

History of Globalfamily Day



In Memory of Paul Wellstone (1944 to 2002)

The Wellstone Resolution, S.Con.Res.138, passed unanimously on December 15, 2000, was the first concrete governmental step toward manifesting the dream of an annual holiday for all humankind that children in an inner-city school had envisioned thirty years before. It could become, over time, one of his most valuable and lasting legacies for the children of the world.

Thank you, Senator Wellstone.

Globalfamily Day is the new annual international "One Day of Peace and Sharing" for all faiths, cultures and nationalities. It's the result of a grass roots initiative conceived by children, confirmed by the U.S. Congress, commended by Presidents Clinton and Bush as well as heads of state around the world and recommended by the UN General Assembly (Res.56/2). It represents the joined efforts of young citizens from several countries - those who created the successful "One Day in Peace January 1, 2000" and those who envision an annual global "Millennium Meal, designed to give the world's peoples a single shared tradition to hasten the bonding that is vital to our survival. The first Globalfamily Day celebration was held on January 1, 2000 between Palestinian and Israeli families at a West Bank refugee camp, with subsequent youth-led ceremonies at the South Pole in 2001, and in several major cities in 2002.

History of the "OneDay" (Globalfamily Day) Initiative

Sometime around 1970, four children from Public School 84 in Manhattan started talking after school one day about the year 2000, when all people in the world would surely come together in peace and friendship to celebrate and grow closer as a result of the shared celebration. Twenty-five years later that conversation inspired a visionary novel, *Tree Island*, written by author and former soap head writer Linda Grover, the mother of three of the children. The book in turn motivated Grover to organize a 1998 meeting in Oregon's Cascade Mountains of fifty millennium groups from around the world all dedicated to making the turn of the millennium a turning point for humanity.



From the Tree Island Millennium Gathering grew the idea of an annual event for the whole human family marked by the sharing of a "millennium meal." The millennium meal concept was later endorsed by the White House and by representatives of 19 faiths meeting in the Holy Land. Grover, a former Congressional aide, decided to make the establishment of a holiday belonging to all the world's people her life's work.

Independently in 1994, high school students at Verde Valley School in Sedona, Arizona decided the whole world ought to observe a day without violence of any kind at the start of the new millennium. The One Day Foundation they formed later supported publication in 22 languages of a book for children visualizing "One Day in Peace January 1, 2000." It also aided the work of the book's co-author Robert Alan Silverstein, who secured pledges of non-violence for that day by 100 nations and 1000 organizations representing millions of people in 135 countries. Twenty-five U.S. governors, hundreds of mayors worldwide and the United Nations General Assembly also endorsed the One Day in Peace idea.

In 1999, a group of multi-cultural Dutch children distributed 3,000 loaves of millennium meal krentebollen bread to delegates at the Hague Appeal for Peace in a plea that children everywhere are entitled not only to peace but also to their daily bread.



Also in 1999, ninety-nine children from Hine Junior High School on Capitol Hill mobilized a friendly march on Congress to demonstrate that whenever the world celebrates, peace should prevail and all the people of the world should be fed. They also worked with Grover to encourage calm in DC in anticipation of Y2K shutdowns. Their efforts would be influential later in persuading members of Congress to support a resolution calling for an annual global day of peace and sharing in our homes, neighborhoods and nations.



Just before sundown on January 1, 2000, in an event arranged by Gerry Eitner of The Masters Group, a small procession of Israeli children and their parents entered a refugee camp at Nablus to exchange gifts of food with Palestinian children in commemoration of the world's first deliberate Day of Peace. Together they rang the Millennium Meal Bell loaned for the occasion by Tipper Gore. Then traditional enemies and their children sat down to enjoy the first Millennium Meal. Afterward the children played together.



In February 2000, One Day in Peace January 1, 2000 and the Millennium Meal Project joined to become the "OneDay" Holiday Coalition. Soon after, at Grover's invitation, eleven-year-old college sophomore and international peace worker Greg Smith became the group's Youth Messenger.

In June of 2000, six members of Congress, Dennis Kucinich, John Conyers, Jr. (creator of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday), Jesse Jackson, Jr., Eleanor Holmes Norton, James Walsh and Bob Filner introduced Linda Grover's resolution to establish the OneDay holiday. In September, Senators Wellstone, Lieberman, Kennedy, Reid, Landrieu and Levin followed suit, with Senate Concurrent Resolution 138.



In a ceremony at the U.S. Capitol, members broke bread together and Congressman Conyers rang the Millennium Meal Bell, declaring no one in Congress should go home until the resolution was adopted. However, despite vigorous lobbying, no action seemed likely.

