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United in art: Together beyond borders

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Letter From the Executive Director

As ARTogether’s first year draws to a close, I look back with pride on how much we have been able to accomplish in such a short time. The year began in the wake of the shocking election of Donald Trump in November, 2016. Like many citizens, I was horrified by the then - president - elect’s flagrant misogyny and anti - immigration campaign platform. It was then on the eve of the Women’s March in January, 2017, that the idea for ARTogether was born.

As the Trump administration continues to undermine the U.S. refugee program, I feel increasing urgency to find ways to support the refugee communities. These are people that have over come extreme trauma and tremendous hardship - first in their home countries and then in transition. Many refugees have been forced to leave their lives, homes, and families, by factors entirely beyond their control. They face many more obstacles as they begin the process of starting over in a new country.

Art invites conversation, laughter, storytelling, and a sense of belonging to the refugee communities.
I myself entered the United States as a refugee in 2004, resettling in California. Guided by my experience, I felt that art could provide a simple and unstigmatized path toward healing for the refugees of my own community. However, I discovered that, while many organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area brought art programs to youth and low-income residents, there was no mechanism which linked such programs to refugees, and no programs that accommodated many of these communities’ quite specific needs.

With the help, support, and encouragement of many friends, I created ARTogether to fill this void. ARTogether is a creative arts resource center for refugees and refugee artists. We provide art workshops, and facilitate social gatherings, family picnics, and other community-building activities. We aim to raise awareness, and to foster relationships based on understanding and acceptance between the refugee community and the broader public. We also support refugee artists who might otherwise find it impossible to sustain their work after resettlement. We provide assistance with grants, free space to practice art, and a platform to showcase creative work.

Since our first event in June, ARTogether has offered 36 workshops and social gatherings, involving over 100 refugees. We have partnered with four different refugee agencies in three different counties in the Bay Area. Nearly all of our instructors belong to underrepresented groups: immigrants, refugees, people of color, and women; and all are paid by ARTogether. In spite of limited resources, we established non-profit legal status, applied for non-profit tax status, created legally binding contracts for our teachers and consultants, and established accounting and finance platforms. This report will summarize many of these accomplishments.

The reaction and support of our friends and community have been overwhelming, and we are truly heartened by the encouragement that we have received. Having had a glimpse of what we can accomplish, we believe more than ever in ARTogether’s impact and potential. I expect this to be only the first of many annual reports we will send you, as we continue to cross challenging milestones and touch beautiful lives.

Leva Zand.
2017 Milestones

Jan  Feb  Mar  Apr

- Launch website

First public event in partnership with Catholic Charity of Santa Clara

May  Jun  Jul  Aug  Sep  Oct  Nov  Dec

- Form the first leadership team
- Start partnership with Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants (CERN)
- Host the first social gathering
- Apply for 501(c) status
- Present ARTTogether in a joint event with Participants Media and Jewish Family and Community Service Center
- Draw contract (pro bono) with Cooley Law Firm

- Hire the first Intern

- Start partnership with International Rescue Committee (IRC) Oakland
- Start partnership with Golestan Immersion School
- Form the first board of directors
- Register ARTTogether as an independent non-profit in California
Accomplishments

ARTogether is the only creative arts program that specifically serves refugees in the Bay Area. In collaboration with artists, ARTogether develops and facilitates a variety of workshops, after-school art programs, summer camps, parenting workshops and social gatherings, which feature creative and artistic activities for the refugee community.

Out Community Partners:
Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants (CERI)
Jewish Family and Community Service Center
East Bay International Rescue Committee
Oakland Catholic Charity of Santa Clara
Oakland International High School

Art is the universal language of healing.
Activities

- Social Gatherings
- Parenting Workshop
- Expressive Art Support Group for Men
- After School Expressive Art Workshop for teens at risk
- After school summer camp arts and craft workshops
- Women’s Craft Circles

Number of workshops:

34 = 1 + 2 + 4 + 5 + 7 + 15

Different workshops for more than 100 refugees, survivors of wars and genocide, who are resettled in the Bay Area.
**Finances**

**ARTogether Income**
- CERI: $2,000
- Website Donation: $7,155
- Founders' personal contribution: $4,005
- Total: $7,155

**ARTogether Expenses**
- Art Education: 51.9%
- Operational: 22.2%
- Art Supplies: 12.6%
- Legal Fee: 2.6%
- Outreach: 10.8%
- Total: $7,155
Future Plans

Fundraising

Grants
ARTogether’s mission and non-profit status make us eligible for various federal, local, and private grants. We will seek consultants and interns to assist us with completion and submission of grant proposals.

Investors
With non-profit tax status, we hope to attract long-term investors in social impact. We will benefit from professional leadership in these fundraising efforts. ARTogether will use a portion of these funds to sponsor individual workshops and projects.

Donations
We will continue to collect donations through our webpage, and other online tools.

Online market
ARTogether will market a selection of participants’ art pieces, with the dual purpose to raise funds for ARTogether and to introduce participants to the marketing process. We will also invite local artists to market partial sales of their work for donation to ARTogether.
As we grow our creative arts programs for the general refugee community, we are developing services for refugees who were artists by profession in their countries of origin. These artists face numerous obstacles to practicing art after resettlement, especially in a location as prohibitively expensive as the Bay Area.

**Support and celebrate refugee artists**

ARTTogether plans to offer a range of resources to assist refugee artists who are starting over in the Bay Area. We want to provide them with access to a network of established resident artists, as well as assistance in applying for funding that supports their creative work. We have embarked on this mission by hiring immigrants, refugees, and asylees with professional art backgrounds to be instructors for ARTTogether’s workshops.

**Monthly Workshops with CERI**
Six workshops every month targeting four different groups

**Craft Circle**
Expand to other refugee organizations

**Mural Art Workshops**
For high school boys with artist Strider Patton

**Public Appearances**
Presentation to promote ARTTogether and raise awareness about refugees in at least two events

**Exhibition**
At least one exhibition for refugee artists, awareness about refugees in at least two events

**Dance Summer Camp**
In collaboration with cultural dance group. DanceVer si ty awareness about refugees in at least two events

**Vision Project at IRC**
Participant for second year of the Vision Project

**Oakland International High**
Continue activities in Oakland International High School

**Workshops and Activities**

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**Workshops and Activities**
ARTtogether
Team in 2017

Staff:
Leva Zand
Alexandra Pettet
Hossein Namazi

Board of Directors:
Leva Zand
Alexandra Pettet
Hossein Namazi
Mona Ahmadi
Shabnam Amini

Advisory Board:
Mona Afari
Heather Rastovich
Kathryn Winograd
Jacqueline Adams
Sahba Aminikia

Team and Acknowledgement
Acknowledgement

Art Education:
Negar Asaf
Farnaz Tashghoo
Somayeh Amiri
Sophia Sattar
Alice Pennes
Shimana Sadeghi

Interns and Volunteers:
Juliet Swanson
Paula Carrizosa

Thank you:
Mayssam Sayyadian
Gelareh Khoshgozaran
Maryam Farmand
Sahar Sedighpour
Negar Tayyar
Neta Jafroodi
Kaveh Khogesteh
Raha Shirazi
Yalda Mobasher
Maryam Attai
Samira Ahtari
Aisian Hoss
Diane Stark
Kelliane Craig
Sean Garner
Lina Nazar
Mohammad Sedighi
Majgan Saberi
Niloofar Khorasanian
Ramina Zadhan
Sohi Lahchi
Sreyneang Lim
Jennifer Jastrab
Raashma Razavi
Susan Amini
Jennifer Barnette
Arielle Friehling