



South Central skateboard recipient.

Bridge To Skate

Editor's Note: Last year, while hosting a party for our 10th anniversary issue (and giving a tribute to Frank Nasworthy), I met up with Chantelle Heroux of Bridge To Skate. I was impressed with the mission of her organization. As you will soon learn, this charity embodies everything that skateboarding stands for. Kudos to Chantelle for having the courage of her convictions. Her work is truly inspirational.

WORDS BY **CHANTELLE HEROUX** PHOTOS BY **MICHAEL SCHOLL**



Children in Perlas de Oriente, Mexico, with the makings of a quarterpipe.



Children from Danli, Honduras.

When it's so easy to make a dream come true, I can't believe more people don't do it. In mid-May of this year, I rented a vehicle and drove seven children from the Watts/Compton area of Los Angeles to a pro skateboard competition at Etnies Skatepark. While traveling there, one of the children proclaimed it was the best day of his life – a statement that was said several more times that day. Every time Bridge To Skate holds an event, gives away a skateboard, has an outing or finishes a building project, the response is always similar: We're making dreams come true. I've always been a dreamer myself, and everything I've accomplished in my life is because of that. I don't want to get too Martin Luther King Jr. on anybody, but holy moley, I do have a dream! And the coolest thing is, I'm living it. Every day of my life I'm surrounded by joy, enthusiasm, smiles and laughter. Usually, at least once a week, I get to see a dream come true for somebody. Search/Spark/Stoke – I think that's obvious.

SEARCH

In 2009, I traveled to Honduras to build a skateboard park. I was dedicated to my own little cause and never expected that a year after my first journey, I would be signing the papers to create a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity called Bridge To Skate. But I am aware ... and that, to me, makes me obligated to chip in. It sounds cheesy, but because I was born in the United States, I immediately have the power to make a positive

change in the world. I'm not a trust-funder and I don't have a fancy job; I'm in my mid-20s, with practically no material possessions. But I do have motivation.

I love that this is my background. It proves that anybody can make a positive difference in the world – if I can, you can. I'd like to think of our little volunteer movement as one of the rawest forms of philanthropy you can get; we're all doing it for the high-fives, laughter and smiles.

If someone had asked me a few years ago what I'd be up to now, I would've never guessed this. If someone had asked me the same question one year ago, I still wouldn't have seen Bridge To Skate taking shape this way. The search is constant and always evolving. We're open to anything and anyone – and because of that, I feel like we've seen and been able to create radical change for the better.

SPARK

When you see a child who hadn't previously found his talent excel at skateboarding, you know you've sparked a change. You also know you've made a difference when you see a child's eyes glow when she sees the Pacific Ocean for the first time, and knows she gets to learn to surf it. Your heart melts when a teenager is shaking after meeting his or her skateboard idol and you know you made it happen. Every skateboarder understands how a skateboard can change a life, and I can honestly say I've seen it happen. We've been able to reach out to youth because of skateboarding, and



Shane Hidalgo, showing his Bridge To Skate family how it's done!

generally, there's a lot more behind their skating than outside appearance would ever show. Skateboarding is our tool to end gang violence and to further education. We use it for therapy and anger management. It's a reason to be drug-free and in shape. It's an art. It's a route of expression, a path of sanity and friendship. It's our helping hand. And beyond all, it's our spark.

STOKE

We've built the skateboard park, we've built the playground, we've built the skateboarders. Our monthly skate contests in South Central Los Angeles began last year with only 15 kids. Our largest competition to date had 147 skaters participate. Last year we gave away 71 recycled and new skateboard completes through our Skateboard Recipient Program. This year, we're giving away 365 complete skateboard decks –

one for every day of the year. In the fall, we're building our first school in a mountain village that is two miles from the closest dirt road. Eventually, we'll have a playground and a skateboard park there too. We have our calendars filled with day trips to different skateboard parks, camping overnights, learn-to-skate clinics, group home visits, and competitions. Bridge To Skate has ignited a fire in children who may never have had an opportunity to shine in this way. The greatest part about it all is that we're stoking their fire at the same time they're stoking ours.

Bridge To Skate is a public charity that uses skateboarding and play to aid in the creation of life skills, promotion of health, fostering of peace and the education of cultural differences internationally. For more information, visit bridgetoskate.org. CW



The first Honduran Skateboard Team!



Watts local Robert Moreno making an ollie over eight decks look easy!



Sector 9 professional Shaun Ross boosting at the WLCAC Center in Watts.



Group shot at our monthly skateboard contest!