

CREATING SAFE,  
**COMPASSIONATE**  
**ENVIRONMENTS**  
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH







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# OPERATION RESPECT

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## MESSAGE FROM INTERIM CEO

◆  
*Charles Dambach*

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*We are taking on the culture of violence in our society by working with people and organizations that seek to build bridges to cross the social and political divide – to return to civil discourse and informed dialogue to find common ground.*

When Operation Respect began some 18 years ago, a global movement to build cultural bridges enjoyed broad support both within the U.S. and worldwide. Since then, we have been able to focus our efforts on the scourge of bullying, ridicule and violence among youth. The *Don't Laugh at Me* program brought children together in schools, camps, and clubs to sing and engage in exercises that built a sense of community and mutual respect. We have seen bullying, ridicule and violence recede and kindness advance where the program has been implemented. We still do, and the *Don't Laugh at Me* program is just as vital and effective as ever. It remains the heart and soul of Operation Respect.

However, the troubling new world of growing racial and cultural tension requires that we do more. We can't ignore the rhetoric of division and hostility that has permeated discourse here in the U.S., in much of Europe and other parts of the world. We simply must apply the same values and principles that drove Peter Yarrow to create Operation Respect to the larger issues driving families, communities and societies apart. We must be peacebuilders.

The *Don't Laugh at Me* program continues to be our primary instrument to build mutual respect, but we are connecting with other organizations to advance our message in new ways. We are taking on the culture of violence in our society by working with people and organizations that seek to build bridges to cross the social and political divide – to return to civil discourse and informed dialogue to find common ground.

As this report indicates, Operation Respect programs have a global impact. For example, we are thrilled with the movement into Mexico and the addition of a Spanish translation of our curriculum. Mexico faces some of the greatest challenges with bullying in the world, where 6 out of 10 students are victims of school violence. We are honored to have been invited to share our program during the Education Por La Paz conference in Mexico City, and our new partnership with Fundacion Ganfer to promote and implement the Operation Respect programs in Mexico and Latin America holds enormous promise.

As many view the world with deep concern – even despair – I remain an optimist. While there are detours along the way, the world has been on a path towards greater peace, prosperity and civility for centuries. In *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Stephen Pinker makes a compelling case that, “We may be living in the most peaceable era in our species’ existence.” None of us would want to return to the world of fifty years ago when massive war raged in South East Asia and our cities were literally on fire. Fifty years ago well over half of the global population lived in extreme poverty. That number is now below 10%. Fifty years ago, bullying was accepted as normal behavior, and untold numbers of adults today still suffer with the scars. Now, we no longer tolerate it as “normal” and we seek to reduce and eliminate it.

The progress within my lifetime has been phenomenal. We may be in a period of reversal, but our humanitarian values and a culture of respect will prevail as long as we persist. As Peter teaches in his great song *Sweet Survivor*, “for everything that matters, carry on.”

CHARLES DAMBACH  
*Interim CEO*

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## WHO WE ARE

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### MISSION

The mission of Operation Respect is to advance the social and emotional growth of children and youth to help them develop into compassionate, respectful, ethical, and civically engaged adults.

### WHO WE ARE

Operation Respect is a non-profit education and advocacy organization founded in 1999 by Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul and Mary, and Dr. Charlotte Frank, Senior Advisor at McGraw-Hill Education. We disseminate our own classroom-based curriculum, the *Don't Laugh at Me*, Program, free of charge to thousands of schools in the United States and around the world. Operation Respect's inspiring music, social-emotional learning curriculum, and highly-regarded professional training provide adults with the tools they need to help children and youth express their feelings constructively, resolve conflict peacefully, celebrate diversity, and engage with each other in a spirit of caring, compassion and cooperation.

### VALUES

Operation Respect is a values-based organization with a priority on respect and caring for everyone, especially children and youth. We are committed to integrity, generosity, and inclusion, and we are devoted to building peace at all levels – in homes, schools, and communities, as well as nationally and globally.

