Betweeen classes, students at Denver School of the Arts stuck together in cliques. Not all kids felt safe or welcome.

These students are a talented bunch of singers, musicians, dancers, creative writers and visual artists ranging from 6th to 12th grade. They’re all artists, but there was still a sense of “us versus them.”

Thanks to you, students learned how to engage each other and heal differences using Habits of the Heart.

“We wanted to build a more kind, safe and interconnected community where everyone feels that they matter,” said Kimberly Menetrier, the Gifted & Talented Coordinator for the school.

Kimberly invited Courage & Renewal facilitator Susan Kaplan to teach her middle schoolers about Habits of the Heart. It’s a program Susan adapted for students based on Parker Palmer’s book, Healing the Heart of Democracy.

Susan tied the program into the school’s existing No Place for Hate® campaign where 8th graders teach 7th graders about anti-bullying.

“I listen to people differently now.”

Habits of the Heart gave the kids a way to put the anti-bullying message into practice.

One student said, “We made a lot of posters about No Place for Hate. The Habits gave us a way to work toward No Hate.”

Another student felt transformed: “I listen to people differently now. How I responded to people before wasn’t really listening.”

You helped Lorean and her classmates become better listeners, compassionate peers and world healers!

Habits of the Heart
Understanding we’re all in this together
Appreciating the value of “otherness”
Ability to hold tensions in live-giving ways
Sense of personal voice & agency
Capacity to create community

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“There’s got to be a better way to earn a living,” thought Jennie Ramsey, distressed. Helping to deliver babies is a joyful experience — and also an exhausting job.

“The sense of responsibility is sometimes crushing,” said Jennie, a midwife for Fairview Health in Minneapolis. During one very difficult clinical case, Jennie began to doubt herself.

Thanks to you, Jennie and her midwife team are nurturing a sense of resilience, acceptance and accomplishment. And it happened because your gifts deliver Courage & Renewal to health care professionals like Jennie.

Jennie recently went through a yearlong Courage & Renewal series called Heart of the Healer. The program helped Jennie develop a sense of balance between self-care and selfless service.

“The retreat series was fabulous for my morale. I’m now using more Heart of the Healer topics in my practice with patients and in my life.

Because of your gift, Jennie had the resilience to face her challenges and even went on to become a leader for other midwives. She found the Courage & Renewal practices so valuable that she recently led a day-long retreat for her team of midwives.

“We talked about how we seven midwives are a community, and also how we create community with the mother and her people when we attend a birth.

“To be able to articulate that was very powerful. It let us speak to the spiritual side of things, which we don't address often enough.”

Thanks to you, Jennie and nurses like her are learning wholehearted ways to serve pregnant mothers better while also supporting each other.
“My work feels like a calling, but the past few years I was really struggling,” said Erika Peterson, the Community Relations Lead for Seattle’s Wastewater Treatment Division. Your support helped Erika stay resilient and not drop out. And that helped people in the Seattle area who depend on Erika’s commitment to protecting water quality, the environment and public health.

Erika has worked in Seattle for King County government for more than 20 years. A few years ago she took a sabbatical and upon her return she noticed that the dynamics at work had turned sour.

“How could I have left a place I liked working and come back to such negativity?” wondered Erika after her brief sabbatical.

Erika was used to conflict, dealing with members of the public in an uproar over wastewater treatment projects. But to experience conflict in her team was unexpected.

“My contributions no longer seemed to matter to the people around me,” said Erika. “I felt isolated and baffled. I was tempted to leave.”

But thanks to you, Erika experienced an aha! moment. Erika recently went to a Courage & Renewal class called Reclaiming Your Passion and Purpose offered by King County government to its employees.

“The paradox exercise was particularly helpful,” Erika said. “Recognizing that two apparent opposites can both be true really helped me cut through that confusion. I can be a significant contributor and that may not matter to others.

“Things are already better since the class. For the first time in three years, I can say that I love my work again.”

“Your support for Courage & Renewal helped Erika stay resilient and keep ensuring clean water for Seattle citizens. Thank you!”

As an employee of the Wastewater Treatment Division, Erika’s continued work is vital to many. Thanks to you, she looks forward to more years of caring & compassionate public service.

“Your support for Courage & Renewal helped Erika stay resilient and keep ensuring clean water for Seattle citizens. Thank you!”

For the first time in three years, I can say that I love my work again.”

“This class really helped me turn a corner in my professional life. I think it will make me a better county employee for the next 10-plus years of my career.”

Courage & Resilience!
A Safer & Kinder Place . . .

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“This has really changed my life. I’m so excited to have learned this,” said one of the 8th graders.

Your support for Courage & Renewal gave these students ideas that have improved the way they treat each other.

And the kids are now translating Habits of the Heart into their hopes for the world beyond their classroom.

In 7th grade, the kids study Utopia all year. “Scholars say Utopia is unattainable,” said Kimberly. “But I’m hearing kids who are declared geniuses in the arts saying they now see ways to make Utopia a reality based on the Habits. It’s very inspiring!”

Thanks to you, 7th and 8th graders are inspired to make school—and the whole world—a kinder place. Your gift made it possible for them to experience the power of Habits of the Heart! Thank you! □

You Helped Midwives . . .

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“The work we did in Heart of the Healer continues to influence my daily practice and the way our team works together—and the way we are able to serve the women and families in the birthing room.

“We can do so much more as a group than we can alone,” she reflected.

“We have a phenomenal group dynamic—it has a lot to do with Courage & Renewal,” Jennie said. “So thank you!” □

Do You Have a Tribe?
Reflection by Parker J. Palmer

It is true that we are all in this together. It is equally true that we spend most of our lives in “tribes” or lifestyle enclaves — and that thinking of the world in terms of “us” and “them” is one of the many limitations of the human mind. The good news is that “us and them” does not need to mean “us versus them.” Instead, it can remind us of the ancient tradition of hospitality to the stranger and give us a chance to translate it into twenty-first-century terms.

Hospitality rightly understood is premised on the notion that the stranger has much to teach us. It actively invites “otherness” into our lives to make them more expansive, including forms of otherness that seem utterly alien to our way of life.

Of course, we will not practice deep hospitality if we do not embrace the creative possibilities inherent in our differences.

Questions: Do you have a “tribe”? If so, how would you describe it? Do you have a story about crossing lines of difference in a way that made your world a larger and more inviting place? What are some of the ways you extend, or can imagine extending, hospitality to “the stranger”? □

Yes! I’ll equip people to serve with authenticity and resilience, which in turn will help thousands of people live better lives!

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The stranger has much to teach us.