

# *The* Museletter



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## YOUNG STORYTELLERS

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## One Path to World Peace

By Kate Dudding



Once there were three young men: a Jew, a Hindu and a Muslim. No, this is *not* the beginning of a joke. This is actually a true story about one path to world peace.

But first, a quick detour to the village of Chelm. According to Jewish tradition, everyone who lives in Chelm is a fool. Here is one of the many stories about Chelm.

*Two Chelmites were walking outside when it began to rain.*

*"Quick!" said the first one, "open your umbrella."*

*"It won't do any good," replied the second one, "My umbrella is full of holes."*

*"Then why did you bring it in the first place?" asked the first one.*

*"I didn't think it was going to rain," explained the second one.*

So now you know a little about the village of Chelm.

Now back to the three young men: the Jew, the Hindu and the Muslim. For the past five years, I've heard them tell stories at programs sponsored by a youth interfaith storytelling group, Children at the Well, initially funded by a Brimstone Award for Applied Storytelling from the National Storytelling Network.

I wish you could have been at these programs with me. Upon entering a house of worship, a different one each year, you see the families of the tellers bringing in fragrant and colorful food for after the program. Some Hindu women are dressed in brilliantly colored saris, and have a red dot on their foreheads. Some Muslim women are wearing gorgeous silk head scarves, totally coordinated with their tops and long skirts.

Then the stories start. Ben, the Jew, tells a Chelm story. Ritam, the Hindu, also tells a humorous story from his tradition. Both these young men are gifted mimics and use many different character voices to embellish their stories. Khalafalla, the Muslim, often has a solemn expression



on his face, but when he smiles, his whole face lights up. Recently he is sharing stories about his journey from the Islamic school, where he graduated in 8th grade, to a public high school, where he is learning about that larger community and they are learning about him.

But what I love the most – more than the stories and the food – what is most heartwarming to me and touches my soul – is watching these young tellers before and after the program. They group together: chattering away, gesturing dramatically, laughing often. All these young people from so many different communities in my area are now friends.

One day, I was at a local story swap with those three young men (at the first gathering of New York State Storytellers.) Of course, they were sitting together. After several stories had been shared, there was a lull. The facilitator, my friend Joe Doolittle, looked at the three young men and said, “Does one of you have a story you’d like to share?”

Ritam, the Hindu, turned to Ben, the Jew, and said excitedly, “Tell them a Chelm story!”

Khalafalla, the Muslim, smiled and agreed, “Yes, tell them a Chelm story!”

So Ben did, and we all laughed.

I remember thinking: How many places in the world today would you find a Jew, a Hindu and a Muslim sitting down together as friends, and sharing stories?

Then I thought: Who would ever have imagined that one path to world peace goes directly through the village of Chelm?

*This story, with the title “Stories Unite Our World,” was published in the Times Union, Albany, NY, on Sept. 4, 2010.*

*An interview with Kate Dudding was published in the Spotlight News, Capital District, New York State, on August 23, 2010.*

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## Great Oaks from Little Acorns Grow

By Karen Chace

*“Tis education forms the common mind: just as the twig is bent, the trees inclined.”*  
—Alexander Poe

On the final day of school, just before summer recess in June of 2002 I was sharing a conversation with a fourth grade teacher about my storytelling when I suddenly said, “I would love to start a Storytelling Troupe next year.” And there began the seeds of my first Storytelling Residency.

Many people have asked how I was able to garner the wonderful support from the administration and teachers for this pilot program so here is my “Beginner’s Blueprint.”

### Step 1: Beating the Drums

Enlisting the enthusiasm and support of the initial teacher I spoke with in June was important since this would impact

everyone’s curriculum time. We met at the beginning of the new school year and brainstormed ideas. Then acting as the facilitator, she shared our ideas with the other teachers. It was mutually agreed that the Storytelling Club Troupe would be offered to the third and fourth grade students.

### Step 2: Making Everyone Happy – Yes It Can Be Done!

I wrote the proposal, sent copies to the teachers, and asked them to comment on the specifics, i.e. day/time/location. Was everything covered? Did it meet with their satisfaction and expectations? Was there anything they would like to add or delete? My aim was to make the teachers feel that we were partners in this new endeavor.

### Step 3: Facing the Music

I arranged a meeting between the principal, myself, and my teacher-on-

point to present the proposal and explain our vision. Having the teacher with me reinforced for the principal that the Storytelling Troupe had faculty support.

### Step 4: Celebrate and Get To Work!

Yes, it was as easy as one, two, three; well at least getting the principal to agree! Now it was time for the nuts and bolts. The time frame for our class was dictated by another specialist program in the school, the choir. Not every child participated in choir so it was determined that this one-hour time slot, once a week, would be the ideal time for the Storytelling Troupe to meet. I designed a logo for the troupe using PrintShop and sent a letter to the parents outlining the goals,