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## MESSAGE FROM **CO-FOUNDER & PRESIDENT EMERITUS**



*Peter Yarrow*

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*The children hold  
the key to our  
future, now more  
than ever before.*

For me, Operation Respect began in the summer of 1998 in Kerrville, Texas at the annual folk festival that was, arguably, the foremost platform for the recognition of unknown singer-songwriters in the US. It was there that my daughter, Bethany, told me that I had to hear “Don’t Laugh At Me”, a song sung and co-written by Steve Seskin, who had sung it at one of the many campfires the preceding evening. “It’s perfect for Peter, Paul and Mary, dad!”, Bethany exclaimed. “Everybody cries.”

At the next evening’s concert, I held my daughter’s hand with, predictably, tears rolling down my cheeks as I listened to Steve sing that song. Inside, something told me that this would become an anthem for what would become a national movement to foster compassion, empathy and respect amongst our children, in schools, summer camps and other places where they learn, mature and find their voices and their paths.

This story took place only one year prior to the “massacre” at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, to which America recoiled in horror, shock and disbelief. “How could this be happening in our country?,” was the national sentiment. It was, unthinkable.

Since then, some 450,000 students have been in a school where a school “massacre” occurred (a shooting in which 2 or more people are killed.) Today, schools conduct sometimes weekly drills in which students run, crouch and hide to shield themselves from future bullets that might pierce the classroom’s door. They not only live in fear of this possibility, they have come to expect it almost as a future inevitability.

Add this to the chaos of today’s frighteningly negative adult role models and their identity “politics” struggle, now emulated by school children as they have come to threaten, bully and ostracize classmates who were formerly their friends.

In the face of our country’s hostile environment, which affects every one of us and also our children, we see endemic fear and mistrust becoming normalized. We see troubled children seeking violent revenge against those who rejected and taunted them. And as a society, we come to place greater value on making sure that guns are easily available to almost anyone, rather than ban assault weapons and take other common sense steps to protect our children from being shot.

Yet, all this is only a symptom of a larger problem and that problem is the reason that Operation Respect is desperately needed in our time, more than ever before.

The challenge to us as a nation will go far beyond any future political victory or defeat. Without our finding ways to reassert our goodness and decency, our generosity, our honor, our ethic, our morality and good will, we will not be able to heal the wounds from this painful and debilitating time.

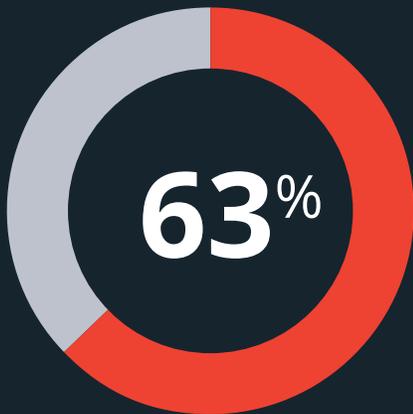
And, going forward, who are our citizens that are the least entrenched, least bitter, and most able to forge a new path that disavows the tenets of hate and fear that have come to dominate our thoughts and our lives? It’s the children and the youth, of course.

Therefore, my friends, I am convinced that whomever and whatever organization champions the empowering of children and youth to become pathfinders and leaders of a caring society, of a humane and equitable world, we must support them. If our children and youth can grow up to lead us in new and positive directions, if they are educated, both in heart and in mind, in a loving, respectful manner and school environment, where teachers are honored and paid as if they are so honored, where students are being given the tools to create a compassionate society, a moral society of the future, we will get there. We will heal our wounded society, our frightened country and emerge from this dark and painful period, triumphant.

The children hold the key to our future, now more than ever before.

