



Attitude. Harmony. Achievement.

WINTER 2014 Update

And did you get what
you wanted from this life, even so?
I did.
And what did you want?
To call myself beloved, to feel myself
beloved on the earth.

- *Late Fragment*, Raymond Carver

Beloved Supporters,

Thanks to your generosity and passion, we have so much good news to share! We have to let our belts out every day to take it all in...

What's Your AHA! Today?

Ours is: Teens, when given the chance, will do everything they can to make their worlds more loving, equitable, and compassionate.

How do we know this?

In the first three months of our Peace Builder Initiative at SBHS and SMHS, the 100 teens we trained in August have reached out to over 3000 other youth in Connection Circles. They've tracked their progress on our fabulous new web application, Peaceq.com (take a look), logging in over 3500 pro-social and helpful behaviors as "peace points."

AHA! is on track this year to reach over 3500 teens to create enormous differences in individual lives and campus cultures. Through externally validated research of our Peace Builders initiative – provided by UCSB researchers with the support of a research grant from the Towbes Foundation – shows that we are meeting our goals of providing tools to interrupt bullying, instilling more compassion and empathy in youth, and teaching youth how to embrace positive attitudes and joy.

Additionally, in the first year of our Peace Building work at SBHS:

- Truancy was reduced significantly
- Suspensions and expulsions were greatly diminished

Students report that they can feel the change happening at their schools – and that it feels good!

We now work with youth in all grade levels at both SBHS and SMHS, and we are in discussion with administrators at Dos Pueblos High School, which wants our programs offered to their students as well. We continue our work at Carpinteria High, La Cuesta, and Santa Barbara Junior High, and are in discussion with CHS about bringing Peace Builders to their campus. Our goal for 2015-2016 to be embedded in all area high schools, making Santa Barbara a model for the nation in terms of student-led initiatives to create safer, more inclusive, and more joyful campuses.



SBHS Peace Builders 2014-15 PHOTO: KindEyes



SMHS Peace Builders 2014-15

Susan Crowne Exchange

As recipients of this award, which was given to only eight organizations nationwide, we have been entrusted to help create a nationwide best-practices guide for social and emotional learning in after-school programs. We have completed our first six months of work supported by the national grant we received from this funder.

SCE sent one of its team, Gina, to see our programs in action and spend time with us in meetings and discussion. Gina commented, "I am so impressed with all of your staff and how you run this organization," and she noted that we were the most impeccable and responsive of all the awardees in the country.

Our team will be meeting with the seven other awardees this winter in Chicago (*brrr!*) to continue with this landmark collaboration.

Waxing Poetic

We are thrilled to announce an extraordinary partnership with jewelry designer Waxing Poetic. This locally based, internationally known company has created a limited-edition collection of stunning AHA! charms and bracelets. AHA! will receive 50% of all sales. Items can be purchased at their Summerland and

Please join us for a pre-holiday celebration and sale at Waxing Poetic Boutique (2350 Lillie Avenue, Summerland) on Saturday, December 6 from 1-5 pm. We'll have fun surprises for all who purchase from the AHA! collection, and the first 10 people who purchase will receive a complimentary gift from Waxing Poetic!



Babcock Winery Harvest Festival

Lisa and Bryan Babcock hosted a Harvest Festival at their winery in Lompoc to celebrate its 30-year anniversary. They generously included AHA! and Storyteller Children's Center as beneficiaries of the event, which featured the unsurpassed talents of Tina Schlieske and the Graceland Exiles with Sister Laura. Guests enjoyed an afternoon of wine, feast, and song.

Ten percent of sales of Babcock's new Pinot Noir, GrapeHunter, will be donated to AHA! and Storyteller in the coming year.



AHA! Angels Bryan & Lisa
PHOTO: Donnie Hedden



Tina Schlieske and the Graceland Exiles with Sister Laura:
Our favorite Rock Stars PHOTO: Donnie Hedden



AHA! Development Committee and Staff enjoyed a beautiful day at Babcock Winery's Harvest Festival
PHOTO: Donnie Hedden

Third Annual Hike for AHA!

We broke new ground at this year's Hike-a-Thon! Just over 100 hikers enjoyed a hot day on the trail and participants and sponsors mingled at the post-hike celebration.

In the after-glow of the sumptuous barbecue provided by Kiwanis of the South Coast, an anonymous donor was moved to offer up to \$50,000 in matching funds to donors who gave within 14 days of the hike. Marla McNally Phillips (aka "Wowie") stepped up and offered donors of \$1000 or more a chance to enter a drawing for a weekend at her fabulous Mermaid Cottage on Padaro Beach.

Thanks to all who were part of this celebration and special acknowledgement to the following event sponsors:

Be Green Packaging
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Bickett Family Foundation
Celeste & Wendell Birkhofer
Mary Blair
Carol Brumer
Elizabeth Burns
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Easy Lift Transportation
Marilyn Ezzes
FindTheBest
Wendy Foster & Pierre Lafond
Jill Garcia

Beth & Dodd Geiger
John Gerngross & Cheryl Doty
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Anne Miles Vaughn
Village Auto Repair
The Whistle Club
Leslie Zemeckis



Hike for AHA! participants included AHA! staff, our teens, a team of Crane School moms, and board members.

Whistle Club Grand Opening

Santa Barbara's stylish, inventive new boutique, Whistle Club, showcases women's apparel, accessories and gifts from a selection of emerging designers and industry favorites. On October 23, owner Rebecca McKinney held a Grand Opening party—and she chose AHA! to receive 10% of sales on that special day.

Whistle Club is in Paseo Nuevo; stop by, browse the racks, and indulge in a cup of Stumptown Coffee at the boutique's coffee bar!



AHA! Success Story: Cinthia

Cinthia began the AHA! program over 10 years ago. She was a loyal, passionate participant for five years, between the ages of 15 and 20. She credited AHA! for helping her get through some strongly negative times in her life and into positive school performance and a sense of civic responsibility. She became a young married mom who continued her education to help take good care of her family.

We've kept in touch with Cinthia, just as we do with many of our alumni, and so we were among the first to learn that she had been hired as a community liaison in Novato High School in Marin County. She wrote, "For now, just thought you should know, I'm reaching my goals – moving forward and still hungry for success!"

The connections Cinthia made through AHA! – both with her own potential and promise and with others who cheered her on – will nourish her for a lifetime.

Although we are gratified by the growing community embrace of AHA!, there is still so much to do to try to ensure that every young person can make positive choices and create positive outcomes. We are still reeling from the Elliot Rodger massacre in Isla Vista and suicides of local youth. Prejudice and bullying are still very real problems in our schools. Much work lies ahead.

Most of you have given continuously and passionately; this is how we have grown so efficiently, and how we have been able to exert such impact. THANK YOU. Most of you already know that an investment in AHA! is an investment in a more peaceful, positive future for all of us, beginning with socially-emotionally intelligent, conscientious, compassionate youth.

In your year-end giving, we ask that you consider how far your contribution goes with us. Picture each youth you are directly influencing, and then picture all the others each will impact in their lifetimes.

We promise to honor every effort you make with redoubled enthusiasm and commitment to engender positive attitudes, increase social harmony, and bridge the achievement gap.

May your generosity be returned to you multiplied with elegant surprises, abundant moments of happiness, and a deep sense of purpose and meaning.

You are all beloved to us!



Jennifer Freed and Rendy Freedman
Co-Founders and Directors

