Because it takes a group to change an individual... and an individual to change the world!
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Dear Friends,

What is a hero? Movies would have us believe they are identifiable by their capes and super powers. But at Hands of Peace, we know the signs are far more subtle. Sometimes it shows in the courage to get on a plane and travel half-way around the world to meet your enemy; it also appears as the willingness to transcend the criticism of your community and listen to the pain of another’s narrative, in order to build a more complete picture. We have the privilege of meeting dozens of young heroes every summer at Hands of Peace. They are the Israeli, Palestinian and American teens who commit themselves to telling their stories with candor, and in the process move beyond black and white thinking. Black and white thinking shapes many of our worldviews, but is nonetheless the enemy of progress, creative thought and, ultimately, peace.

Our program has been empowering teens to think critically since 2003. We are preparing the upcoming generation with the tools to be agents of change in Israel-Palestine, America and everywhere their paths take them in the world. We took a major leap forward in that effort this year with the creation of our Leadership Program. Drawing on the expertise of Gamaliel (the organization that trained a young Barack Obama), we now offer targeted training to a select group of older alumni to become effective community organizers. They are building on the dialogue tools they first learned at HOP and are now building projects they are passionate about in their home communities. The ripples are spreading!

None of this could happen without you, our loyal supporters: volunteers, host families, advisors and donors. It does take the whole community, working together, to change the world. Thank you for being part of the change taking place in Chicago, in San Diego (launched in 2014 and expanding to full size in 2016) and the Middle East. I’m thrilled to be part of the team supporting these young heroes and grateful you are too!

In Peace,

Gretchen Grad
President/Director of Development
Founder
Hands of Peace is an interfaith organization developing peace-building and leadership skills in Israeli, Palestinian, and American teenagers through the power of dialogue and personal relationships.

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 19 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 ed’s from Israel and the West Bank of Palestine are hosted by generous local families.

“In HOP, I got to really see the person not as Palestinians, Americans, or Israelis—but deep into their souls. And first and foremost, as humans. I’ve learned to listen. Not to hear to really listen. To stop thinking how I would respond but instead, stop and embrace people’s feelings.”

Eden, Jewish Israeli participant

“Now I can see the conflict from different point of views. It surprised me because I didn’t even think that I would have an Israeli friend, but I’m thankful because I was wrong.”

Yazan, Palestinian
In October of 2015, amid escalating violence in Israel and Palestine, 2011 Hands of Peace (HOP) alum Noam Preminger noticed a disturbing photo posted on Facebook by an IDF soldier. The soldier had written on her hand: “Hating Arabs is not racism. It reflects values.” The photo generated 20,000 Facebook “likes” within hours.

Noam was horrified by the reaction to the post, which he felt showed that “the mood in Israel was turning towards hate.” For Noam, Palestinians were not “other” people. They were close friends with whom he had exchanged personal and often painful stories and with whom he regularly reunited at HOP’s year-round follow-up seminars. No fewer than 85 of Noam’s Facebook friends are fellow HOP alumni—about half of them West Bank Palestinians and Palestinian Citizens of Israel.

What Noam did next was directly influenced by his HOP experience. He says, “HOP has made it clear that I need to act to change the situation.” Noam and a couple of his friends decided to launch a Hebrew language counter-initiative asking people to post photos of their hands with the tagline: “Hate is not a value. Racism is not the way.” The campaign has inspired thousands of Israelis and Palestinians to post these anti-bigotry photos and take a stand among their friends and communities. It even attracted coverage from major Israeli and Palestinian Israeli news sources, including Ha’aretz (a leading Israeli daily).

A 2006 Palestinian HOP alum, Bashar Sorri, also found that his HOP experience gave him the independence and the inspiration to take action. He says: “I truly felt that I’m a free man, and that I have the freedom to decide what I want to do in my life. It was the first time I’ve experienced this feeling in my life.” Through the HOP dialogue process, Bashar formed close and compassionate relationships with Israelis, and was moved to think more deeply about non-violence as an ideology and a way of living. “Many people speak about stopping violence and how the violence is destroying our community….But we also need to do something about it! We need to shift from think-tanks to do-tanks. And that is what HOP is all about.”

Today, Bashar has earned a law degree and is working as an associate at a legal firm in Ramallah “to know more about [his] rights and duties and how to find better ways to protect freedoms through peace.” He earned a prestigious one-year fellowship with the McCain Institute for International Leadership and he serves as a Middle East consultant for Cure Violence, an international organization that approaches violence as a contagious epidemic that must be addressed from the grassroots. Bashar says: “There is a wonderful world and a better future beyond the violence and hatred. After participating in HOP, I have realized how important it is to strengthen the peace process. HOP is not just a camp, it’s a lifestyle. It’s about building a culture of peace.”

As Noam says: “Dialogue is the way of bringing people from a place of not having any hope to a place where they see the human being on the other side and feel there’s a chance to make peace. When things are the worst, that’s when you need dialogue the most.”