PETER YARROW  
*Co-Founder*

BY THE  
**NUMBERS**



of elementary school counselors implement the *Don't Laugh at Me* program in Israel

**500,000 +**

*the number of Educators, Administrators, Parents, Community and Policy makers who attended Operation Respect presentations.*

**200,000+**  
the number of *Don't Laugh at Me* curricula disseminated.

**50,000+**  
the number of educators who received professional development from Operation Respect.

13



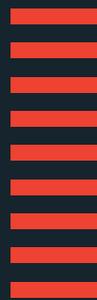
number of years engaged in NYC public schools

11



number of years engaged in Respect for All partnership with NYC DOE

9



number of years engaged in Israeli schools, with the support of the U.S. Embassy, the endorsement of the Israeli Ministry of Education and in partnership with the Center for Educational Technology in Tel Aviv

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## MESSAGE FROM CO-FOUNDER & CHAIR



*Charlotte Frank*

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*My hope is that, in the future, all children will be guided by the virtues and values that we, at Operation Respect have been championing, teaching and espousing since we began.*

I am so proud to have been a part of the creation and launching of Operation Respect, soon to be 20 years old. I vividly recall Peter Yarrow coming to my office and telling me about this idea in formation and realizing that I had already begun this journey a decade earlier when, as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction at the New York Board of Education, I had engaged the remarkably gifted Linda Lantieri to create what we then called a “Peace Education Program” in the New York City School System. Linda spearheaded this effort brilliantly, using the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) that, blessed by destiny, kismet and besherd (a Yiddish word that is similar to kismet), became the basis of Operation Respect’s classroom-based program called “Don’t Laugh at Me”.

It was an extraordinary alliance of intentions and dreams between myself, an educator who had already been doing all I could to bring a program to the New York City public schools that would nurture the development of children’s character, ethic and humanity, and a folk singer who had lived with that same calling his whole career. Along with (Noel) Paul and Mary, Peter’s music had become a major cultural force in America, having become, for many, the “sound track” of their breakthrough awarenesses and actions during the iconic movements of the 60s, such as the Civil Rights Movement, the Peace Movement and beyond.

It is wonderful, and an especially precious irony to me, that at Operation Respect we have come full circle. We no longer, as we did in the beginning, announce ourselves as, nor conceive of ourselves as, an educational non-profit with a commitment to create caring, safe, bully-free environments in classrooms and schools, across America and in many countries beyond our borders. In a true, “back to the future” irony, we are now what I had originally intended to nurture and create in New York City. We are not only an organization that focuses on the social-emotional development of children and youth. We are now guided by an understanding that makes us truly an organization that seeks to bring peace, internal, personal and spiritual peace, as well as peace when it is used as a “verb”, meaning living, acting and creating efforts that advance that intention.

What a great part of my life this has been to see this dream bloom and fulfill my original intentions. As ever the teacher, which is a most fundamental and precious part of everything I ever wanted to be, and do, I could not be more proud of what Operation Respect has accomplished. I am supremely grateful to have played the role that I did in creating and nurturing its growth.

My hope is that, in the future, all children will be guided by the virtues and values that we, at Operation Respect have been championing, teaching and espousing since we began. This is a legacy I am proud to have created along with so many others, and especially Peter Yarrow, as we look to the future and seek to inspire each other in ways that will challenge the darkness and bring light and beauty to our world. In peace.

CHARLOTTE FRANK  
*Co-Founder and Chair*

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## MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

◆  
*John McKenna (2018)*

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We are raised upon adages, maxims and words of wisdom, imparted to crystalize thought, simplify understanding and steer proper behavior. Thus, we recall “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me,” as if a golden nugget of philosophy set in stone. Over the passage of time we realize such wisdom is imparted more as a coping mechanism than a valiant virtue or code of conduct. The world can be unfair, people cruel and justice fleeting. Will this crush us early, or do we put on the emotional armor as early as toddlers and brace ourselves for the insults, bullying, trauma, violence and abuse surely to come?

Evolving thought allows us to properly challenge institutionalized injustice across the personal and public spectrum. We recognize the very methods of ridicule, incivility and outright abuse, though unchanging, can be cleverly employed in the digital age, gain dangerous momentum and unleash devastating results. Today the stakes are higher than ever on the interpersonal, intercommunity and international stages. We hear the youth and world yearning for change, a new human charter. It is in this arena where the mission of Operation Respect applies and thrives.

