

# YOUTHS TAKE IT GLOBAL

**Two young Canadians are bringing youths together in an on-line network that provides inspiration, access to information and opportunities to improve local and global communities.**

By the time he was 18, Michael Furdyk had made millions creating and selling Internet companies and was a technology consultant to Fortune 500 firms. At 21, Jennifer Correiro was debating corporate responsibility at a World Economic Forum event in Geneva after being selected by the organization as a Global Leader of Tomorrow.

Fuelled by these experiences and their passion for social engagement and information technology, in 2000 the two young Canadians founded TakingITGlobal (TIG), an international non-profit organization that has grown to a worldwide staff of 40 young people. The organization's flagship program is TIG.org, an on-line community where youths meet to exchange ideas and develop plans for community development projects.

"There are an infinite number of ways to effect change and have an impact," says Correiro, now 25 and TIG's Executive Director, who describes the organization as "a catalyst" for "youth-led action in the international context." Furdyk, 23, the company's Director of Technology, calls TIG "a connector" that allows young people to exchange information about successful youth initiatives.

All of that on-line activity is sparking creative projects and creating connections worldwide. In Cyprus, members use TIG to initiate dialogue between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Students in South Africa and Canada participate in an innovative form of comparative education by analyzing differences in perceptions of HIV/AIDS in images posted on the site's Global Gallery. Through Foreign Affairs Canada's Young Professionals International program, TIG has arranged internships for young Canadians with organizations like Peace Child International and the Digital Youth Consortium.

This Canadian initiative has caught the attention of major players in the corporate world. Soon after the idea for TIG was announced, Microsoft invited the two young co-founders to Seattle for a six-month stint advising the company on various aspects of the next generation of workers (referred to as the "Net Generation"). Wrote *Time* magazine in 2001: "At the heart of the new generation's approach is a collaborative style that is getting smart young minds together. This is a central tenet of TakingITGlobal." TIG's partners and sponsors include five UN agencies, RBC Financial Group and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

TIG has grown into a vast network, with more than 75,000 members in 200 countries. Between 30,000 and 40,000 people visit the site each day, generating more than 1.4 million "hits." The site offers a database of 1,000 projects around the world along with downloadable "guides to action" that help young people to



photo: Vito Amati

TakingITGlobal's Michael Furdyk and Jennifer Correiro: Helping youth to exchange ideas and develop plans for community development projects.

plan, implement and evaluate community development projects.

There is a danger, Furdyk admits, of overwhelming people with information. Soon the site will deliver customized information packages and offer a personal look and feel to members. TIG already operates in English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic, with plans to add Portuguese and Vietnamese in the coming months and another 10 languages in development.

As TIG celebrates its fifth anniversary, Furdyk is most proud of the organization's record of "using ideas to build what is available on-line now." Correiro is putting into practice her statement to the World Economic Forum that "companies need to be responsible to the broader community and not just their shareholders." Through TIG, the two are investing talent, resources and energy in unleashing the power of youth. 🍁

**Check out TakingITGlobal at [www.TIG.org](http://www.TIG.org).**