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**MCW'S 18TH ANNUAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP RETREAT
INSPIRES YOUNG GLOBAL LEADERS**

New York, NY August 14, 2015 — MCW, an organization dedicated to empowering youth to become positive agents of change in their communities, convened fifty young leaders from around the world to participate in MCW's 18th Annual Youth Leadership Retreat (YLR) held at Stony Brook University and New York University.

Each participant entered the retreat with a social change to address in their local communities. Topic areas included environmental issues, youth development, human rights, education, gender equality, entrepreneurship, healthcare, and intercultural dialogue. During the retreat, educators, guest speakers, and MCW board members and staff provided guidance, inspiration, and skills building workshops to assist participants to develop a vision plan to address their social change.

Representing more than twenty different countries and territories, including Austria, Brazil, Colombia, East Jerusalem, Egypt, Hungary, India, Israel, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, Palestine, Puerto Rico, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, United Kingdom, the United States, Vietnam, and Zambia, the retreat was a platform for intercultural dialogue and understanding.

The YLR program equips young leaders to implement social change as global citizens. "Every participant is already a leader in his or her community whether they fully realize it yet or not. Our work is mobilizing them by recognizing their unique leadership qualities, broadening their skillsets and networks, challenging them to think critically and deepen their understanding of the complex issues they are addressing, and to turn all of this into an actionable plan for change," said YLR Coordinator, Regina Leichner.

YLR mentee Kim Umutesi of Rwanda said, "It was amazing to meet so many people from all over the world who share the common goal of implementing social change. After listening to all speakers, I feel equipped and inspired to create change in my community."

Hennie Kongsøre of Norway shared, "During the YLR, I gained tremendous knowledge on how to implement social change, developed my leadership skills, also had the opportunity to share my experience and knowledge through mentoring participants this year. The YLR program gives youth so much inspiration, motivation, and the confidence to achieve your goals."

Thought-provoking and inspiring presentations were given by representatives from the Africa Youth Initiative Network, FoodtoEat, Global Sunrise Project, Indego Africa, Milana Foundation, ONE, Opportunity Africa, Report It Girl, RW Social, SoundBoard Consulting, Teach for America, Trinity Counseling Service, and the World Education Foundation.

The program also provided participants with educational tools required to make change in a globalized world. This included networking, social media strategy, pitching ideas, telling your story, working in multi-cultural environments, and public speaking skills. Additionally, YLR alumni and mentor Abdu Mohamed shared his experience of going from a YLR participant to receiving the MCW Alumni Ventures Fund to launch his vision of The Way Forward Foundation in Tanzania.

Informal activities offered throughout the week highlighted different mediums for social change, including a presentation and performance by Malian Afro-pop musician Amkoullé, who is a leading activist for peace and unity in Mali, as well as a screening of the documentary *Life is Waiting* by Iara Lee, a Cultures of Resistance film that chronicles the non-violent struggles for freedom in the Western Sahara. During a Q & A discussion following the screening local Sahrawis shared their stories and answered questions about life in Western Sahara and their hopes for the future.

The retreat concluded with the annual Open Doors Ceremony at New York University's Center for Spiritual Life on August 5, 2015. The celebratory event featured remarks by Dr. Charles Robbins, MCW Board Member and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of the Undergraduate Colleges at Stony Brook University; Khalid Elachi, Chief Operating Officer at MCW; and Regina Lechner, YLR Coordinator.

During the 2015 YLR, MCW received significant support from the New York community through in-kind donations and gifts from sponsors [Agata and Valentina](#), [Chipotle](#), [Dunkin' Donuts](#), [Fairway Market](#), [NYU School of Professional Studies](#), [Stony Brook University](#), [Trader Joes](#), and [Whole Foods Market](#).

To view photos of MCW's Youth Leadership Retreat, please visit:
<http://bit.ly/MCWYLR2015photos>

About MCW (Miracle Corners of the World)

MCW (Miracle Corners of the World) is a non-profit organization founded in 1999 with the vision "Local Change through Global Exchange" and the mission: to empower youth to become positive agents of change in their communities. Based in New York, with partner organizations in Africa (Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zambia), MCW offers the following three core programs: Global Youth Development, Community Development Initiatives and Oral Healthcare, as well as Partner Programs, including Human Rights and Pediatric AIDS Treatment for Africa (PATA) projects. For more information on MCW, please visit: www.mcwglobal.org.

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