From the innovative *Don't Laugh at Me* curricula utilized in schools across the world, to conflict-resolution programs exercised from the Middle East to Mexico, we witness the shift. This mission, intentionally, is pro-active and reactive, for there is time to further the strategies in time-proven methodology into institutional organizations, such as school districts, and to respond to the call for healing in post-traumatic circumstances. Operation Respect is at the table with New York City school administrators as well as on the stage with survivors of Sandy Hook and Parkland. The Latin roots of “respect” provide two distinct definitions, reminding us there is nobility in reflecting as well as forward-thinking in the honoring of another’s place and condition. Applying both sets us on the proper course for benevolent change. Indeed, words matter. Thus, in our title just before “Respect” stands the word “Operation.” We are respect in motion.

In the coming seasons we shall further the movement to raise the awareness and resources of Operation Respect. You will find us at high-profile educational conferences and summits, social-impact forums and music-industry events, all in a larger design of developing partnerships and perpetuating peace. We will keep an open ear and heart when the world calls for our presence and participation. We will respond when the failings of our times result in confusion, misunderstanding, injury and pain.

Nearly twenty years ago this organization took its first bold steps in its offerings to the world, hardly envisioning the call would be so universal. We have come to recognize nearly every fracture in society stems from a fundamental breakdown of respect. In such, we welcome an obligation to serve that is challenging and inviting. There is a larger-fix in play, and it is one we do not carry lightly. This is what an organization growing up looks like, its heart beating, eyes and ears open, wisdom and experience at its foundation.

In our midst remain those reaching for sticks and stones, breaking bones. Words will often harm us, and hearing such, it rings familiar. But the words are adrift in a shift. Their resonance wanes compared to unifying calls for civility, fairness, peace and justice. Join the global movement that shies not from the troubling realities in our lives and times - but offers two active and empowering words of wisdom of its own: Operation Respect.

JOHN MCKENNA  
*Executive Director (2018)*



*Join the global movement that shies not from the troubling realities in our lives and times - but offers two active and empowering words of wisdom of its own: Operation Respect.*

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## 2017 YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

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### JANUARY



Operation Respect sets up a School Mediation Center at Putnam Valley High School in Putnam Valley, New York. Educators participate in mediation training and students participate in peer mediation training.

### FEBRUARY



Education Director, Mark Weiss, presents the *Don't Laugh at Me* program, to educators from throughout the United States, at the National Art Education Association Conference in NYC.

### MARCH

Peter Yarrow performs and participates in Peace Week celebrations in Jerusalem. Grammy nominated songwriter, Steve Seskin, provides songwriting workshops and assembly programs to elementary schools in NJ and NYC.

### APRIL

Peter Yarrow launches the *Don't Laugh at Me* program at Tomorrow's Youth Organization (TYO) in Nablus. TYO is dedicated to helping disadvantaged children, youth and parents in the Middle East become healthy, active and responsible family and community members.



## MAY

Operation Respect continues its multi-year intervention in Staten Island schools, including the development of peer mediation programs and the implementation of the *Don't Laugh at Me* program. Mark Weiss represents Operation Respect at the annual UFT Art Exhibit.



## JUNE

Operation Respect presents *Don't Laugh at Me* program at the Arkansas ASCD Conference and concludes multiyear project in Clark County School District, the fifth largest district in the United States.



## JULY



Operation Respect presents *Don't Laugh at Me* program at the American School Counselor Association National Conference in Denver and provides training for guidance counselors, social workers and climate managers in NYC.

## AUGUST



Mark Weiss and Elizabeth Kolodny secure contract with Putnam Valley BOCES and engage in planning meetings with the NYC DOE and consultants involved in the Staten Island schools project.

## SEPTEMBER



Operation Respect provides school climate and culture professional development workshops for the entire staff at all of the middle schools and high schools in Somers, NY.

## OCTOBER



Charles Dambach, Mark Weiss and *Don't Laugh at Me* curriculum guide writer, Laura Parker Reorden, participate in Better Angels workshops and train as facilitators and moderators. Larry Hui and Trudy Mason host a fundraising event for Operation Respect.

## NOVEMBER

Peter Yarrow, Charles Dambach and Mark Weiss launch the *Don't Laugh at Me* program in Mexico City in partnership with Trixia Valle and the Fundacion en Movimiento, and Operation Respect provides *Don't Laugh at Me* workshop for the entire staff of Buffalo Unified Middle School.



