



Ryan's Well

Speeches by Ryan Hreljac and Jimmy Akana Hreljac
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Imagine having a pen pal in Uganda, Africa. Now, imagine that you actually travel to Uganda to meet him. Then he becomes your brother! Sounds unbelievable? Well, that's just what happened to Ryan Hreljac (Hurl-jack) and Jimmy Akana (A-kan-a) Hreljac. These two boys now believe that anything is possible.

When Ryan was six years old, his teacher talked about people in Africa who did not have access to clean water. This bothered Ryan so much that he began doing chores around the house to raise money to drill a well in Africa. Less than a year later, Ryan realized his dream when a well was built near Angolo Primary School in Uganda.

After Ryan's well was built in Agweo, his teacher decided to bring her students and the Ugandan students together as pen pals. Ryan was paired



Ryan and Jimmy meet for the first time in Uganda.

with Jimmy Akana, a young orphan at the school. The two became long-time pen pals. When Ryan was given the opportunity to travel to Uganda to see his well, he met Jimmy and they instantly became close friends. Later, Jimmy was adopted by the Hreljac family and now he lives in Canada too.

Although Ryan and Jimmy were born in different continents, they have one important thing in common—they believe that young people can make a difference in the world.

They often talk to schools, governments, and other organizations to tell in their own words how a well brought them together. Here's their story.



Ryan gave this speech in the spring of 2003 to Minesing Central Public School in Ontario.

Thanks for asking me to speak here today. I can't thank you enough. I am 11 years old and I live in Kemptville, just south of Ottawa, Canada's capital city.

As fast as you can snap your fingers, people are dying because they don't have clean water. That makes me very sad.

It all began when I was in grade 1. I saved \$70 by doing extra chores at the start, but with lots and lots of help from other people and CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency, I helped to raise over \$750 000 for water projects in Africa.

I even have a foundation now called the Ryan's Well Foundation. The foundation and I are still working hard to get clean water for people in the world. I know how lucky we are because we are born in a country that has lots of clean water. However, there are countries that are not as lucky as ours. In July, 2000, I travelled all the way to Africa for the very first time to meet the people of Uganda. I was able to drink from my well when I was there and it tasted great. It was satisfying to see my drilling equipment in action. The school had a huge celebration when I was there with over 5000 people in attendance! In appreciation, they gave me a present—a goat. I named her Peace!

"I dream of the day when everyone in the world has clean water. That's a big dream. But I learned that you can do anything if you really try hard and you really want to."

I met two boys who were very nice, but meeting them made me very sad. They were very sick and their stomachs were sticking out from drinking contaminated water. Seeing what they had to go through made me feel sick too. No one should have to live like that. We all just have to learn how to share and conserve and not pollute the water we have.

There are lots of great kids in the world. I know that lots of them are working to make



Ryan receives a gift from the village of Agweo—a goat!

the world a better place. I just met 130 amazing kids at the Children's World Water Forum in Japan, in March. They came from all over the world! Kids can help to change the world, you know, but we can't do it by ourselves. We can't wait any longer or we're all going to be in big trouble. And whether it's clean water or something else, what is important is that we all make a difference. Right now, I am working on water projects in Tanzania, Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya.

I dream of the day when everyone in the world has clean water. That's a big dream. But I learned that you can do anything if you really try hard and you really want to. Who knows? If all the kids and adults work together then maybe someday there will be peace and clean water for everyone. I wish for clean water for not just my family but for every single family on earth. I really hope my dream comes true one day and I hope your dreams come true too.

At the age of 17, Jimmy gave this speech in the fall of 2006 to students in North Grenville in Ontario.

Good Morning everyone. Irio wunu maber (eye-reeo woo-noo may-burr). My name is Jimmy Akana Hreljac. I have lived here in Kemptville, Canada, for three and a half years.

Before moving to Canada, I lived in Uganda. I would like to tell you a little story about what my life was like when I lived in Uganda. I used to get up very early in the morning, usually around midnight, to fetch water for my aunt and her family. The water was about five kilometres from my home. Sometimes I would make the trip three times before I went to school.

After Ryan's well was built near Angolo Primary School, I didn't have to get up as early

"Young people need to help with telling the good stories so that people don't lose hope."

to fetch water. I could go straight to school for the whole day and I wouldn't be as tired in class. We had more time for homework and



more time to help out at home with gardening and other chores.

I was happy that we had clean water now. Water is life, not just for people in Uganda but for people everywhere. In the north of Uganda, there is a lack of clean water. It has caused an increase in water-borne diseases for thousands of people.

People need at least 15 litres of water per person, per day. In northern Uganda, people live on less than three litres of

water per day! Six percent of the population has worms, all because they do not have access to clean water and sanitation.

Young people need to help with telling the good stories so that people don't lose hope. I am grateful for my new home. Today, I can get clean water from taps in my very own house and my family's very own well. I am lucky to be living in Canada with my new family.

I am telling you my story today so that people around the world can understand about how important clean water and sanitation is to everyone on earth, no matter who you are or where you live.

Villagers gather water from a pond.



Jimmy at home in Uganda

Ryan's Well Overheads
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