Hello Friend,

2022 brings us hope for the future, with adaptability and resilience our watchwords.

How can we remain hopeful in the face of the ongoing pandemic, community and domestic violence, human rights violations, and political divisions that have impacted so many in the U.S. and in the Middle East?

**Hope Starts With You**
At Hands of Peace, hope comes from you as we move into our 20th year of empowering American, Israeli and Palestinian youth as agents of change. Your commitment to peace, equality, freedom and justice has brought more than 700 young people into deep personal connection with "the other" and launched them in a new direction where they are building Positive Peace through their work, their volunteerism and, most importantly, their willingness to seek out and value other perspectives.

In July, we will welcome 80 new Hands to Chicago and San Diego for the 2022 Summer Program — anxious and curious as they start their path to positive change together. COVID protocols and contingency plans are being developed for travel, hosting, and programs, and Summer Staff are being hired and trained.

I am also hopeful because of the thoughtful, compassionate, and experienced team we have rebuilt this year. **Alex Abedutto**, Office Administrator; **Hamze Awawde**, Palestinian Regional Manager; **Lisa Notter**, Development Officer; **Ayala Shaley**, Jewish-Israeli Regional Manager, and **Melanie Stanek**, San Diego Site Director, are eager to welcome the new Hands to the Summer Program and to
New Chicago Site Director
Also joining the Hands of Peace staff in January is Chicago Site Director Emily Kenward.

Emily, a 2015, 2016 alumna, brings deep institutional knowledge and community connections, along with academic and experiential learning. She participated in the Hands of Peace/EcoPeace Collective Impact Project in 2018 and was awarded the Rooftop Consciousness Award in 2020. Emily graduated with honors from Tulane University in May 2020 with a B.S. in Environmental Biology and a B.A. in Political Science: International Relations.

In August 2021, she graduated from Tel Aviv University with an M.A. in Conflict Resolution and Mediation.

Join Ayala, Emily, Hamze and Melanie for Breaking Bread, an opportunity to get to know them and their stories on January 16, 10 pm I/P, 2 pm CST, 12 noon PST. This virtual conversation will provide insight on the situation in Israel/Palestine, the role of youth building positive peace, and how Hands of Peace alumni are moving from dialogue to action.

Like all of you, I am looking forward to the new year as we create new memories and deepen relationships like that of Host Mom Julie Orr and alumnus Mohammad (see below). My gratitude knows no bounds for the hundreds of volunteers, host families and supporters like you, who are the lifeblood of Hands of Peace.

In peace and gratitude,
Scott Rasmussen
Executive Director
Hands of Peace

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