## DECEMBER

Operation Respect continues an 11-year partnership to provide *Respect for All* workshops through the New York City Department of Education's Office of Safety and Youth Development. Peter Yarrow, Noel Paul Stookey, David Broza, Bethany Yarrow, Rufus Cappadocia and Melissa Errico perform together at a year-end benefit for Operation Respect.



## YEAR IN REVIEW

Throughout 2017, Operation Respect remained committed to advancing the social and emotional growth of children and youth to help them develop into compassionate, respectful, ethical and civically engaged adults. Toward this end, we continued to disseminate the *Don't Laugh at Me* program materials, free of charge, and provided professional development workshops for educators, administrators and parents, along with principal coaching, restorative circles, peer mediation workshops, assembly programs and songwriting workshops for students.

In a time during which schools are continually pressed to improve academic test scores, while simultaneously facing and addressing the trauma many children experience, both within and outside of school, we need to address the critical intersections between social and emotional learning, academic achievement, long term health and outcomes for success in life. Frightened children and youth simply cannot succeed in school.

Operation Respect initiates positive change in ways that diminish bullying and other destructive behaviors by creating conditions in which such behaviors are discouraged and replaced by positive vehicles for children and youth to acquire a sense of their individual strengths and identity and increase their self-esteem.

Recent changes in the cultural, social and political environment in the United States, and elsewhere, have made it clear that the work of Operation Respect is now more urgently needed than ever before.

Bullying and mean-spiritedness, disrespect and a lack of compassion have become ever more pervasive in these times, not only amongst our children and youth but in adult society, threatening our future as a caring nation, and a world, dedicated to the common good.

*Recent changes in the cultural, social and political environment in the United States, and elsewhere, have made it clear that the work of Operation Respect is now more urgently needed than ever before.*

In 2017, Operation Respect began adopting new tools and strategies that can help to counter and prevent vitriol, divisiveness, bigotry and hatred from escalating year by year, and to a degree unseen, prior to the inception of our work.

### ***Better Angels: A New Educational Tool for Children and Youth***

An organization called Better Angels has developed an interactive methodology, a tool, that is bringing Americans of opposing political points of view together in ways that challenge and invalidate preconceived stereotypes through skillfully guided small group exchanges in which listening respectfully to others and safely sharing perspectives turns former adversaries into friends who can respect each other's differing points of view and thereby respectfully agree to disagree.

Better Angels has given Operation Respect the rights to create a child and youth version of its small gatherings and bring it to schools to address damaging and painful divisions such as the following:

- Divisions between immigrant and non-immigrant children
- Divisions regarding gender and LGBTQIA populations
- Divisions based on religion, race or ethnicity

The fragmentation of school environments along such division is becoming more and more acute and the Better Angels tools are uniquely suited to addressing and ameliorating this problem.



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2017 YEAR-END  
**FUNDRAISING EVENT**

*Peter Yarrow, Noel Paul Stookey, David Broza,  
Melissa Errico, Bethany Yarrow and Rufus Cappadocia*

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PHOTOS THIS PAGE: SARAH COALE



As an initial step, in the fall of 2017, Operation Respect CEO, Charles Dambach, Education Director, Mark Weiss and *Don't Laugh at Me* curriculum writer, Laura Parker Reorden, participated in Better Angels workshops in Washington, DC and were trained as facilitators and moderators. Mark Weiss and Laura Parker Reorden are now collaborating on the development of the Better Angels tools, which Operation Respect will offer to schools throughout the country, and beyond.

### **New York, New York**

Throughout 2017, Operation Respect provided professional development and student and staff development sessions to schools throughout New York City. In Staten Island our partnership and project with community schools entered into its 7th year. The professional and student development initiatives in Staten Island focus on the implementation of the *Don't Laugh at Me* program and the development of peer

mediation programs at each of the participating schools. This project is funded by a multi-year grant the New York State Department of Education awarded to District 31 in Staten Island.

