

Just for friends of Youth Journalism International, the *YJI Insider* is aimed at providing a behind-the-scenes look at this Connecticut-based educational charity and its talented students around the globe.

Telling stories: Child labor, school violence, maple syrup

With eye-opening writing about child labor in Pakistan to an [intriguing look at how New Englanders make maple syrup](#), YJI's talented young writers, photographers and artists are keeping up a steady stream of great work. Arooj Khalid of Lahore wrote a compelling [story that revealing the sad life of Saba Sher, a 12-year-old girl](#) who's worked as a kitchen maid most of her life. Published along with Arooj's gripping photos and [stinging commentary](#), the package capped YJI's serious news coverage in 2012. In neighboring India, reporter Roothani Deshpandi in New Delhi offered [strong opinions on India's attitudes about rape](#) followed up by Sara Chatterjee's insightful piece, [India's Anti-Rape Protests Miss The Point](#).

We've got an eager new group of students in Hanoi who delivered a terrific batch of [commentary and colorful photos](#) on Tet, the Vietnamese New Year, and from Northern Ireland,

Peter Kelly lamented how a [Belfast Flag Flap Disrupts Irish Peace Talks](#). In Nairobi, students Walter Mulroy and Kai Lawson-McDowall offered perspective in [Kenyans Bracing For National Elections](#) and [Coming Kenya Election Triggers Memories of 2007](#). While school violence seems to be on everyone's mind, most of us don't know what really goes on behind the school walls during a lockdown, but Texas teen Natalie Tarrant [gives us an insider's view](#). From YJI's Connecticut home base, Bristol's Alan Burkholder covered [the opening of a new exhibit at the Mark Twain House & Museum and a lecture by biographer Debby Applegate](#).

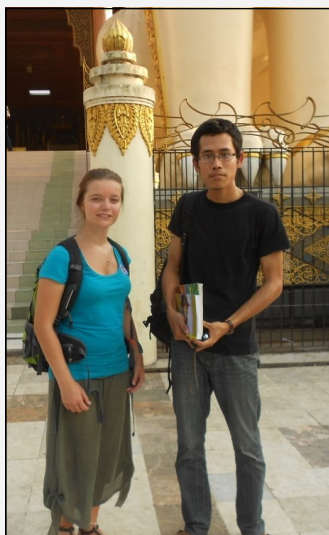
Soon, we'll be announcing the winners of YJI's fourth annual [Excellence in Journalism contest](#). A lot more terrific work is in the pipeline, so to be sure you don't miss out, keep an eye on www.yjiblog.org and www.youthjournalism.org.

Student Spotlight: Mariechen Puchert of Cape Town, South Africa

You'd think that balancing medical school and taking on an additional course load as you circumnavigate the world on a Semester at Sea program would keep anyone busy, but [Mariechen Puchert](#) still makes her work with Youth Journalism International a priority.

In her floating classroom in the Atlantic, somewhere between Ghana and Morocco, Mariechen and her shipmates learned of the Boston Marathon bombing. With no details and only a sketchy outline of what had happened, Mariechen got to work as a journalist and just hours later, filed a [compassionate, insightful commentary for YJI about the impact the attack had onboard](#).

That's just what Mariechen is like. Despite her rigorous schedule, she's typically among the first students to respond to



Mariechen with YJI student Soe Htet Htet Tun in February at the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Yangon, Burma.

a call for coverage. Since she first began as a junior reporter for YJI in 2008 from her home in South Africa, Mariechen has contributed news stories on [South African elections](#), [the World Cup](#) and [tuition hikes at her university](#). She's also partnered with other YJI students to produce packages on the [American elections](#), [Earth Day](#), New Year's [celebrations](#), the [shooting in Norway](#), [Chinese New Year](#) and much more. A natural leader, she won Rotary International's support in 2010 to travel to Canada and the U.S., where she met many people associated with YJI.

Mariechen is now a trusted associate editor for YJI, making her a role model for younger students.

During her Semester at Sea, Mariechen connected with YJI students or alums in Singapore and Burma. Watch for more from her as she puts her incredible voyage into stories for YJI.



Mariechen with YJI alum and Ambassador Geraldine Soon in Singapore in February.

YJI Alums Show Their Support Worldwide

Part of what makes Youth Journalism International so special is the strong group of alumni around the world. Not only do these amazing adults, often in the early stages of their careers, offer help to younger students, but this year started a new tradition of hosting informational fundraising parties to help build the organization.

Dubbed '[I Love YJI Parties](#)', the events included same-day house parties with homemade goodies in Durban, South Africa – alum Nicole Megan Gounder and her terrific mom Lucy Gounder made that happen – and in Connecticut with alum Joe Bun Keo warmly welcoming new supporters.



YJI alum Edrees Kakar, center, with friends at the Kabul party.

Not long after, alum Edrees Kakar hosted friends in a restaurant in Kabul, Afghanistan, where he shared his experiences with YJI.



Most recently, alum Shaina Zura threw [an elegant wine tasting party](#) and silent auction at a San Francisco art gallery. Not only did folks from the Bay Area have a good time, but YJI alum Talon Bronson of Portland, Oregon happened to be in the neighborhood and gave Shaina a lot of help.

YJI is grateful to these amazing trailblazers who got the ball rolling. More parties are in the works, but we think there's no such thing as too many parties, so if you'd like to host one, please let us know!



YJI alums Shaina Zura and Talon Bronson at the San Francisco wine tasting party.



Lucy and Ricky Gounder are dedicated YJI parents! With their daughter, YJI alum Nicole Megan, the Gounders hosted a party in Durban, South Africa.

Rotary Gives Grant for New YJI Summer Camp Initiative

Thanks to a generous grant from the Bristol, Connecticut, Rotary Club, [Youth Journalism International will be leading two week-long summer camps in July](#) in a partnership with the Environmental Learning Centers of Connecticut.

The camps, held at Indian Rock Nature Preserve in Bristol, are for teens entering grades 7 to 10. One week will focus on environmental reporting and photography and the other on nature-focused narrative writing and photography.

Part of the grant will cover camp fees for eight local children who could not otherwise afford to participate. We're excited about this new adventure!

Students, Supporters Make YJI Great

YJI is grateful to everyone who helps out, whether it is by volunteering as contest judge, hosting a fundraising party, sharing our stories with your friends, offering assistance to a student or by being a hardworking journalism student. Most of the operating funds YJI has are donations from people who believe in our young journalists and our mission to bring them together.

If you can donate, please send a check to:

Youth Journalism International

33 Griswold Dr.

West Hartford, CT 06119

The best way to make online donations is through the link on the YJI website:

www.youthjournalism.org

Please check to see if your employer will match your gift, making your donation go even further!