

Hands Across the Water

The electronic newsletter for Hands of Peace

October 2009

A Letter from our Program Director

Hello Hands of Peace Supporters,

It's hard to believe that Hands of Peace is already recruiting and gearing up for the summer of 2010. It wasn't long ago that we were all waving tearful goodbye and resuming our "normal" lives.

As many of you know, I made a trip to Israel and Palestine last month and took part in the HOP follow-up on September 4th. Most of this summer's participants attended, as well as many participants from previous years—2008, 2007, 2006, 2005 and even 2004! It was the biggest follow-up turnout Hands of Peace has ever had, and a real testament to the commitment and courage of our participants.

For me, it was also one of my few opportunities to sit in on a dialogue session. The participants discussed tough issues—the difficulty of discussing HOP with friends and family who have little experience with dialogue, the upcoming army service of many Israeli participants, and participants' personal experiences with violence and racism. I came away impressed by the wisdom, honesty and self-reflectiveness of our participants, and moved by their determination to continue the dialogue process.

Thank you all for your continued support of Hands of Peace. I hope you'll join us again for the summer of 2009!

Cheers,

Ashley Bates
Program Director



Participants join in song at this summer's Farewell Banquet, held August 2 at Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation in Evanston.

Mid-west meets Middle East

In early September HOP Founder **Gretchen Grad** joined a United Church of Christ (UCC) mission trip to Israel/Palestine. Along with 11 others, she spent 12 days touring Christian holy sites in the Galilee region of northern Israel, Jerusalem and Bethlehem; touring several towns in the West Bank; and meeting with human rights groups and church partners. The highlight of the trip was connecting with the Hands for their first follow-up meeting since this summer's program, held in Jerusalem on Friday, September 4.

This was the biggest follow-up meeting yet, drawing participants from all years! In fact the group was so large (34) that it was split into the class of 2009, led by facilitator **Husam Jubran**, and a separate group of older alums (2003-08) was led in dialogue by **Avigail Jacobson**. The discussions were lively and passionate, but full of connection and sharing. Meeting on a Friday during Ramadan in Jerusalem meant big crowds and packed checkpoints. An extra bonus was the presence of Program Director **Ashley Bates**, who was spending 3 weeks in the region on journalism work!

Gretchen shared "Even though this was my fourth trip to the region, it definitely felt different this time. The Hands of Peace community has become so widespread, I felt there were friends everywhere I went! I even ran into an '06

alum (**Bashar Sorri**) while waiting at the post office! Best part was meeting our staff families and getting my baby fix. So enjoyed meeting Avigail and Avner's 7 month old Yehonatan (Tel Aviv)- what a cutie! And spent a delightful evening with Husam and Jumana's daughters Mayar (7) and Lamar (1 1/2) (Bethlehem). That kind of human connection helps to make the hard realities of life there bearable."



Gretchen Grad in Tel Aviv with Avigail and Avner's son Yehonatan

News from the Board of Directors....

On September 22nd, the Hands of Peace Board of Directors held their final meeting for the fiscal year 2009 and elected new members and officers for 2010. New Board members are **Kholoud Khoury** and **Kit Harper**. We look forward to the new energy and perspective they will bring to the leadership of HOP.

HOP Board leadership for 2010 is:

Chair - **Joanna Sullivan**
Vice-Chair - **Laura Bernstein**
Past-Chair - **Debby Fosdick**
Secretary - **Oscar Marquis**
Treasurer - **Jane Hund**
Founder - **Gretchen Grad**

The HOP Board looks forward to working with Executive Director **Julie Kanak** and the HOP staff, with **Jim Tatsuda** and the HOP Operations Committee, and with the entire HOP community to make 2010 the best year ever for HOP!

...and from the Operations Committee

Sue Minkus has just joined the HOP Operations Committee as Recording Secretary. She and her husband have resided in Glenview for the past 20 years, and they have 3 children: a daughter who is a freshman at the University of Illinois, a son who is a sophomore at GBS, and another son who is a 7th grader at Attea Middle School. Over the years, Sue has been very involved in many volunteer activities at her synagogue as well as in the PTA, Cub Scouts, and in the local schools as a room mother and in the school office. She currently works part time with her husband in his computer software consulting business. Sue looks forward to a rewarding experience working with entire HOP organization.

US Hands Celebrate International Peace Day

US Hands **Carrie Hanson, Annie Boswell, Roya Naderi, Owen Haglund, Mary Andersen, Julia Duers,** and **Kara Gurvey** joined with other students at Glenbrook South High School to raise awareness about peace on International Peace Day. As Carrie (09 XL, 08 Hand) reported: "The petition for peace got over 600 signatures, and certainly got a lot of people thinking about peace. This petition will be sent to the United States division of the United Nations this week. The banner we put up will continue to hang in the hallway for the remainder of the week as well. Other students from STAND (Students Taking Action Now: Darfur) and Amnesty International came to help with the petition and to educate others about their clubs! We distributed some HOP fliers and had a HOP poster hanging by the table too!"

Way to go, GSB Hands!

09 Hands are reaching from the Middle East to San Diego

HOP Facilitator **Scott Silk** moved to San Diego several years ago, but came back this summer to work once again with his co-facilitator from 07, **Husam Jubran**. Scott, a teacher at the Pacific Ridge School in San Diego, has initiated an exciting new project between his 11th graders and the Hands he worked with this summer. Scott's class will be spending a year studying Middle East History and Diplomacy and much of that time will be spent learning about the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. His students will be communicating regularly with some of the 09 Hands, which will give them the opportunity to learn about the conflict they

are studying in school in a much more personal way from people their own age who are directly affected by it. It will also give our Hands a chance to get to know more American teens--a powerful and enriching experience for everyone! We look forward to hearing from Scott as the school year progresses, and are glad to see these new connections forming.

Want to spread your news to the HOP community?

Send your submissions to [Maggie Cain](#).

www.hands-of-peace.org