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**MCW'S 17<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP RETREAT MOBILIZES  
YOUTH TO BE AGENTS OF CHANGE IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

**New York, NY July 22, 2014** — MCW, an organization dedicated to empowering youth to become positive agents of change in their communities, convened thirty-seven young leaders from different corners of the world to participate in MCW's 17th Annual Youth Leadership Retreat (YLR) held at Champlain College in Burlington, VT and New York University.

Each participant entered the retreat with a social change they would like to address in their local communities. Topic areas included youth empowerment, gender issues, community development, education, communication, environmental and health issues. During the retreat, vision plan facilitators, guest speakers, and MCW board members and staff provided guidance, inspiration, and skills building workshops to help participants develop their vision plan and equip participants with tools needed to actualize change in their communities.

Representing seventeen different countries and territories, including Armenia, Austria, Botswana, Ethiopia, India, Israel, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Norway, the Palestinian Territories, Russia, South Africa, Tanzania, United States of America and Zimbabwe, the retreat fostered a vibrant platform for cultural exchange and dialogue. Retreat participants shared their respective cultures through music, dance, videos, and informational presentations.

Priscilla Okwaro from Kenya shared, "I came to the MCW Youth Leadership Retreat with an idea and I am leaving inspired, with a clear mission and plan to accomplish my vision. I have also met amazing people and made lifelong friends."

The program was created to prepare youth to leave as mobilized leaders, ready to implement social change. "Our aim is to expose participants to leading innovators in their fields of interest, who can convey the complexity of some of these issues, while brainstorming with participants grassroots approaches that can see measurable results in their communities," said YLR Coordinator, Regina Leichner.

Such innovators included representatives from UN Women, Food4Farmers, The Dream Program, The Big Questions Project, SoundBoard Consulting, and Corporate Social Responsibility branches of Coca Cola, Seventh Generation, Keurig Green Mountain Coffee Roasters and Ben & Jerry's.

Matthew Acey from New York shared, "In learning of some of the practices of industry giants such as Coca Cola at YLR, I was not only astonished by how their companies have strived to reuse resources, I was also inspired by the innovative practices demonstrated and am driven to bring like-minded organizations to light in hopes that their leadership will foster an increased valuation of sustainable practices to consumers and companies alike."

Multiple YLR alumni joined the speaker list, including Alan Garcia, Program Coordinator at iMentor, Mallory Rothstein from DoSomething.org, Ngoni Chihombori, Founder of Vilux Investments and Dylan Howard, Caterpillar Hill Initiative Board President.

The Program also focused on the modern tools needed to make change in a globalized world; MCW staff addressed modern-day networking through LinkedIn, social media etiquette, working in multi-cultural environments, and provided time for mentees to work on public speaking while highlighting their own various social ventures.

Informal activities offered throughout the week furthered 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 film screening of *Wadjda*, a critically acclaimed film by Saudi Arabian filmmaker Haifaa Al Mansour.

The retreat concluded with the annual Open Doors Ceremony at New York University's Center for Spiritual Life on Thursday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014. 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; Gerardo Porteny Backal, Consultant on Global Youth Engagement for UN Women #HeforShe Campaign; and poet Marshall Davis Jones, who performed spoken word inspired by his observations at the retreat.

Retreat participant Meerim Iusupova from Kyrgyzstan, who presented her vision at the ceremony, aspires to build "a community where women of Kyrgyz and Uzbek nationalities live in peace and are given resources to support themselves." Upon completing the retreat, Iusupova reflected, "It was an honor to witness the future in the eyes of MCW participants who gained the knowledge and experience to address social issues in their communities."

MCW received significant support from both the New York and Burlington communities, which made the program possible; 2014 sponsors included [Ben and Jerry's](#), [Chipotle](#), [Costco](#), [Dunkin' Donuts](#), [Hill & Bay](#), [NYU School of Continuing Professional Studies](#), [Stony Brook University](#), [Seventh Generation](#) and [Trader Joes](#) (Union Square and South Burlington locations).

To view photos of MCW's Youth Leadership Retreat, please visit: [bit.ly/2014YLRPics](http://bit.ly/2014YLRPics)

To view photos of MCW's Open Doors Ceremony, please visit: [bit.ly/2014OpenDoors](http://bit.ly/2014OpenDoors)

### **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](http://www.mcwglobal.org).