### **RESPECT FOR ALL**

Operation Respect continued to provide Respect for All workshops for teams of educators in New York City. This initiative, launched by the New York City Department of Education's (NYC DOE) Office of Safety and Youth Development, strives to ensure that all students will learn in a safe, supportive school environment, free of bullying and bias-based behavior. Over the past 11 years, Operation Respect has partnered with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and the Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility to provide hundreds of anti-bias and LGBTQIA cultural competence training sessions across all five boroughs.

### **Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV**

In June of 2017, Operation Respect celebrated the completion of a multiyear school climate project with Welcoming Schools, of the Human Rights Campaign, and Teaching Tolerance in Clark County, the fifth largest school district in the United States. In early 2017, Operation Respect's Education Director, Mark Weiss, returned to Clark County to provide professional development workshops for teams of educators from each of the 25 schools participating in the project and to conduct school visits to support their work to create safe and compassionate school climates, which included the implementation of the *Don't Laugh at Me* program.

### **Songwriting and Assembly Programs**

Operation Respect Board member and Grammy-nominated songwriter, Steve Seskin, visited New York and New Jersey elementary and middle schools to lead songwriting workshops and present school assembly programs as he has, nationwide, to over 1,200 schools. The goal of this program is to instill a love of creative expression in the students as well as help them create their own songs that speak to issues that concern them which, in turn, affect the entire school community. Such issues address areas such as bullying, disrespect, peer pressure, self-esteem and diversity. The lyrics on the following page were written by students, with the guidance and mentorship of Steve Seskin. It is one of the many moving songs that have emerged from his songwriting workshops ([www.kidswritesongs.org](http://www.kidswritesongs.org)).

## ***Nobody Quite Like You***

Chinook Elementary School  
Vancouver, Washington

*Everybody wants to fit in  
Do what it takes to be a popular kid  
But I have to say in my school  
Just being who you are is perfectly cool*

*Now we have our differences  
But we are all friends  
When somebody's down  
We remind them*

*Chorus:  
You're one of a kind, you're an original  
Just being yourself is something special  
You can shine like the stars  
There's no telling how far you'll go  
It's true, no one can do what you do  
There's nobody quite like you.*

*Everybody can sparkle  
Be really brilliant and remarkable  
We're all talented in different ways  
If you're not good at something, it's ok*

*Don't try to be a copycat  
Where's that at?  
Always remember that*

*Chorus:*

*Now don't try to change yourself  
for someone else  
Be who you want to be  
Stay on the road you're on  
Singing your own song  
Soon the world will see*

*Chorus:*

## **INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES**

### **Mexico City, Mexico**

In November, Peter Yarrow, Charles Dambach and Mark Weiss traveled to Mexico City to celebrate the launch of the *Don't Laugh at Me* program in local schools. Trixia Valle, the Fundacion En Movimiento's Director General, translated the curriculum into Spanish and hosted the Operation Respect team in Mexico City. During this visit, Operation Respect was invited to participate in an anti-bullying Facebook Summit on Cybersafety and headlined a sold-out Education for Peace Concert with Peter Yarrow, Bethany Yarrow and Rufus Cappadocia, and world-renowned singer Tania Libertad, in a 1,000-seat auditorium at the Colegio Anglo Mexicano de Cayoacan.

Mark Weiss also shared the newly translated *Don't Laugh at Me* curriculum with 400 educators who participated in a professional development workshop to facilitate the implementation of the program. At the end of the workshop, all of the participants stood in a circle and celebrated our joint commitment to making schools safe for every child. To advance the implementation, Operation Respect will translate and record all of the *Don't Laugh at Me* program music in Spanish, with Tania Libertad, who is committed to supporting the program in schools throughout Mexico and beyond.

### **Israel**

The *Don't Laugh at Me* Program, translated into Hebrew and Arabic, has been implemented in Israel since 2009, with the support and endorsement of the Israeli Ministry of Education, the U.S. Embassy and The Center for Educational Technology (CET). In 2017, the program was utilized by more than 63% of elementary school counselors across Israel. CET, the most esteemed source of school curricula, evaluation and educational school programs, is an Israeli NGO, and our partner in Israel. CET translated our curriculum into Hebrew and Arabic, created and then expanded the website and tools used by Operation Respect: Israel, provides distance-learning workshops for school counselors, and recently completed the development of a *Don't Laugh at Me* program specifically designed for the 1st and 2nd grades. These efforts will advance both the breadth of the adoption of the *Don't Laugh at Me* program via this new on-line training program, making it accessible to schools not situated in large population centers, and will also extend the program to the youngest students in Israel's schools.

