

## Educator and youth developer Eric Bobrycki, Co-Director of NextGen Academy

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*(from right) Eric Bobrycki with Tesia and Edwin Bobrycki*

Born, raised and educated in upstate New York, Eric Bobrycki has been working since 1979 as an educator and youth developer. Eric has focused on promoting the unity of all faiths. The work for world peace is paramount to Eric and personal growth - that which transforms the individual - has been his focus. It is his belief that as a consciousness is raised, i.e., as awareness of one's true identity is realized, then one is empowered and rightly positioned to effect peaceful change in the world.

It was through his daughter, Tesia Bobrycki, that Eric first became acquainted with NextGen Academy (NGA) based in the Seattle, Washington area. In 2007, Tesia applied and was accepted to participate in the full year

program of NGA. NGA is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit volunteer organization that provides a year-long program for college-aged youth to develop as leaders as they conduct both domestic and international service work. Eric was impressed with NGA founder, Jeff Adshead's passion and vision to empower youth to experience their true potential and live in their highest ideal. He resonated with NGA's mission statement: To challenge and empower the next generation to create lives of authenticity, abundance, and altruism. He saw the transformation in his own daughter as she completed her first year as a participant and continued for a second year as one of the coordinators for the International Service Project.

During Tesia's second year, NGA added a summer challenge program for those who wanted to get a taste of the program but weren't ready to commit for a whole year. That summer, the Bobrycki family opened their home in Valley Springs, CA and Summer Challenge was born. It was an opportunity for new participants to enter the NGA family, experience the culture and environment, and invest in their personal development and growth. Entirely planned, organized, and executed by the NGA full-year participants, giving them an incredible leadership opportunity, Summer Challenge enables an uplifting, inspiring experience, providing an environment for incredible personal transformation to take place.

Eric and his wife, Colette, were deeply moved by the impact the experience had on those staying at their home. It led to their decision to become the directors of a second NGA center for the full year program in the fall of 2010. This decision has changed their life forever but Eric says he wouldn't trade it for anything. Eric said, "NGA works well because our philosophy is that the program won't work without our second years stepping up and taking on the leadership roles. The second years know that it's up to them to have each workshop, each project, each program turn out. They feel the weight and depth of what it is to guide others and learn true accountability and responsibility."

Since 2008, the International Service Project has been a big part of the NGA year. The NextGen Academy has volunteered alongside local communities in 11 countries across southern and eastern Africa. Volunteers spend the first half of the program year at home in the US, developing their own international service project idea, raising funds, and gaining the skills and know-how to execute abroad. They are also spending this time planning logistics and networking with foreign contacts in order to make their project a success. NGA volunteers work with church communities, grassroots NGOs, and government ministries to coordinate service programs and educational workshops for a total of four weeks of service which include Character Education programs, leadership and training workshops, community clean-ups, orphanage volunteering and much more.

In 2010, NextGen Trainings (NGT) was born as an affiliate of NextGen Academy. With the vision: Driven By Purpose. Fueled By Passion. Achieving Our Potential, NGT offers a number of workshops for students, young adults and families. IGNITE is a week-long outdoor experience focused on developing true confidence, authenticity and a sense of ownership over life. Fusion is a transformational family workshop that gives families the opportunity to become more skillful in listening, communicating and loving each other and oneself. The Momentum Training Series is a set of dynamic, interactive presentations that teaches students about awareness, empathy and integrity by experiencing it. The Momentum program has touched the lives of many Northern California high school students, their teachers and principals. Under the new leadership of Rachel Curry, the program is growing quickly and a train-the-trainer program for schools to take more ownership is on the horizons.

After looking for several years, NGA has found a location for its home base and training site. It is a wonderful 42 acre farm in Ione, CA - only 25min from the Bobrycki home, about 1.5hrs from the Bay Area. With a small house and a large shop/steel building, it is a place to start and there's plenty of room to run to grow. There are about 200 fruit and nut trees and ample irrigation water is provided by the county for a nominal fee. Along with continuing the full-Year training and summer camps, NGA plans to develop a true organic farm and practice the same model of care given to raising young people to raising plants and animals. As a training organization, this hands-on experience will be implemented as part of the curriculum.

The recent NGA Board of Directors retreat included a visit to the new training center. It was an awesome moment to see the vision and dedication of Jeff & Satomi Adshead and Eric & Colette Bobrycki moving forward with the establishment of this new location. The NextGen Academy was created to inspire and develop a new generation of leaders that not only have a vision but to guide them through the process of working together to make that vision happen. Eric said, "Our graduates have gone on to do very well in college, in their relationships and in life. They experience a great deal of healing and growth and develop a deeper connection with their parents and family. NGA is a real family for all who come and most leave knowing that God is the source of this family. That is what makes me most proud."