



ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
& EDUCATION CENTER

Upstander Activities

Students will be presented with two Upstanders below, both of whom are featured in IHMEC's *Make a Difference! The Harvey L. Miller Family Youth Exhibition*. These individuals took a stand for an issue that was important to them and were able to make a positive change in the world.

Hudson Taylor – Working Against Gay Hate Speech

Students should begin by reading Hudson's biography below.

Biography:

In addition to spending four years as a champion wrestler at the University of Maryland from 2005-2009, Hudson Taylor is an academic All-American with his eye on law school and a possible future political career. It's his outspoken support for gay rights, though, that makes him unique in the athletic world, where straight allies are few and far between. Not many athletes would wear a Human Rights Campaign sticker on their headgear in competition.

"For me and my generation, [LGBT rights] is a pressing issue," said Hudson, 23, a native of New Jersey. "I believe that whatever history I'm a part of, I'm responsible for. If I feel something is unjust or unequal, I feel a responsibility to do something about it." One of his greatest impacts is trying to counteract the aura of homophobia that pervades sports. He does this by bringing up gay rights in media interviews and discussing the issue with teammates, despite the discomfort it might bring. "It's tough being a college athlete," Hudson says. "Guys like to bring each other down and use hurtful words. But I think you need to be conscious of your thoughts, words, and actions."

Hudson will always challenge his teammates if he hears language demeaning of gays. He says he often has a larger impact with younger teammates than with his peers, whom he fears sometimes roll their eyes when he starts in on gay rights talk, saying it's just Hudson. There are, though, those breakthrough moments when he and a teammate will have a meaningful dialogue. His passion for gay rights is borne more out of righting a wrong than of having a lot of gay friends. Believing in the power of each person's voice, Hudson created the Athlete Ally Pledge and Whydoyoufight.org blog to gather support from athletes and advocates around the country.

Next, students should watch this brief [YouTube video](#) to learn more about Hudson and Athlete Ally.

Ryan Hreljac – Providing Communities with Clean Water

Students should begin by reading Ryan’s biography below.

Biography:

One day in January 1998, Ryan was sitting in his first-grade classroom. His teacher, Mrs. Prest, explained that people were sick, and some were even dying, because they didn’t have clean water. She told the class that some people walked for hours in African countries and sometimes it was just to get dirty water. “All I had to do was take 10 steps from my classroom to get to the drinking fountain and I had clean water. Before that day in school, I figured everyone lived like me. When I found out this wasn’t the case, I decided I had to do something about it,” Ryan said.

So, he went home and begged his mom and dad to help. After a few days, they told him he could do extra chores to earn the \$70 he thought would build a well. He thought that’s all it would take to solve the world’s water problem. He worked for four months to earn his first \$70. Then he learned that it was actually going to cost \$2,000 to build a well in a place like Uganda. He also learned that the problem was way bigger than he realized.

Ryan started speaking to service clubs, school classes, to anyone who would listen to his story so that he could raise money for his first well at Angolo Primary School in Uganda. That’s how his little first-grade project became the Ryan’s Well Foundation.

He attended the University of King’s College in Halifax on the east coast of Canada. He’s just completed his studies in international development and political science but remains involved with the Foundation as a Project Manager. Ryan speaks around the world on water issues and on the importance of making a difference no matter who you are or how old you are.

According to Ryan, “My work would not happen without the support of my family and friends. My Ugandan pen pal, Jimmy Akana, who I met on my first trip to Uganda, is now a member of our family. Jimmy is an inspiration because he works hard and has a positive outlook. He always has a great big smile.”

Ryan’s advice to anyone is that in order to make a positive change in the world, you need to find something you are passionate about and then you need to take steps to act. For Ryan, the issue is water and sanitation. Ryan sums up his story this way: “Water is essential to all life. I hope my story is a reminder that we can all make a difference – it applies to each and every one of us.”

Next, students should watch this brief [YouTube video](#) to learn more about Ryan and Ryan’s Well Foundation.

Classroom Activities

Students can choose either Ryan or Hudson (or both) to focus on for the activities below.

Choices Worksheet:

For further comprehension of Hudson or Ryan's story, have students fill out the [Choices Worksheet PDF provided](#). The Questions included discuss Hudson or Ryan's personal journey to become an Upstander as well as self-reflection for students to consider their own actions and responsibilities.

Create a Tribute:

Have students create a tribute to either Ryan or Hudson (or both). A tribute is something that is done as an expression of esteem or praise.

They will need a piece of paper and any art supplies around the house.

1. Using one side of the paper, have students create a certificate of accomplishment for Hudson or Ryan. They can be creative in their design and format. They should sign their name at the bottom to make it official.
2. On the other side, students will create their tribute to their chosen Upstander. This can include quotes, writing, pictures, information, whatever they would like to put in that highlights and praises the activist's accomplishments, life, and goals.