on October 8, 2005 to a new reality after a devastating earthquake destroyed much of their homeland. 80,000 people died in the quake and millions more were left homeless. Among the dead, Zohair Iqbal, an Empower Peace student.

As reports of the devastation reached the United States it didn’t take long for students in Boston and New York to decide they had to get involved.

Their new friends in Pakistan – ones they had met just days earlier through the Empower Peace conference – needed help desperately. Boston and New York students answered those calls for help by launching *Empower Peace: Pledging for Pakistan*, a live telethon aimed at raising money for earthquake victims.

The telethon aired in the Boston area on WB56 and internationally to 134 countries via Geo TV, a Pakistani satellite channel. The tele-



▲ (l-r) “Pledging for Pakistan” host Karen Marinella, Empower Peace’s Tara Haggett, and Rock Star Salman Ahmad



## Zohair Iqbal 1986 -2005

Those taking part in Empower Peace realized just how small the world is after learning of the tragic death of a former participant. Zohair Iqbal a 13<sup>th</sup> grade student at the Beaconhouse school in Islamabad died on October 8, 2005 in the aftermath of the South Asian Earthquake.

18-year-old Zohair, who had just taken part in the Empower Peace broadcast a few weeks earlier, died when his apartment tower collapsed around him. His family and friends take solace in the fact that he died heroically; Zohair had actually made it out of his apartment safely after the earthquake hit, but returned to the building to save his wheelchair-bound uncle. That’s when the tower fell.

According to his best friend Sabeen, Zohair “not only was a brilliant student, but he was very popular among his classmates.” He loved music and was a prolific guitarist.

Zohair leaves behind his parents, two brothers, and hundreds of friends.

“It really makes me proud to say confidently that the aim under which we had Empower Peace is coming to life before our very eyes. The bonds that was formed between us and the Americans is now enabling them to help us when we are so direly in need,” she said during the telethon. “It is so heartwarming to know there are people around the world who care about us so much.”

## Stoneham High School Students Sell Handmade “Friendship Bracelets” for Earthquake Victims

**L**ooking for inspiration. Look no further than Stoneham High School in Massachusetts.

Just days after an earthquake hit their friends in Pakistan, students from Stoneham High School banded together to raise money for relief efforts. Their idea: to make and sell hand-made “friendship bracelets.”

The bracelets were made with colorful threads during school by students who took part in the third Empower Peace conference. Students then sold the bracelets throughout school during lunch and recess to raise money for the victims.

“We came up with the idea to make the bracelets after last year’s tsunami,” explained Jeanna

McCarthy, a student in Stoneham. “Once we heard that the earthquake hit, we thought it would be a good idea to make the friendship bracelets [for the victims] because we consider them our friends.”

Her classmate Kris Ingersoll said it was a much larger effort this year because, through Empower Peace, they had befriended many people affected by the earthquake.

“It touched us a lot more deeply this year. It’s much more personal,” he said.

Senior Alycia Sacco remarked how the bracelets are “the simplest way to symbolize friendship and unity.”

Altogether Stoneham students sold more than

## DID YOU KNOW?

Empower Peace is working in collaboration with students and teachers on an Empower Peace Pen Pal program.

Students who participated in September’s conference can now stay in touch via E-mail. Empower Peace hopes the increase of communication among students online will further break down barriers and stereotypes between cultures.

200 bracelets and raised close to \$500.00 for relief efforts. Furthermore, their effort proves it doesn’t take much to make a difference.

Student Kelly Landers put it best; “Personally, just making these bracelets and knowing that just by sitting here and spending five minutes tying some string together could help make sure someone has a house or gets home from school safe next time is a great thought.”

## Empower Peace Joins Alliance for International Conflict Prevention and Resolution

**E**mpower Peace has partnered with another internationally-known organization in hopes of strengthening its reach and impact.

In October, 2005, Empower Peace became a member of the Alliance for International Conflict Prevention and Resolution (AICPR).

