

# RACE 4 GOOD

Where the Best and Brightest Compete

## Race4Good Introduction:

I developed the Race4Good leadership programme as a way of bringing together dynamic teams from business and from universities to harness their experience, innovation and passion. Teams have up to 21 days to research real-life critical challenges facing a community and to develop a business plan which will bring long-term economic uplift. The critical challenge might be one affecting an overseas community or a problem much closer to home.

Linda Cruse  
CEO  
Race4Good



## Race4Good Mini – Vail, Colorado: February 2018

I was recently invited to record my second TEDx talk entitled 'it's not about money - it's about having serious fun' under the theme 'business as a force for good', and in February I arrived in Vail, Colorado to give my talk. Having spent the last two decades inspiring and engaging the private sector to solve some of the world's most critical problems, it was a privilege to be able to share some of the insights learnt from a life on the frontline. In addition to my talk, I was invited by Kat Haber of TEDxVail and Susie Davis of Our Community Foundation, to run a workshop based on my leadership programme: Race4Good. It was a race itself to get it all organised in time but with support from the Vail community and my Race4Good team, we pulled together what would be an unforgettable event.

## Critical Challenge:

The challenge given to us was: 'hunger in the eagle river valley'. Eagle County in Colorado (above) is a luxury destination for visitors; it is packed with SUVs full of urban families and flights bringing in wealthy visitors from far and wide.

Supporting this vibrant tourist trade are service industry employees who typically earn a low hourly wage and struggle to afford safe housing and healthy food.

It's thought 16% of residents here are food insecure but the real figure is much higher. Speaking with local teachers, I learnt that 75% of students in government-run schools are in assisted lunch programmes.



### The R4G Mission:

A solution needed to be found urgently; parents are losing their self-esteem and the children affected by food insecurity are also struggling academically. We didn't have the luxury of 21 days to develop a sustainable solution – teams had just four hours. But could it be done?

### The Race:

Once I had finished briefing participants about the rules of the race, I introduced the advisory group who were there to answer questions. The advisory group consisted of: Susie Davis, CEO of Our Community Foundation; Erika Donahue, Principal of June Creek Elementary; and the Principal and Vice Principal of Colorado Mountain College. During the race, each team had a maximum of 20 minutes with the advisors, so it was important to choose questions carefully.



As the clock counted down to the start of the race, you could almost hear the adrenaline in the room, pens were poised, and fingers hovered over keyboards. At 14.00 hours, the sound of a horn marked the start of the race. Hot huddles quickly formed, heads down; team members were given tasks, some on the phone researching, others on the internet. Flow charts, doodles and diagrams emerged from these discussions.



At 15.30 hours the horn sounded again, and the room went quiet as a mid-race challenge was given: 'during the summer of 2017, the 'InteGreat!' organization managed a summer lunch programme providing lunch boxes for children - how many lunch boxes did they give out?' The silence was shattered by a screech and



several hands shot up, 'seventeen thousand' someone shouted. The correct answer gave the winning team an extra ten minutes with the advisors, a golden opportunity to ask additional questions.

During the afternoon, I walked from table to table observing team dynamics; strangers thrown together, united so easily by this shared goal. No one stopped for a tea break and the passion and determination were tangible. Energy bars and bottles of water were handed out whilst heads remained locked in discussion. A eureka sound emitted from a table at the back of the room and all heads turned – had that group come up with the winning idea?



At 16.00 hours a further announcement was made: 'teams have 30 minutes left to finalise their plans'. Immediately computers were flipped open and PowerPoint presentations began to take shape. There was a trading-floor buzz in place as the end of the race drew near. The countdown clock had begun.

Meanwhile, the judging panel assembled: Troy Dudley, Principal of Red Canyon High School; two members of his teaching staff, Cristina Gosselin and Jeffrey Duggan; Cinzia Angelini, TEDx speaker; and Riley Dudley, local student and award-winning debater (pictured below).



The horn sounded for the final time accompanied by a dramatic display of fireworks on the presentation screen - pens down, close your computers, the race is over. Sighs of relief, applause and whoops filled the room.

### **Judging:**

It was now time to learn what the teams had achieved in just four hours. The Judges listened intently as each team presented their plan, after which there was an opportunity to ask questions before the judges retired to a private room to deliberate. The plans were all credible and to my surprise, completely different.

