“People don’t get along because they fear each other. People fear each other because they don’t know each other. They don’t know each other because they have not properly communicated with each other.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.
Dear Friends,

I am thrilled to share with you this report chronicling a very special year for Hands of Peace, the pinnacle of which was the launch of our second Summer Program site in San Diego. Our teens and adult volunteers have continued to inspire hope— person by person, and moment by moment. We see this hope in the beautiful peace mural created by our Chicago participants, in the candlelight vigil to victims of violence led by our Israeli and Palestinian alumni, in our teens’ dynamic participation in Alumni Club overnight seminars, and in our American volunteers’ vibrant discussions of politics, inclusivity, and global engagement. Yet 2014 was also a year of heartbreaking circumstances: Israelis and Palestinians were literally at war as our teenagers boarded planes to the United States, and our Middle East teens went home to an ever-more-entrenched reality.

One story encapsulates the humanitarian values and quiet leadership that HOP instills in our teens amid this ongoing tragedy. Shortly after our Summer Programs began, Israeli ground troops entered Gaza— a signal that the war was escalating and massive casualties were imminent. The news reverberated into our San Diego lunchroom: participants clutched their phones to check for updates and divided into national groups, whispering in their mother tongues. Many worried about loved ones in harm’s way, questioned their involvement in a dialogue program, or felt guilty for having fun while others suffered back home.

HOP staff convened the group and called for a moment of silence to recognize all those who were suffering and dying. Many began to cry. Spontaneously, an Israeli and a Palestinian participant stood up and bowed their heads. Another participant did the same. Within seconds, the whole room— participants, staff, and host families— rose without words. We stood together in heavy silence, collectively mourning the unfolding tragedy yet honoring the rarity and specialness of the bond that had developed among our group. We knew that we as individuals were powerless to stop the bloodshed. But we also knew that our example of peace on a small scale demonstrated the possibility of peace on a broad scale.

Thank you for making these moments possible, and for helping to empower Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans to re-think their assumptions, lead with compassion, and rise above fear and distrust that preclude genuine understanding. Together we are modeling what coexistence looks like, and I hope we can count on your continued support.

Salaam, Shalom, Peace,

Ashley Bates
Executive Director
Introduction: Understanding Oneself, Understanding the Other

Below is a poem written by Wael Omar, a 17-year-old Muslim Palestinian who met Israeli civilians for the first time during the Hands of Peace (HOP) Summer Program. His poem—as well as countless essays and speeches produced by HOP participants over the years—shows the complicated feelings and dark histories that our teens are struggling to confront. Before committing to work for peace, they must grapple with these tough issues in a safe, open-hearted dialogue environment:

I am a Palestinian who is denied the right to go home
I am an Israeli who is finally home
I am a Palestinian who is in an identity crisis
I am a Jew who had an identity crisis
Lost my land, got kicked out of my house and not able to go back
My grandfathers were kicked out, but I finally made it and went back
I lost my son by a Zionist who took my land
I lost my grandfather just because he was a Jew
Once upon a time there was green in Palestine, but it all turned to fire bombs and red sand
Now we are here, Israel will go back green
Blood that we see is the reason for our tears
Joy and happiness of us being back here is the reason for all those tears
I am the battle cry of freedom
I am the battle that fights terrorism
I am the battle cry of liberty
I am the battle cry of survival
Our children are full of fear
Do not deprive me from my children’s smile
Keep your tanks, helicopters and soldiers away
Keep your Qasam rockets and suicide bombers away from my children’s school
from downtown
Many years we have spent away from home in refugee camps
Many years we have spent in the ghettos of Nazi Europe in Lebanon, in Syria, in Jordan, in the West Bank in Germany, in Poland, in Lithuania, in Ukraine treated like animals
Everywhere we go we would hear the same:
Go for him!
Go for him!
He is Palestinian!
He is a Jew!

Courageous teenagers like Wael are able to write poems like this because they have been challenged to see the conflict from the perspective of “the other,” because they have had their own suffering recognized, and because they feel empowered to help create a better future. HOP provides this safe space and growth opportunity for 70 teenagers every summer and for hundreds of alumni and adults throughout the year.

“For two years, Hands of Peace has been a place where I am surrounded by people who I truly love, and who truly love me. That is one of the biggest gifts I have in my life.”
-Tamar, Jewish-Israeli participant
**MISSION**

Hands of Peace is an interfaith organization developing peace-building and leadership skills in Palestinian, Israeli, and American teenagers through the power of dialogue and personal relationships.