Located in Washington D.C., AICPR is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to preventing and reducing violence among individuals and organizations through conflict resolution and peace building.

AICPR's objectives are similar to those of Empower Peace.

One aspect of the Alliance's mission is to foster collaboration and learning among conflict



prevention and resolution professionals and their counterparts.

With membership throughout United States and world, many of the AICPR members projects are based in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe.

Empower Peace attended a recent three-day retreat in Rhode Island with fellow AICPR members to discuss individual as well as collaborative projects. Dozens of organizations attended the event.

By becoming a member of AICPR, Empower Peace hopes to continue building relationships based on peace, respect and mutual understanding with organizations working toward the same common goal.

## Long Beach High School makes a "Pledge for Peace"

**S**ince its inception, Empower Peace has asked classrooms to create a pledge of no more than 250 words that outlines their commitment to fostering a spirit of peace and mutual respect among their peers and youth of all ages.

During the third Empower Peace conference, students from Long Beach High School in Long Beach, New York, unveiled their "Pledge for Peace." Here is what they said:

*"We, the students of Long Beach High School, recognizing our right and responsibility to empower peace, and knowing that together we are stronger; pledge for ourselves, and to all, that:*

*We will embrace our similarities and respect our differences to encourage and maintain a more peaceful environment. We will act as ambassadors for our school, community, and nation, by enthusiastically carrying the messages*

*"We will work to break the cycle of violence, intolerance, ignorance and discrimination in the world community."*

*-Long Beach High School's Pledge for Peace*

*of cooperation, mutual respect, and peace.*

*We will listen to others and maintain open minds in learning more about our world neighbors and ourselves.*

*We will work to break the cycle of violence,*



▲ Long Beach High School "Student Ambassadors" Carolyn Gomez and Migiuel Dias read the "Pledge for Peace."

*intolerance, ignorance and discrimination in the world community. We will support cross-cultural education, communication, and understanding as proactive solutions to the aforementioned problems.*

*We will strive to create a world characterized by concern and compassion for all people regardless of their political ideology, socioeconomic status or cultural beliefs.*

*We will take advantage of all opportunities to promote the welfare of humanity, to preserve the rights and dignity of all people, and to ensure peace for every citizen of the world."*

To submit your classroom's "Pledge For Peace" email [info@empowerpeace.com](mailto:info@empowerpeace.com). You can see other pledges at our website, [www.empowerpeace.com](http://www.empowerpeace.com).

## USDLA Honors Empower Peace with Top Award

**T**he United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA) has honored Empower Peace for its efforts connecting students around the world.

The USDLA praised Empower Peace during its recent awards ceremony with its 21<sup>st</sup> Century Best Practices Award For Distance Learning.



This award is the USDLA's highest and is only given to organizations that have demonstrated positive attributes in distance learning in regional, national, or international forums.

USDLA officials said that Empower Peace exemplifies the USDLA mission of creating distance learning opportunities for people around the world.

During the award ceremony, Dr. John Flores the Chief Executive Officer of USDLA said "The recipients of the 21st Century Award have often been the pioneers, not only for distance learning, but for education and training in general." He added, "This award speaks of innovation and it speaks of excellence. These are the people and organizations that have done the heavy-lifting to make all of this happen."

### STUDENTS CAN PRODUCE A "PSA FOR PEACE"

Empower Peace is looking for aspiring video and movie producers to produce a 30 second public service announcement for peace.

We are asking high school students to create their own message of peace for the world to see. The PSAs will be broadcast on local TV stations in your country.

Students should script and videotape a message of exactly 30 seconds promoting mutual respect and cultural relations and encouraging world peace.

Submit your tape to Empower Peace and we will work to have your "PSA for Peace" placed on your local television station. For more information check out the "PSA for Peace" contest at: [www.empowerpeace.com](http://www.empowerpeace.com).

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