Late in September, led by Greg, 1600 schoolchildren in Provo, Utah created a video letter addressed to President Clinton, and distributed in Congress. In it the children, speaking in unison, said, "Mr. President, We the children, Need a holiday of peace, compassion and generosity . . . A day without violence OneDay. . ." President Clinton promptly responded in a letter to Greg, pledging his support. Yet in the same letter the President also made clear that he did not have the unilateral power to declare a national holiday. Efforts to pass the Congressional measure were redoubled.

Days before the expected October adjournment of the 106th Congress, following unusually close cooperation between the offices of Senator Hatch and Senator Wellstone (thanks to help from bridge-builders like former Salt Lake City mayor Deedee Corradini), the Senate bill was passed unanimously and referred to the House International Relations Committee. However, despite the support of its chair, Republican Ben Gilman and the support of Minority Leader Gephardt, the chance to pass a measure for peace grew dimmer by the day in the rancorous atmosphere that prevailed in the wake of the presidential election. Kate Moss, a former national representative of the Girl Scouts, and mother of OneDay volunteer and global peace walker Matthew Pflantzbaum joined Grover in working for passage of the holiday.

On December 10th a letter from Greg Smith to Speaker Hastert and House Majority Leader Dick Armev was hand-delivered as negotiations between the Majority and Minority Leaders' offices continued. "We, the youth of the United States," said Greg, "are determined to enter the twenty-first century with a new and dedicated attitude of peace, non-violence and generosity...the OneDay holiday has the potential to be a wonderful vehicle for teachers across this land to teach their students the importance of peaceful, non-violent solutions to conflict...As the landmark date of 01-01-01 approaches, I ask for your help in my mission to encourage the youth of our nation to reach for their dreams, strive for their highest academic potential and to live a life of respect for our diversities."

On December 13th, to back Greg's words, Brent Elementary School children on Capitol Hill (DC), hosted adult guests with an hour of praise for a global holiday of inclusion for all. They displayed the OneDay holiday medallion they had helped to design that would be distributed to 30,000 DC elementary schoolchildren. They sang the new song "Peace One Day" written by their teacher. They chanted, they cheered, they read essays that were cogent and compelling. With the help of the DC Fire Department and outdoor performance artist Fred Stern, they put a 500-foot natural rainbow in the sky over Capitol Hill. (Stern has previously placed rainbows over many peace sites around the world, including Tree Island and the Hague Appeal.)

Brent schoolchildren then sent two messengers back to the House, (Paul Kanjorski, Democrat from Pennsylvania and Jerry Lewis, Republican from California and Chair of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee) to plead for passage of the OneDay initiative. Still, nothing was sure, and adjournment was imminent.

On the last day of the Millennium Congress, making one final effort, twenty "Positive Action Kids" from Brent School took part in a loving and legal sit-in in the U.S. Capitol Building. There they built a House of Peace and a Senate of Peace out of 150 wooden blocks representing their 100 Senate and 50 House supporters. Each block in their "global holiday under construction" was decorated with a child's artwork and featured the photo of a member. Many of the blocks, including one from the Speaker, had been signed by a member.



All afternoon the children talked to staff, buttonholed members of Congress and held their breath. Just before 7:00 p.m., less than two hours before the closing of the 106th Congress, S. Con. Res. 138 passed the U.S. House of Representatives by unanimous consent. With its passage the elected representatives of all Americans signaled to the world our children's wish that we become more peaceful and generous in the millennium just beginning.

On January first, 2001 (01/01/01) a team of young people from several continents, completing a 9-month Pole-to-Pole journey, (skiing, kayaking, bicycling and performing environmental and community services along the way), placed a time capsule at the South Pole containing the peace pledges of about 68 million people. Their leader, explorer Martyn Williams was one of the original collaborators in the Tree Island project. He appears in the 1998 novel as a fictional character whose pole-to-pole trek helps to unite the whole world at the millennium. On behalf of the U.S. Congress and People, American team adventurers Heidi Hausman and Jessica Casas invited the rest of the world to celebrate OneDay of Peace and Sharing at the South Pole as the first light of 01/01/01 strikes the planet.



On January 4, 2001, President Bill Clinton received the founders of OneDay and its youth messengers in the Oval Office to congratulate them on their achievement. Later that spring, children from Brent Elementary and homeschoolers from Bolling Air Force Base began a unique project of direct diplomacy, visiting both the PLO and Israeli embassies, utilizing the building blocks for peace program that had been so successful with the Congress. Treated as honored guests, they rang the millennium meal bell, broke bread and shared fruit with the

diplomats. They videotaped discussions with the PLO head of mission and Israeli officials and found unanimity of opinion as regards OneDay of peace and sharing. "Only 364 days to go," commented one of the children.