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**ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION**

Our organization incorporates a Summer Program, a Leadership Program for second year participants, and a year-round Follow-Up Program for Middle Eastern and American alumni. The annual Summer Program lasts 18 days and is conducted in Glenview, IL and Carlsbad, CA. Intensive daily dialogues about the conflict are led by professional facilitators. The teens also learn about the different religions represented, and participate in educational and social activities. Visiting participants from Israel and the West Bank of Palestine are hosted by generous local families.
Our Impact & Accomplishments in 2014

- All Summer Program participants expanded their worldviews, deepened their understanding of “the other,” and questioned their stereotypes through 35 hours of professionally facilitated dialogue focused on participants’ personal experiences in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- Hands of Peace successfully launched our second Summer Program site in San Diego, with full funding from local individuals, foundations, and social media initiatives. We inspired and educated over 300 guests at our sold-out Farewell Banquet.

- Our Chicago Summer Program had another extremely successful year and also attracted a sold-out Farewell Banquet audience of 300 guests.

- 2014 Summer Program highlights included hiking adventures, a portraiture workshop, team-building ropes courses, dialogue with Mexican students at the U.S.-Mexico border, dialogue with students from inner-city American neighborhoods, and much more!

- HOP was recognized by Slingshot: A Resource Guide to Jewish Innovation as one of the 21 “most inspiring and innovative organizations” serving the Midwest Jewish community.

- HOP grew our social media presence: We gained 1,200 new Facebook followers, featured weekly Facebook posts, and won a $10,000 grant from KIND Snacks for the non-profit with the most Facebook votes.

- Thousands learned about HOP teenagers’ perspectives and stories through media coverage in an assortment of print and video outlets—including the Associated Press, Chicago Tribune, San Diego Union Tribune, WGN television, KPBS television, Rotary International, and Ha’aretz.

- Sliding scale tuition meant that no one was (or is ever) turned away for inability to pay. No participant paid more than $900 (including all airfare and expenses), and 17 participants paid $500 or less.

- Summer Program participants once again created and directed their own film shorts about the dialogue and coexistence process. These powerful films can be viewed at www.handsofpeace.org/video-clips.

- Generous in-kind donations of facilities, meals, snacks, and supplies deepened our community connections. Our host families in Chicago and San Diego made the biggest in-kind gift of all: opening their homes and hearts to our Middle East teenagers and staff.

- Hundreds of individuals and community organizations—including videographers, artists, yoga instructors, mosques, synagogues, churches, Zumba instructors, hula hoop dancers, musicians, chefs and actors—donated their unique talents and services.

- Our robust Middle East Alumni Club Program included four overnight seminars in Israel benefitting Israelis and Palestinians from seven different years of Hands of Peace.

- Highlights of these Middle East Alumni Club seminars included a trip to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum, two alumni-led community service projects, tours of a settlement and a Palestinian refugee camp, Q&As with diverse speakers, and continued dialogue about alumni’s personal experiences and perspectives.

- Highlights of American Alumni Club activities included two community service projects, 10 dialogue meetings, and alumni presentations at more than two dozen community events.

- Supporters in Chicago, San Diego, and Israel participated in our various Adult Education Program offerings—including five film dialogue nights and eleven speaking events.

- Hands of Peace supporters from the United States took part in our dual narrative tour of Israel and Palestine.

- Our pre and post-program evaluative surveys once again found that participants developed an increased willingness to think critically about the role of their own “side,” along with an increased ability to question stereotypes, current events as portrayed by the media, and the history they were taught in school and through their communities.

- More than 450 teenagers have benefited from the rare HOP Summer Program experience since 2002. Our graduates continue to undertake courageous peace work in their home communities (see our Alumni Magazine for some of their stories!).
GOALS OF DIALOGUE SESSIONS

- Help participants develop skills to effectively communicate with people of diverse backgrounds and opinions.
- Equip participants with knowledge and skills that enable them to think critically about the master narrative that has shaped their thinking about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Help the participants accept that they can be both pro-Israel/Palestine and pro-peace.
- Instill in participants a commitment to get involved in organized peace-building activities and/or service projects that bring together people from different national, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds.

TESTIMONIALS

“Hands of Peace opened my eyes (and my heart) to a conflict that I didn’t really know that much about, and taught me that no matter what side you believe in, we have to all work together to create a chance for peace.”
- Seth, American participant

“We have been blessed to be part of HOP for so many years. It has been so rewarding to see the growth in all of the teens as well as the growth of the host families and many volunteers (ourselves included!).”
- Gail and Jim, host parents

“Hands of Peace has opened my mind to understand that the truth has several faces.”
- Fadwa, Palestinian participant
Institutional Supporters

The following organizations provided financial or in-kind support in 2014:

