

# The Activists

These nonprofit stars started small but took on big problems, from education to poverty to making volunteers more effective. The clearest sign of their success? The spin-offs built on their bright ideas

BY JEREMY CAPLAN AND KRISTINA DELL

## Ashoka

**FOUNDER** | Bill Drayton

**WHEN** | 1980 in Washington, D.C.

**BRIGHT IDEA** | Developed the concept of “social entrepreneurship” or investing in social change like a business and demanding measurable results. The program supports ambitious advocates not just with funding but also with a network of fellow do-gooders to call on for help as the entrepreneurs transform their initial work into large-scale movements.

**IMPACT** | Ashoka has funded almost 2,000 fellows in 70 countries over the past 26 years. The organization offers living stipends to people with proven, early-stage ventures they wish to expand. Muhammad Yunus, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his microfinance work, is just one of the established activists who serve as part of the Ashoka network offering guidance to others. Ashoka initially emphasized Third World projects, but in 2000 it expanded to the U.S.

**More than half of Ashoka fellows have changed a national policy within five years. 90% said other institutions have successfully replicated their innovations**

### THE NEXT WAVE

**In addition to notable Ashoka fellows, the group has inspired a whole new generation of philanthropists who are seeking out and funding social entrepreneurs in a variety of fields.**

#### The Skoll Foundation

Founded in 1999 by Jeff Skoll, eBay's first president, it provides three years of funding for social entrepreneurs to expand proven projects and connect them through its annual conference and its website, [socialedge.org](http://socialedge.org).

#### Omidyar Network

Established by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar, the group supports for-profit and nonprofit endeavors that give power to individuals. Its ventures range from an online community for patients to a mobile-phone-based marketplace.

#### Echoing Green

Since 1987, Echoing Green has supported young activists by investing in their ideas and connecting them to each other. It has awarded \$25 million in grants to nearly 450 social entrepreneurs, who receive two-year fellowships.

#### New Profit

Venture philanthropy—inspired by venture capital's focus on high-stakes, high-impact projects such as KIPP, whose five-year plan will double its number of schools—gives multiyear support to a wide variety of groups. New Profit's blind fund lets individuals pool their resources and spread their risk by investing in tightly screened organizations.

#### Draper Richards Foundation

This group gives funding, business mentoring and fellowships to early-stage social entrepreneurs as they begin their organizations. Grantees tackle issues from AIDS education in Africa to music in U.S. public schools.



# TIME

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**SSGT. DEREK BISHOP, 26**

An Air Force recruiter in Times Square, Bishop has received numerous awards for enlisting color guards for New York City ceremonies

**ISADORA MORAIS AND KARINY CONTRERAS, 15**

The high school students used a grant from Ashoka's Youth Venture to start Green Apple's Core, a project to prevent littering in New York City subways

**JAMES FERUS, 22**

Living and working in west Harlem, N.Y., the Jesuit Volunteer Corps member from New Bedford, Mass., is organizing a work-study program for high school interns

**RICK ALFANO, 51**

This New York City fireman worked at ground zero and continues to fight fires in Bayville, Long Island, since his 2002 retirement

**PUBLIC SERVICE**

## How You Can Help

Get involved with a group mentioned here, or find one near you

**ASHOKA**

[www.ashoka.org](http://www.ashoka.org)

Funds and supports the leaders of growing, innovative nonprofits

**AMERICORPS**

[www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org)

Network of service programs

**CITIZEN SCHOOLS**

[www.citizenschools.org](http://www.citizenschools.org)

Middle school apprenticeships

**CITY YEAR**

[www.cityyear.org](http://www.cityyear.org)

Yearlong full-time volunteerism

**EXPERIENCE CORPS**

[www.experiencecorps.org](http://www.experiencecorps.org)

For reading tutors 55 and older

**FELLOWS/USA**

[www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)

Grants for Peace Corps workers

**HARLEM CHILDREN'S ZONE**

[www.hcz.org](http://www.hcz.org)

Helps kids at every age

**JESUIT VOLUNTEER CORPS**

[www.jesuitvolunteers.org](http://www.jesuitvolunteers.org)

Lay Catholic volunteer program

**LEARN AND SERVE AMERICA**

[www.learnandserve.org](http://www.learnandserve.org)

Integrates schoolwork with service

**NEW YORK JUNIOR TENNIS LEAGUE**

[www.nyjtl.org](http://www.nyjtl.org)

Tennis for underprivileged kids

**PHYSICIANS FOR PEACE**

[www.physiciansforpeace.org](http://www.physiciansforpeace.org)

Sends health professionals abroad

**SENIOR CORPS**

[www.seniorcorps.org](http://www.seniorcorps.org)

Projects for volunteers over 55

**TEACH FOR AMERICA**

[www.teachforamerica.org](http://www.teachforamerica.org)

Top grads teach in needy schools

**VOICES FOR NATIONAL SERVICE**

[www.voicesforservice.org](http://www.voicesforservice.org)

Lobbies for volunteer groups

**VOLUNTEERMATCH**

[www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)

Pairs volunteers with nonprofits

# A Time To Serve

In a changing society facing all manner of new challenges, volunteers are helping bind America together. Why the U.S. and the next President should make a new commitment to national service

BY RICHARD STENGEL