

Teens Fast to Relieve World Hunger

As tens of thousands of teens prepare to fundraise through fasting this weekend, the results of a new study reveal most teens are charity-minded, and that the current U.S. recession is only helping to boost their awareness.

✖ **Feb. 26, 2009** – Countering perceptions that today's youth are selfish and lazy, hundreds of thousands of teens from 7,000 youth groups will fast, pray, fundraise and serve neighbors in need this weekend to raise awareness about world hunger.

The 30-Hour Famine, an initiative of World Vision, comes days after the results of a new study show that more teens volunteer for charitable causes than their parents do. "The stereotype that teens are selfish and lazy is not an uncommon perception, but I'd say it's probably not true," said Pat Rhoads, national director of the 30-Hour Famine.

"Nearly half a million teenagers will participate in the 30-Hour Famine this year," he said. "That goes a long way towards showing how, as a whole, teenagers may not be all that selfish and unmotivated."

Rhoads said the teen-led fast, which raised \$12 million last year, inspires kids ahead of each event to find sponsors to pay \$1 for every hour fasted. He said a dollar cares for one child for one day; 12 sponsors would care for a child for one year. Most students begin their fast after lunch on Friday and end it Saturday evening.

Funds raised by teens will go to Uganda, Zambia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Haiti, North Korea and other nations hit by famine, conflict or other **crises that make children**

vulnerable.

World Vision leaders said they have long known that teens want to make a difference in the world. "The survey surprised some but not a lot of folks here at World Vision," said John Yeager, chief spokesman for World Vision. "Teens have helped raise more than \$120 million [over the years] through 30-Hour Famine. Bottom line, I think adults sell teens short and the [survey] numbers bear that out."

The secular study, which was conducted by Harris Interactive, revealed that three out of four adults view teens as "tech-savvy" while two out of three said they were "intelligent." More than half of the parents surveyed said teens were "selfish" and "lazy."

But rather than supporting negative stereotypes, the study found that since the current recession hit, seven in 10 teens have gained a stronger awareness of the needs of others. "I think the current economic climate has put a little bit of a squeeze on some of the families of these teenagers and made them that much more aware of other people who are in need," Rhoads said.

He also speculated that the Internet and globalization has changed teens' cultural values.

"I think students, in particular, are just a lot more aware of the world around them," Rhoads said. "The ease with which people find out about things that are going on in different parts of the world is amazing compared to when I was a teenager [in the 1980s]. Students have just really decided that [charitable causes] are important to them and have led the charge on their own."

The next 30-Hour Famine takes place in April. The events are decentralized, with each group planning its own activities. "The 30-Hour Famine is really meant to be owned by individual churches," Rhoads said. "It's more about them and their youth

ministries, as much, if not more, than it is about what they raise for us.” – **Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**