Bashar and Noam are not unique in their growth processes. In the summer and throughout the year, Hands of Peace inspires profound transformations among Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans. Trust and empathy are nurtured. Stereotypes are debunked. Assumptions are questioned. Political, ethnic, and religious identities are rethought. Lasting partnerships are forged. And—ultimately—dedication to taking action is kindled.
IMPACT AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2015

- Thriving summer programs in San Diego and Chicago served 73 Israeli, Palestinian, and American participants, and included 35 hours of intensive, professionally facilitated dialogue.

- Sliding scale tuition continued: no one was turned away for inability to pay.

- Exciting new summer program activities were launched: team painting of beautiful murals at both sites, a high ropes course trust-building challenge, and a new pilot community organizing program in partnership with Gamaliel (www.gamaliel.org).

- Quarterly, year-round overnight seminars in the Middle East served more than 200 alumni and deepened their investment in peace-building.

- Monthly, year-round US adult education and alumni programming promoted understanding, tolerance, and global engagement.

- Over 1,100 inspired guests attended our sold-out events: Farewell Banquets in Chicago and San Diego and our annual Benefit Evening at Chicago’s Adler Planetarium.

- HOP teens once again directed powerful film shorts, which have been viewed by thousands: www手脚ofpeace.org/video-clips.

- Hundreds of volunteers, host families, and organizations donated their time, talents, resources, and facilities...and the volunteer and staffing groundwork was laid for San Diego’s 2016 expansion to a full-size program!

- Professional researchers from the University of Chicago and the University of California, Berkeley found statistically significant improvements in our participants’ empathy towards the other side, willingness to compromise, and eagerness to take action in their own communities.

“I believe that Hands of Peace will have consequences that reach farther than the individual lives of Middle Eastern and American teens. I believe that simple things like a Palestinian offering a tissue and a hug to an Israeli is the first step to achieving understanding and equality.”

Maddie, American participant

“Hands of Peace has taught me the difference between genuinely listening and merely hearing others. I have learned how to be myself and take off the masks we put on because of society and our communities.”

Adan, Palestinian Citizen of Israel participant and XL
The foundation of the Hands of Peace summer program is our intensive dialogue sessions. These sessions are run by trained facilitators who understand the intricacies of conflict and are equipped to help the participants.

The Goals of the Dialogue Sessions are:

Help participants develop skills to communicate effectively 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 and to examine their beliefs.

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.

“Through dialogue, people gave me the most beautiful gift I could get: they shared with me their deepest secrets and most difficult and life changing stories in such an honest and real environment.”

Asaf, Jewish Israeli participant
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AND FOUNDATION DONORS

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Ben & Jerry’s
Café Lucci
Deerfield First Presbyterian Church
Glenview Community Church
Islamic Foundation North
Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation
Pita Inn
Rob Orr Productions
Roti Restaurant
Veteran’s Art Museum
Viccinos

San Diego
In-Kind Donations
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Border Angels
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Christ Presbyterian Church
Gamaliel Foundation
Jewish Collaborative of San Diego
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Pacific Ridge School
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Leslie Aberson
Tom and Karen Aldrich
Wayne Andersen and Sheila O’Brien
All donations can be viewed on our website. This report reflects donations over $500 that were received 10/1/14-9/30/15. Donations received after that will be reflected in our 2016 annual report.
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

REVENUE IN 2015 FISCAL YEAR: $552,810

- Individual Donations ................................................ $154,843
- Foundations ........................................................ $101,981
- Fundraising ........................................................ $163,202
- Program Fees ....................................................... $63,763
- In-Kind Donations & Miscellaneous Income .................. $54,251
- Corporate and Community Organizations .................. $3,958
- Religious Organizations ....................................... $10,812

EXPENSES IN 2015 FISCAL YEAR: $495,808

- Summer Program ................................................... $312,884
- Middle East and US Follow-up Programs .................. $92,415
- Recruiting and Orientation .................................... $29,446
- Indirect Fundraising ............................................. $24,581
- General and Administrative ................................... $36,482

“The seminars are the only thing that charges me with hope. The situation nowadays is very tough and full of racism and violence. The seminars are where I escape, in order to disconnect from everything and fill my heart with hope for the future.”

Jasmine, 2011 Palestinian Citizen of Israel participant, 2012 XL
**Revenue 2015**

- Individual Donations: 28%
- Foundations: 18%
- Fundraising: 29%
- Program Fees: 12%
- In-Kind Donations & Miscellaneous Income: 10%
- Religious Organizations: 2%
- Corporate & Community Organizations: 1%

**Expenses 2015**

- Summer Program: 63%
- Recruiting & Orientation: 6%
- Middle East & US Follow-up Programs: 19%
- General & Administrative: 7%
- Indirect Fundraising: 5%
Hands of Peace Board of Directors:
First row (left to right) Gretchen Grad, President and Founder, Wendy Rhodes, Chair, Bev Shurman Lavitt
Middle Row (left to right) Kelly Mellos, Henry G. Conroe, M.D., Debby Fosdick, Ashley Bates, Executive Director (Ex-Officio), Kim Lande
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