Several Israeli school counselors who participated in the newly disseminated distance-learning program shared these moving moments:

A School Counselor:

"The students were attentive to the story and could relate to the feelings of being hurt and in pain. They expressed empathy and pointed out all the places which showed the child's pain. They also pointed out the different emotions the character felt and we wrote them down together inside a big heart...

Next, I asked them to think about ways to heal the broken heart of the character. They offered the following suggestions: "Ask for his forgiveness, ask him to join us and play, write him a letter and go to his house, and more. Of course, it's hard to help a broken heart..."

Another School Counselor:

"I decided to hold one of the lessons outside the classroom in order to create a more warm environment. We talked about listening methods and explained validation, empathy and not being judgmental. While talking to each other, two students opened up and told the group about their past experiences with bullying. After that, one of the other students stood up and said: 'We will never let you feel left out again. In our class you are one of us, and we won't

let anyone hurt you ever again'. One of the students who shared his experience was so moved, he burst into tears. I was so touched by that moment!"

### Nablus, Palestine

In April 2017, Operation Respect launched the *Don't Laugh at Me* Program at a building housing Tomorrow's Youth Organization (TYO) in Nablus. TYO is dedicated to serving the needs of pre-school as well as Kindergarten and 1st grade children, mainly from the Nablus refugee camp and "inner city." To support the successful implementation of the program, Education Director, Mark Weiss, provided professional development for all of the teachers, interns and volunteers at TYO, and Mira Awad, an esteemed Palestinian-Israeli performer and peace activist, joined Peter Yarrow, to help launch the program with a concert at TYO, singing to all of the children and staff. The students reciprocated by singing *Don't Laugh At Me* in Arabic, which was incredibly moving (a video from this visit may be viewed at: <http://operationrespect.org/get-inspired/videos/>). TYO intentionally seeks out children who have experienced trauma, with the specific intent of intervening early so that the trauma does not lead to long-term mental



illness. This concept is burgeoning in the United States, and is already well established and highly regarded in the TYO community. In 2018, Operation Respect will strive to strengthen and enlarge this partnership in other areas of the West Bank, in support of the vital work of this organization.

### Hong Kong

There has been a very large and successful presence of Operation Respect's *Don't Laugh at Me* Program in Hong Kong over the last decade. Thanks to a generous 3-year, \$600,000 grant, provided by the Lee Hysan Foundation, social workers and trainers from the Boys and Girls Clubs Association (BGCA) of Hong Kong provided intensive school-based support to 10 schools utilizing activities adapted from the *Don't Laugh at Me* curriculum, along with additional materials focused on compassion and respect. Educators participating in this project report that, to date, *Don't Laugh at Me* has had a positive impact on school climate overall. They also report that students are more alert to, and more sensitive to, the issue of bullying and better able to address it when it occurs. Overall improvement in the daily interactions amongst students in

the 10 schools was observed. The final year of the program will be 2018 when the final results and evaluations will be made available.

### PLANS AND PRIORITIES: 2018 AND BEYOND

- Develop the *Better Angels* initiative, in middle and high schools, to combat harmful divisions among youth and adults.
- Expand the musical component of the *Don't Laugh at Me* Program both in terms of school assemblies and an expanded number of songwriters working with students to write songs together, following the lead of Steve Seskin.
- Expand the implementation and impact of the *Don't Laugh at Me* program throughout the United States and the world.
- Continue the collaboration with the Office of Safety and Youth Development at the New York City Department of Education.
- Strengthen current international partnerships in the Middle East, Israel, Mexico, Hong Kong and Ukraine.
- Develop new partnerships with like-minded NGOs nationally and internationally.
- Build the Board of Directors with expanding skills, resources and diversity.