Now in a quiet room, the judging panel referred to the judging criteria and carefully discussed each plan - each solution needed to be well researched, culturally sensitive, time bound, accountable and outcome driven. The scores were checked, and the judges' decision was handed to Kat Haber, our TEDxVail organiser.

Kat and the judges returned to the main room where the teams waited eagerly to hear the result. Loud music filled the venue as Kat made her way to the front of the room, taking a moment to thank the participants and congratulate them on what they have achieved. Finally, Kat was ready to announce the name of the winning team.



Members of the winning team were invited to join Kat at the front as fellow participants gave a loud and generous round of applause.



Kat Haber congratulates the winning team: Team Harvest.

Left to right: Kat Haber, Katy Plakas, Ben Garshelis, Randy Macan, Bridget Bradford, Salvador Acevado and Nasreen Sheikh

### **Team Harvest Plan:**

Team Harvest placed great emphasis on identifying and addressing the root causes of the local hunger crisis. Vail valley is an area with incredible wealth and resources, but cultural issues were preventing those affected by the critical issue from getting the resources they needed. The immigrant community here is proud, hard-working, and resourceful. Most of the families affected are working multiple jobs, but low wages mean they are unable to keep up with ever-increasing housing costs. The understandable reluctance to accept handouts is further compounded by: lack of access due to limited food pantry hours; low quality of food available; and undocumented workers afraid to draw attention to their families.

Team Harvest discovered that a new facility was being built in the county to act as a centralised "food hub", which would make sourcing and distribution much easier and included plans to bring in more fresh food. More importantly, the plans included an industrial kitchen for which no programming had yet been proposed. The team saw this as an ideal opportunity to create a framework that would empower those impacted by food insecurity and bring about a solution from within – through the creation of a community kitchen which would also serve as an incubator for educational and entrepreneurial pursuits.

Having a small group cooking large quantities communally in exchange for food and a stipend, easily addresses the needs of families for whom long hours had made home cooked meals impossible or because legal status prevented their participation. Instead of a "soup kitchen", a band-aid solution that still carries heavy stigma, the team proposed the creation of a bustling food hub that fits the cultural norms of cooking together and in which business ideas could be nurtured.

The judges highlighted areas of the plan which had appealed to them:

- Putting nutritious food on tables by empowering entrepreneurship.
- Partnering with existing contacts, facilities and infrastructure, including a food warehouse and the Our Community Foundation.
- Treating the root cause and not just the symptoms.
- Generating self-sufficiency in families; overcoming stigma and shame.
- Engaging with entrepreneurial leaders within affected communities.
- Training community members, facilitating multiple cooperatives.
- Creating pop-up kitchens and a training programme.
- Creating jobs and tapping into the cultural spirit of entrepreneurship.
- Fostering community cooking, healthy food education, creating entrepreneurial businesses that will generate income for food insecure people.

The judges were careful to recognise that great ideas had been generated by all the teams, some of which will be included in the winning plan. These included mapping which would streamline access to food through mobile food trucks (thank-you Joseph Kerski); creation of community and school gardens; engagement with local hunters; a buddy system for the school back-pack programme so students would not feel ashamed taking food home at weekends; use of social media to create a movement fostering awareness of the issue.

And the catchy hashtag **#FULLBELLY** a great social media movement campaign!

**This was not an exercise but a serious initiative which will address  
the serious issue of hunger in the Vail valley**

## **Taking it Forward - The Race Continues:**

Susie Davis, of Our Community Foundation, was overwhelmed by the ideas generated and the support pledged. Susie (below) has dedicated her life to helping the challenged and under-served in her community and now has an additional support team cheering her on. Participants from the winning team have pledged to remain engaged, offering support and mentoring for Susie and her local team; and Linda and the Race4Good team will be on hand with any advice needed during the implementation phase. In addition, the Foundation is organising an online community group to report back to teams and the wider community with the results.



A huge thank-you to all who gave of their passion, insights and time to be part of this Race4Good. Participants, judges, advisors, volunteers, organisers, supporters, my team – thank you. So many great ideas came out of the race. And not just ideas – a community is being formed around Susie, a key individual and a champion in the community who has worked tirelessly.

