

A CONVERSATION WITH:

# Dr. Jim Kooler

Dr. Jim Kooler is Lifeplan Institute's Creation Wizard. A leader in the youth development field, Jim brings the passion, innovation, and hands-on experience of someone whose lifetime endeavor has been putting young people back in control of their own lives. As Lifeplan's operations officer, Jim keeps the Lifeplan experience and infrastructure aligned so that each element works perfectly for young people and their adult allies.

Jim's career has focused on helping youth become active leaders and resources in their communities. He is the administrator of the California Friday Night Live Partnership, the highly successful youth engagement program that is widely regarded as a landmark process. He has also served as deputy director of the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs and director of the Governor's Mentoring Partnership in California. Jim holds a BA in psychology and a Masters and Doctorate in Public Health from UC Berkeley.

## What's a Creation Wizard?

A person who melds the operational side of business with something akin to magic: the journey of the heart. Lifeplan is really about the caring of one individual for another, a journey of the heart as well as of the head.

## Why does Lifeplan matter?

It's like having glasses if you don't see clearly. Lifeplan allows young people and their adult allies to look through a lens and see what could be instead of being lost in what is. It provides a pathway to a future that young people may not have known existed. If we're interested in a future different from what we have today, this is a wonderful tool that will help youth change what tomorrow can be..

## Whom does Lifeplan help?

Young people will expand their vision of the future and increase their sense of hope about their life's journey. Lifeplan will also have a much broader impact by breaking the cycle of negative outcomes such as alcohol, drugs, and hopelessness that directly affect our communities and economy. When we can help young people see a positive outcome in their future, all of us benefit.

## What's the coolest thing about Lifeplan?

The fact that the metaVerse engages young people in a world they're comfortable in: the tech world of virtual sites and social networking. Young people will navigate through the metaVerse portal, in many cases, as the guide for their

adult mentors. So you'll also have an intergenerational learning experience. Lifeplan is truly next-generation mentoring because it bridges the worlds of high tech and high touch.

## What's your role?

Helping to build the human highway that will put Lifeplan into the hands of hundreds of thousands of young people. My job is a bit like the Wizard of Oz; I make sure what goes on in front of the curtain works well for the participants. Behind the curtain, I integrate and orchestrate the business practices, policies, infrastructure—everything needed to ensure that the Lifeplan experience is seamless.

## What does Lifeplan mean to you?

We in the youth support field have always targeted a range of issues, but in segregated areas of kids' lives. I've struggled for years to integrate and weave those efforts together. What's awe-inspiring is that Lifeplan does this—and on a very grand and meaningful scale. It's the pinnacle of what I've been trying to do for as long as I can remember.

## What's your quote?

My answering machine closes with: "Thanks for giving our kids the gift of time." The greatest gift we can give young people is the time we invest with them. My other motto is Carpe Futura. Enough with this "seize the day" stuff—let's seize the future!

## What are going to do next?

I just came from watching some young people present their animated short films to their peers. The pride and heartfelt response in the room was amazing. What I'll do next is what I'm privileged to do every day—rejoice in the success of youth succeeding once they're able to connect with the right tools.