PHOTO: EDGAR VACA VILLASENOR





*Photo top left*

*Senator Harris Wofford, Geri Critchley, Amy Walker and Congressman John Garamendi*

*Photo top right*

*Secretary John Kerry, Senator Harris Wofford, Ambassador Elizabeth Bagley, Corey Arnez Griffin and Peter Yarrow*

*Photo bottom left*

*Operation Respect benefit hosted by Ambassador Elizabeth Bagley*

*Photo bottom right*

*Prudy Gourguechon, Flora Lazar, Elizabeth Kolodny and Charlotte Kea*



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## GRATITUDE

PHOTOS THIS PAGE: BYRON BUCK

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*The first theme of our Don't Laugh at Me curriculum lessons is expressing feelings so we want to express one of ours – gratitude. We all realize that what really matters are the gifts of caring and being cared about, loving and being loved, giving and being given to, by those we hold dear. Our most heartfelt gratitude to our many friends and supporters of 2017!*



Operation Respect depends on the generous support of individuals, corporations and foundations. Many donors have contributed to making it possible for us to survive and thrive and increase our effectiveness. Our thanks go out to each one, as safer and more respectful learning environments prosper because of all who contribute. We appreciate and value your support, offered in so many ways, and more than we can ever express.

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## FINANCIAL REPORT BREAKDOWN

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### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION 2017

December 31,		2017	2016
<b>Assets</b>	Cash	\$204,513	\$174,219
	Investments	—	—
	Contributions and other receivables	\$93,381	\$50,623
	Computer equipment, net of accumulated Depreciation of \$43,314 and \$41,913	\$682	\$2,083
	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$298,576</b>	<b>\$226,925</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	Liabilities—accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$27,069	\$25,708
<b>Net Assets</b>	Unrestricted	\$269,498	\$198,458
	Temporarily restricted	\$2,009	\$2,759
	<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$271,507</b>	<b>\$201,217</b>
	<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$298,576</b>	<b>\$226,925</b>

*The Statement of Financial Position and Statement of Activities on the following page were derived from the 2017 financial statements audited by our independent accountants, West, Rhode and Roberts. A copy of the audited financial statements and form 990 for 2017 are available upon request.*

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES 2017

<i>Year ended December 31,</i>				<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
		<i>Unrestricted</i>	<i>Temporarily Restricted</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Summarized Comparative Information Total</i>
<b>Revenues and Support Contributions</b>					
	Individuals	\$225,119	\$12,500	\$237,619	\$221,842
	Contributed services	\$53,654	—	\$53,654	\$70,209
	Foundations and other contributors	\$36,069	\$75,000	\$111,069	\$89,249
	<b>Total contributions</b>	<b>\$314,842</b>	<b>\$87,500</b>	<b>\$402,342</b>	<b>\$381,300</b>
	Educational workshops and performance fees	\$139,989	—	\$139,989	\$174,300
	Special events	\$101,900	—	\$101,900	\$122,343
	Other income (loss)	(\$1,015)	—	(\$1,015)	\$1,645
	Net assets released from restrictions	\$88,250	\$88,250	—	—
	<b>Total Revenue and Support</b>	<b>\$643,966</b>	<b>(\$750)</b>	<b>\$643,216</b>	<b>\$679,588</b>
<b>Expenses and Losses:</b>					
	Program services	\$378,351	—	\$378,351	\$439,824
	Management and general	\$116,540	—	\$116,540	\$154,453
	Fundraising	\$78,035	—	\$78,035	\$125,597
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$572,926</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>\$572,926</b>	<b>\$719,864</b>
	Change in net assets	\$71,040	(\$750)	\$70,290	(\$40,276)
	Net assets at beginning of year	\$198,458	\$2,759	\$201,217	\$241,493
	<b>Net Assets at End of Year</b>	<b>\$269,498</b>	<b>2,009</b>	<b>\$271,507</b>	<b>\$201,217</b>

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Operation Respect would like to thank McGraw-Hill Education for underwriting the cost of printing this annual report.



Operation Respect is a public charity under sections 501c(3) and 509(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code. Our 2017 Form 990 is available upon request.



**OPERATION RESPECT**

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