Am Shalom
Anonymous foundations
Bahai Temple
Ben & Jerry’s
Border Angels
Café Lucci
Carlsbad Musallah
Christ Presbyterian Church of Carlsbad
Clark Family Foundation
Community Foundation of Louisville
Congregation Solel of Highland Park
Congregational Church of Jefferson Park
Congregational UCC
Deerfield First Presbyterian Church
Encinitas Coastal Rotary Club
Evanston Blue Print Company
First Giving Frontstream Co.
First Presbyterian Church of Wilmette
Gelber Family Foundation
Glenview Community Church
Harley-Davidson Financial Services
Illinois Tool Works
Islamic Foundation North
JAMS Foundation
Jersey Mike’s Subs of Carlsbad
Jewish Community Foundation of San Diego
Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation
J-Serve
Kids for Peace
KIND Snacks, LLC
Kiwanis Club of Glenview
Kraft Matching Gifts Program
La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club
LaSalle Street Church
Luna Grill of Bressi Ranch
Mondelez International Foundation
Moonlight Cultural Foundation
Mystic Grill of La Mesa
Nordson Corporation Foundation
Oakton Community College
Old Globe Theater
On the House Foundation
Optimist Club of Deerfield
Pacific Ridge School of Carlsbad
Palomar Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Peet’s Coffee of Bressi Ranch
Perry Family Fund
Pfizer Foundation
Phoebe R and John D Lewis Foundation
Pick Up Stix of Carlsbad
Pizza Port of Bressi Ranch
Price Family Foundation
Pure Burger of Bressi Ranch
Rotary Club of Glenview-Sunrise
Roti Restaurant
Rubios of Bressi Ranch
San Diego Foundation
San Diego Zoo and Safari Park
Skoll Global Threats Fund
Soroptimist International of Fallbrook
Souplantation of Bressi Ranch
Sunshine Charitable Foundation
Tariq Khamisa Foundation
Temple Solel of Cardiff
Tin Leaf of Bressi Ranch
United Church of Christ / Global Ministries
Watts Atelier of the Arts
Weil Family Foundation
Wines for Humanity
Woman’s Club of Carlsbad
WorldLink Program in USD’s Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice
World We Want Foundation
Xtreme Fun of San Diego
**FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

**REVENUE IN 2014 FISCAL YEAR: $569,262**

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**EXPENSES IN 2014 FISCAL YEAR: $465,266**

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“In my daily life, I keep dreaming about when the next Alumni Club seminar is going to be. I feel it’s the only place where I can speak my mind about the conflict and how it affects my reality. Every time I leave the seminars, I know that hope still exists.”

-Jasmine, Palestinian Citizen of Israel participant
REVENUE IN 2014:

- Individual Donations: 41%
- Corporate and Community Organizations: 6%
- Other: 0.5%
- Foundations: 19%
- Religious Organizations: 3%
- Fundraising Events: 14%
- Program Fees: 9%
- In-Kind Donations: 8%
- Middle East and US Follow-up Programs: 16%
- Recruiting and Orientation: 6%
- General and Administrative: 4%
- Fundraising (including events): 5%
- Summer Program: 69%
Testimonials

“Hands of Peace has shown me that people from totally different backgrounds with radically different opinions are still willing to come together to make a change.”
- Iddo, Jewish-Israeli participant

“Hands of Peace taught me that it takes a group of people to change an individual, and an individual to change the world.”
- Anna, American participant

“HOP taught us that we are important and our voices do matter. It taught us to face our fears, to say what we believe in, to believe in ourselves and it taught us the meaning of friendship. It taught us to never lose hope!”
- Yasmeen, Palestinian participant

“Now I understand that if we hang onto the past, we will not be able to improve the future. What happened in the past we cannot change. We need to accept that and try to move forward to a solution.”
- Shira, Jewish-Israeli participant
A Sample Summer Program Schedule

8:30 AM: Host families drop off participants
8:45 AM: XLS (second-year participants) lead the morning icebreaker game
9:00 - 11:30 AM: Dialogue
11:30 AM – 12:30 PM: Kosher/halal lunch
12:30 – 3:00 PM: Drama workshop

3:30 – 5 PM: XLS lead small group discussions of religious diversity in preparation for visits to church, synagogue, and mosque
5:00 PM: Time for host families to do a fun activity with their guest(s)

A Sample Middle East Seminar Schedule

9:00 AM: Palestinians and Israelis arrive at seminar
9:30 AM – 12:00 PM: Tour of Jerusalem’s Yad Vashem Holocaust museum
12:00 – 1:00 PM: Lunch
1:30 – 3:00 PM: Tour of Deir Yassin (site of massacre of Palestinians in 1948)

3:30 – 5:30 PM: Community service tactile art project with blind children
6:00 – 7:00 PM: Dinner at hostel
7:00 – 9:30 PM: Dialogue
9:30 – 11 PM: Social time and desserts

Testimonials

“Before Hands of Peace, every participant thought that we have different suns that shine down on us. After Hands of Peace, we became closer, and we realized that the same sun shines down on all of us.”
- Hadeel, Palestinian Citizen of Israel participant

“I learned how to think, to respect, to doubt, and to listen. I learned about my country, my government, and mostly about myself. And I made friends for life, too!”
- Noomi, Jewish-Israeli participant

“I’ve learned that true, loving friendship overcomes identities, religion, and politics.”
- Alyssa, American participant
“It’s so important to send our future generation to such programs, so they will have a better future than we had.”
-Basma and Yahiya, parents of a Palestinian participant

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