



**CHILDREN
OF
THE EARTH**

INSPIRES AND UNITES
YOUNG PEOPLE

Bear Hugs Project- Athens

Frequently Asked Questions

We have answered some commonly asked questions below. For more details on the project visit:

www.coeworld.org/news/bear-hugs-project

What is the Bear Hugs Project?

It is an ongoing project, developed by Children of the Earth that has reached out to child victims of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, earthquake in Haiti, tsunami in Thailand, and civil war in Uganda. The teddy bears symbolize and offer a message of comfort and compassion amidst experiences of tremendous loss.

Bear Hugs-Athens specifically addresses the emotional well-being of Syrian refugee children through the donation of teddy bears and a cultural exchange with students from California. Its long-term goal is to inspire and motivate the Syrian children as well as the students involved to pursue further projects aimed at creating a more peaceful world.

What is Children of the Earth?

It is an international nonprofit, recognized by the United Nations, founded by Dr. Nina Meyerhof in 1990. It aims to empower youth to build local projects in the form of "conscious leadership" with the goal of creating a peaceful and sustainable Earth.

Who are the team members?

Students from Lompoc and Santa Barbara, California have been working on this project since December 2016, collecting teddy bears and spreading awareness of the Syrian refugee situation in their local communities.

Where are the teddy bears going and what will happen there?

Our team will travel to meet the teddy bears we have collected, along with 250 teddy bears collected by elementary school students in Romania for the project, and personally deliver them to Syrian children at the Skaramagas refugee camp and others in Greece. We will be hosting an educational day of peace, where the team will be able to interact with the children and their parents with an intent to promote the idea of One Humanity and global, compassionate understanding.

What will the monetary donations be used for?

The money raised on our GlobalGiving crowdfunding campaign will be used for the cost of transporting the team and teddy bears to Greece, purchasing additional school and hygiene supplies for the refugees, and transportation and modest lodging in Greece.

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Quick Facts

1. Syrian refugee crisis:

The Syrian crisis started in March 2011 as an anti-government demonstration. What was at first a peaceful protest escalated into the violent acts. The army recruited Free Syrian Army and civilians into the war. Bombing has destroyed cities and killed million of people. Airstrikes started in fall of 2015.

2. Number of refugees

There are 12.5 million Syrian refugees in the world. Hundreds of refugees arrive on the shores of Greece and Italy each day. The U.N. estimates 6.3 million people are internally displaced. The entire population needs urgent humanitarian assistance.

4. Where are they fleeing to?

Most Syrian refugees fled Jordan and Lebanon in 2012. More refugees fled to Iraq and Turkey. Many Syrians decided to start off in Europe by taking a dangerous trip across the Mediterranean Sea. The Syrian refugees who made it to Greece face scarce resources to live. (Mercy Corps)

5. Do all refugees live in camps?

No. The U.N. estimates that on 1 out of 10 Syrian refugees live in camps. Many families who live in camps feel trapped, crowded, and feel no sense of home.

6. How many are children:

U.N. estimates roughly 2.5 million refugees are children under the age of 18. Most of them have been out of school for months, if not years. More than 50% of the refugee children have lost everything, including family, home, school, and friends.

The consequence of neglecting the emotional needs of the children is that they grow up feeling confused and scared and lack a sense of safety and home. Bear Hugs is designed to provide a moment of joy that they can remember and hopefully use to move forward with renewed hope.

Source Information: Mercy Corps, Quick Facts: What You Need to Know About the Syrian Crisis



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Noah Benchek is a high school graduate who will be attending Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in the fall of 2017. He has a passion for helping others and has chosen to forward the mission of peace by organizing the Bear Hugs project throughout his community, Lompoc, CA.

Melissa Ha is a senior majoring in Global Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). Bear Hugs has allowed her to pursue her interest in studying cross-cultural connections through a project aimed at building youth-to-youth relationships and fostering a global understanding



Jennifer Lin is a rising senior majoring in Communications at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). Jennifer believes any form of kindness is powerful. She feels honored to participate in Bear Hugs and help develop a peaceful and understanding global environment.

Shamara Carney is going into her fourth year as a Communications major at University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). Shamara believes that having a peaceful world is an attainable goal that we all must work together to achieve. The Bear Hugs project is one of the ways in which she is doing her part.

