



Above: One sign at a time: Vancouver anti-landmine activists hang banner for May 2000 regional youth conference.

Left: Ottawa Youth Ambassador Carla Potts does an interview with local radio in Accra, Ghana.

Quebec City Youth Ambassador Violaine Des Rosiers with new mine clearance friends in Bosnia.

Youth Ambassadors expand landmine outreach across Canada and around the world

By Alison Clement, Program Officer – Youth Mine Action Ambassador Program (YMAAP)

In June 2000, eight Youth Ambassadors successfully completed the second year of Canada's Youth Mine Action Ambassador Program (YMAAP). Since its inception in September 1998, the program has graduated 12 Youth Ambassadors. These dedicated young adults have organized outreach activities in communities across the country, working towards the program's goal "to create sustainable community action within Canada to support the global movement to end the suffering caused by landmines."

During their 10-month internship at

host organizations across the country in 1999-2000, youth ambassadors gave more than 700 presentations to schools and the general public, training a cadre of volunteers who contributed more than 6500 hours to mine action. Their activities were reported in over 250 media clips (TV, radio and print). An estimated 35,000 people were reached directly across Canada through the YMAAP during 1999-2000.

Youth ambassadors also participated in events in the United States, including the Presidential Candidate Forum in Iowa, American Red Cross facilitator training in Seattle, presentations through the American Refugee Committee and Canadian Consulate in Chicago, a School Twinning Project in Rochester, New York and the

United States Campaign to Ban Landmines Conference in Washington.

In April 2000, Ottawa Youth Ambassador Carla Potts travelled to Ghana, West Africa to represent the program at the West African Conference on War Affected Children, the precursor to the War Affected Children Conference to be held in September 2000 in Winnipeg, in which another youth ambassador will participate.

Youth ambassadors travelled to mine-affected Bosnia and Herzegovina in April where they met with officials from the Canadian Embassy, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Centre, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, disability

rights workers and NGOs such as the Landmine Survivors Network in Tuzla.

The ambassadors also took part in an International Committee of the Red Cross mine awareness session at an elementary school in Mostar, observed the demining operations of Norwegian Peoples Aid in Sarajevo and were able to study the training of mine detection dogs at the Canadian International Demining Centre's program in Banja Luka.

Throughout the trip, the youth ambassadors were affected by a strong sense of this country trying, in the words of the Canadian Red Cross, to "survive the peace." They were clearly enriched by this experience and, in true YMAAP fashion, were able to translate it to those they spoke to when they returned to Canada – volunteers, students and members of the general public.

Year three: New partnerships, exciting launch

The 2000-01 program welcomes 12 new youth ambassadors and expands our outreach into Saskatchewan, the

Maritimes and Southern Ontario.

The Canadian Landmine Foundation and the Canadian International Demining Centre join the Canadian Red Cross, Mines Action Canada, UNICEF Québec and Oxfam Canada in the role of host organizations this year. These agencies will host youth ambassadors and provide supervisory support to them throughout the 11-month program cycle.

This year's program officially began in mid-July with two weeks of intensive training in preparation for the youth ambassadors' education and outreach work in their regions. Immediately following their training, teams of youth ambassadors participated in summer exhibitions in Toronto, Ottawa and Quebec City.

During the fall, they will travel to a mine-affected country to expand their knowledge of mine action and mine ban advocacy first-hand.

Youth Ambassadors will continue their outreach efforts within local communities, including the promotion of such initiatives as the *Youth Against War Treaty* and the Canadian Landmine Foundation's new www.clearlandmines.com fundraising site. They will also be key organizers of YMAAP events such as Landmine Awareness

Week in March and regional youth conferences in May which focus on the landmine issue and youth activism.

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For more information, visit www.dangermines.ca or contact the YMAAP Secretariat at (613) 241-4141 or e-mail: ymaap@sympatico.ca