



THE FACE OF PHILANTHROPY

Drawn Together

CHILDREN FROM Egypt to California will crouch on pavements in their hometowns this month, armed with hunks of chalk for drawing rainbows, doves, and other symbols of peace.

Volunteers will photograph the chalk paintings and post the images online to create a "global portfolio" of Chalk4Peace, an international art project for young people that will take place September 16 and 17.

The event is the brainchild of John Aaron, an artist in Arlington, Va. He has enlisted several dozen groups worldwide to hand out buckets of chalk and assign sections of pavement, sidewalk, and cement panels to young people ages 8 to 18 and ask them to create depictions of peace.

It is one of a growing number of efforts to involve young people in promoting peace. (To read about one of the most ambitious efforts to link Nobel Peace Prize winners with children around the world, see article on Page 7.)

Mr. Aaron says he chose chalk painting as the medium for his project because of its origins in Italy, where anyone could draw on the sidewalks.

"It was once a vehicle for the common man to be recognized," he says.

Since the first Chalk4Peace event took place last summer at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, in Washington, Mr. Aaron's been planning this international project. He stresses that he has no political agenda: "It's pro-peace, not anti-war," he says, adding that he hopes the event inspires adults to think positively.

Chalk4Peace has yet to receive tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service, so for the past year, Mr. Aaron has put more than \$20,000 of his own money into planning the event—along with \$10,000 in cash donations and free promotional materials provided by FedEx Kinko's. He relies on about 100 volunteers to help him organize event sites around the world.

Mr. Aaron says that once Chalk4Peace receives charity status, he plans to seek grants so that he can supply chalk to cities overseas for the group's next event. "Not every place in the world can get good chalk," he says.

Here, children in Arlington, Va., work on a 26-foot Chalk4Peace painting at a neighborhood festival.

—M.J. PREST

Photograph by John Aaron