

Teachers Complete First Peace Army

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"MANY men cry peace! Peace! But they refuse to do the things that make for peace."

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

YOU may think she's a dreamer, but she's not the only one. Especially after the Rasur Foundation held its first graduation ceremony in December at the Elias Jiménez Castro School in Desamparados, a southern suburb of San José. With director Carlos Corales proudly looking on, 19 teachers accepted certificates for their successful completion of the foundation's first Peace Army basic training in "Feeling Peace, Speaking Peace."

The completion of this innovative pilot project is an important milestone for Costa Rica and for Rita Marie Johnson, creator of the project. She intends to make the training available to all willing teachers in Costa Rica within 10 years.

When asked what motivated her to take on such a daunting task, Johnson replied: "My goal is to help create a country-wide model of consciously passing the skills of peacemaking from one generation to the next."

MANY groups and individuals in our troubled world teach various methods of nonviolent conflict resolution. Valuable as this approach is, by definition it comes into play only after a conflict has occurred.

Rita Marie Johnson, founding Director of the Rasur Foundation, thinks we can do better. She has long had a dream of a world in which peace is our customary state of



Photo courtesy of John Hutcherson

FEELING peace: Nineteen teachers completed the Peace Army's first basic-training program, spearheaded by project creator Rita Marie Johnson (third from bottom right).

existence and the birthright of every child. In her vision, parents teach their children, and teachers, their students, how to recognize when they are peaceful and how to communicate honestly in a way that results in empathy and connection, satisfaction and joy in human relationships.

After 10 years of research and reflection, Johnson decided to use the Institute of HeartMath's Freeze-Framer software and Dr. Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (NVC) method to create a teacher-training program called the Peace

Army. Freeze-Framer addresses the "Feeling Peace" phase of the training, while NVC teaches the "Speaking Peace" aspect (TT, July 9, 2004). Johnson found each of these techniques had been well validated, over time and across cultures, as being highly effective. She went on to pioneer using them together in a synergistic way.

SINCE its inception in October 2003, the Peace Army has raised the money to purchase necessary training materials and contract Sura Hart, a certified NVC trainer