### **Your Race4Good:**

What are your passions and skills? Engineering, accounting, marketing, communication? What is the burning issue in your community that you are tired of hearing about? I urge you to use the Race4Good model - it works! Bring together dynamic teams of all ages and backgrounds and see the magic happen.

If you would like to run your own community Race4Good Mini workshop, contact:

[www.lindacruse.com/contact-us.html](http://www.lindacruse.com/contact-us.html)

## **Participant Testimonials**

"I had the pleasure of participating in Linda Cruse's Race4Good as a judge. When I arrived, I had little idea of what this 'Race' was, but within a few hours I witnessed complete strangers, people of totally different backgrounds, age, and experience, come together to solve an urgent problem. This was a great example of how a few engaged people with a shared goal of "racing to do good" for the community, can work wonders. Race4Good is an incredible way to focus the creativity and business skills of participants to shape powerful ideas, which can then lead to immediate change at the local level. If only our law-makers and more corporate leaders were required to do this daily, that would certainly make the world a better place!"

Cinzia Angelini

Story Artist/Story Development

Cinesite

"For me as a cook, I believe that feeding someone is a very personal thing. It is something that I have struggled hard to be good at. Being given the opportunity to use that skill to benefit the community that I am now a part of was exciting to say the least; I found the Race4Good experience challenging and very humbling. To share ideas with people who are so proficient in their field was intellectually stimulating and gratifying. In my opinion, the fact the process felt more like a game than a task, made it easier to throw out ideas without fear. The notion that six people from varying professional backgrounds could so easily come up with such a cohesive solution in such a short time was invigorating. I sincerely look forward to working with these people who have inspired me to be a better cook, to end hunger in the Vail valley."

Benjamin Garshelis

Chef de Partie

Tavern on the Square, The Arrabelle

[www.arrabelle.rockresorts.com](http://www.arrabelle.rockresorts.com)

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"I believe that the ideas, expertise and passion of the Race4Good participants combined to create a positive outcome not only on the day we assembled but for years to come. This event was significant in that it brought concrete ideas, plans and partners together to effect meaningful change."

Joseph Kerski, PhD,  
Education Manager  
[www.esri.com](http://www.esri.com)

"What a beautiful culmination of your efforts. I am moved and amazed and so touched by your leadership, your intentions and for running a successful event with such sincerity. Every single Race4Good participant was fully engaged and giving openly. I will send an impact report a year from now to remind you of the profound significance you bring to this world."

Susie Davis  
Director of Community Impact  
Our Community Foundation  
[www.ourcommunityfoundation.org](http://www.ourcommunityfoundation.org)

"Race4Good is the most impactful change agent "formula" I have ever seen or experienced. In four short hours several exciting business plans were created within the context of a fun game. All participants were engaged in solving a complex problem of food insecurity and the judges, the advisors and the participants were elated with the results. It was astonishing that this simple game could create so much good and will have a ripple-effect of reducing hunger in this community for years to come."

Lesley Smith  
[www.lesleysmithproductions.com](http://www.lesleysmithproductions.com)

"It was amazing to see a group of people come together, from varied career and socioeconomic backgrounds, to brainstorm and come up with concrete solutions to the serious problem of food insecurity in the Eagle River Valley. In fact, it was precisely this formula that was the key to success in this exercise! With so many different personalities and experiences coming together, there is no other option than to think outside-the-box. It was transformational, inspiring, and gave each participant such a euphoric sense of accomplishment."

Beth Shafer  
Current Events Co.  
[www.linkedin.com/in/beth-shafer-63498810](http://www.linkedin.com/in/beth-shafer-63498810)

"I was tremendously impressed by the thoughts and excitement generated by the Race4Good process. As an educator who works with the under-served, I was impressed by the compassion and thoughtful empowering process to help my community. I can see this being a part of how we do business to solve complicated problems in the future."

Troy Dudley  
Principal  
Red Canyon High School

Photography: [www.tomascohenphoto.com](http://www.tomascohenphoto.com)

Venue: [www.coloradomtn.edu](http://www.coloradomtn.edu)

TEDxVail: [www.tedxvail.com](http://www.tedxvail.com)