

## Her Movement's Going, Now It's Your Turn

Contributed by Erick Colman  
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Tara Suri, 17  
Founder  
Turn Your World Around  
Scarsdale, New York, United States

Sometimes a change of scenery is all one needs. Tara Suri proves the saying is true. When she was 13, Suri, an Indian-American, visited India. The poverty and sexism she saw in that country was the spark that set her in motion. "When you're on the cusp of adolescence, you look at the world and say, 'wow, I didn't realize,'" Suri said.

The injustices she saw in India led Suri to act. Today, her work has evolved into what is now known as Turn Your World Around, an umbrella nonprofit that supports several initiatives.

The organization is also known as Aandolan, a Hindi word meaning "a movement for change."

The original program she founded was H.O.P.E., Helping Orphans Pursue Education. Somewhat self-explanatory, H.O.P.E. is active in orphanages in India and Sudan. Today, the organization has raised over \$20,000. "We really think that education is their [the orphans'] cornerstone," Suri said. She cited the proverb, "Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime," to summarize H.O.P.E.'s mission.

Along with H.O.P.E., Turn Your World Around sponsors a program called Turn Your World. In a way, the program is Suri's challenge to other youth to create social change. "How do we maximize what we do, how do we make sure all youth get involved and make a difference?" Suri said. "What you can do is register on the site and it will help you plan and implement the project."

Even if someone isn't immediately inspired to start their own program, Turn Your World also uses ServeWorld, a specialized search engine with causes and initiatives for people to donate to whatever piques their interest. Turn Your World Around also sponsors [Connect-A-Kid], a fundraiser for the One Laptop Per Child Foundation. OLPC, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, is known for creating the \$200 XO laptop targeted towards children in poorer countries.

Currently a junior at Edgemont Junior-Senior High School in Scarsdale, New York, Suri had more to share in her recent interview with The Leader World.

The Leader World: What does someone do after registering to start a program?

Suri: What they can do is register, create a project page, set a fundraising goal and start taking action.

The Leader World: What do your peers and high school classmates think of your work?

Suri: Most people are receptive to what I do. We've gotten a wonderful response [online], which is really cool. We've got two kids from Israel, one wants to do a hunger project, another wants to do an environmental project.

The Leader World: Being 17 years old, do some people doubt your ability because of your age?

Suri: I get that. People ask me "why?" I say "why not?" When I was younger, I encountered

some skepticism. The response since I've gotten older is more and more positive. Just keep pursuing what you do and turn those skeptics into supporters.

The Leader World: How do you fundraise for these initiatives?

Suri: I started out at bake sales. I baked 1,000 cupcakes in the first year. We're working to obtain tax-deductible status. I think this year, our goal was raising awareness.

The Leader World: You do speaking engagements. For example, in February, you spoke at Kentucky Child Now's Great Kids Summit in Lexington, Kentucky. How do you balance your work with being a high school student?

Suri: A lot of [the speaking] is to motivate youth to get involved. It's a very enjoyable experience. For me, it's really a lifestyle choice. It's seamlessly integrated in my life. I do this in my free time. This is the way I enjoy myself; this is how I find fulfillment.

The Leader World: What are the future plans for Turn Your World Around?

Suri: We'd like to increase the number of programs for youth to get involved. I'd like to see Turn Your World go across the world.

For more information and to register, visit <http://www.turnyourworldaround.org>