Right after September 11, 2001, Mrs. Kofi Annan notified OneDay founders of her strong support for the youth-led project. She felt it "is an excellent initiative that reflects many of the UN's principles and beliefs." Later in October, the UN General Assembly invited all "Member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and all the peoples of the world to celebrate One Day in Peace, 1 January 2002, and every year thereafter."

In the Fall of 2001, as the holiday season approached, Congressman John Conyers, Jr, and other members requested the president to issue a OneDay proclamation. The White House said it was unable to do so as the United States was at that time bombing Afghanistan. However, the day after Christmas, from his ranch in Crawford, Texas, President George W. Bush issued a statement in which he said, "[t]his celebration represents an opportunity to reflect on our hope for a new year that brings peace, safety, and freedom to all people."

As a result of her work with the OneDay children of Washington, D.C. in the spring of 2002 the holiday's cofounder Linda Grover was named District of Columbia Mother of the Year by American Mothers, Inc., the 65 year-old official sponsoring organization of Mothers' Day. On May 4, 2002, in ceremonies at the United States Capitol, hosted by Senator Mary Landrieu and Representative Mary Bono, a number of mentors of the holiday, including the mother of Washington mayor, Anthony Williams, came together to form a new non-profit group called Global Mothers, dedicated to building a world safe for every mother's child. All present signed a "Declaration of Interdependence."



On September 11, 2002, joining with other sponsors under the aegis of "Today's Children, Tomorrow's World," chaired by Gerry Eitner, Global Mothers hosted a commemorative event on the Capitol lawn, featuring talks by Representative Ben Gilman and Representative Tom Lantos, ranking members of the House International Relations Committee. A new female youth messenger, Glorianne Hefner, sang and the Washington Symphony Orchestra played with Mayor Anthony Williams conducting one of the selections.



Founding Nations Global Family Day 2005 Planning Conference Executive Summary) Leaders from around the world spoke out in support of Global Family Day at the Conference held at American University, May 10-11, 2004.

In addition, the nations of Afghanistan, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Philippines, Russian Federation, Senegal, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen registered to attend one or more sessions.

Keynote speaker Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs Dr. Paula Dobriansky discussed the importance of creating a global community and offered strong, continuing support for Global Family Day. Other key speakers included Congressman Benjamin Gilman, former Chair of the US House of Representatives International Relations Committee; Ambassador John McDonald, Chair of the Institute for Multi-track Diplomacy; and Washington, DC Mayor Anthony Williams, all of whom stressed the importance of increasing peace efforts around the world by forming a global family.

Several panel discussions were held over the course of the two-day conference: Ambassador McDonald presided over a discussion on The Importance of Global Family Day and How We Can Unite to Make it a Worldwide Tradition that featured embassy representatives from the nations of Indonesia, Morocco, Nepal, and Syria. The discussion was followed by Korean Embassy First Secretary Woongsoon Lim, who advocated increased global promotion of Global Family Day and recommended the formation of a coalition of non-governmental organizations supporting Global Family Day.

Dr. Richard Landes, director and co-founder of the Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University, moderated the panel How Faith Organizations Can Aid and Benefit from the Global Family Platform, which featured representatives of six faith organizations. The panel as a whole supported the concept of a secular holiday that religious groups can get behind. Among those who participated were Imam Mohamed Magid, Director of the All Dulles Area Muslim Society, and Reverend Dr. Clark Lobenstine, Executive Director of the Inter-Faith Conference of Metropolitan Washington.

Several non-governmental organizations such as TerraBuilt, Limbs for Life, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, Helping Hands International, Solar Oven Society, the National Union of American Families, and First Night International (represented by President and CEO Naima Kradijan) made a series of presentations entitled Ending Hate and Hunger in this Century: Setting goals for Global Family Members. Panel discussions by children's groups and young professionals were also held.

The conference was co-hosted by Global Family Foundation, the Center for Global Peace at American University, Airline Ambassadors, Mayor Anthony Williams and the District of Columbia, Representative John Conyers, Jr., Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton, Friends of the United Nations, the Islamic Society of North America and the World Alliance of Mayors.

Global Family Programs
600 D Street SE, Suite 5, Washington, DC 20003
tel: 202-544-8505 • e-mail: gfdaypress@gmail.com