

THE ART OF HOPE 1.0

# How Stars of HOPE® is Transforming Corporate Volunteerism and Accelerating the Healing Process for Disaster Survivors Worldwide

A White Paper on Trends in Corporate Volunteerism  
and Disaster Relief, Recovery, and Resiliency

V5.1



SEPT  
2016

**Jeff Parness**  
Founder, Executive Director, and Board Member  
*New York Says Thank You Foundation*

“The Stars of HOPE program utilizes the latest scientific findings in positive psychology and heroism science to bring healing, growth, and resiliency to a world thirsty for loving kindness. The guiding principle behind Stars of HOPE is producing heroic transformation in people through their participation in compassion-based community healing. There is no organization more effective in converting despair into love, loss into recovery, and tragedy into triumph. Through connective volunteerism and social transformation, the Stars of HOPE showcases the power of love and service in cultivating the best of humanity.”

Professor Scott Allison  
University of Richmond

Scott T. Allison is Professor of Psychology at the University of Richmond. His research program examines the psychology of heroism, leadership, and heroic leadership. He has served on the editorial boards of *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, and *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Scott has published over 100 articles and books, including *Heroes, What They Do & Why We Need Them*, published in 2011 by Oxford University Press, *Heroic Leadership: A Taxonomy of 100 Exceptional Individuals*, published by Routledge in 2013, *Conceptions of Leadership: Enduring Ideas and Emerging Insights*, published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2014, *Reel Heroes and Villains*, published by Agile Writer in 2015, *Frontiers in Spiritual Leadership: Discovering the Better Angels of Our Nature*, published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2016, *The Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*, published by Routledge in 2017, and *Heroic Humility*, published by the American Psychological Association in 2017. Scott Allison’s work has been featured in media outlets such as *National Public Radio*, *USA Today*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Slate Magazine*, *MSNBC*, *CBS*, *Psychology Today* and *Christian Science Monitor*. He is the recipient of the University of Richmond’s Distinguished Educator Award and the Virginia Council of Higher Education’s Outstanding Faculty Award.



Seeing the stars brought a sense of calmness in the storm. They stood out among all the destruction. They showed the precious goodness in humanity.

Francesca Y., Hurricane Sandy Survivor



Breezy Point, NY

## Abstract

**The purpose of this White Paper is two-fold: (1) to inform key constituencies about the growing global impacts of the Stars of HOPE® disaster relief and community arts program, and (2) to lay the groundwork for the funding, design, and implementation of quantitative, multi-year longitudinal studies to measure both the transformative impact Stars of HOPE is making on the mental health and resiliency of disaster survivors, as well the program's impacts on corporate volunteerism and family-based volunteerism.**

Stars of HOPE® is a unique disaster relief and community arts program started by the New York Says Thank You Foundation in 2007. It empowers people to transform communities impacted by natural and man-made disasters by creating colorful art and messages of hope and healing on one-foot wooden stars that are displayed in public for months and even years after historic tragedies. The stars serve as beacons of compassion for all to see and have made a direct impact on the long-term mental health and resiliency of individuals and entire communities recovering from disaster.

Over 45,000 volunteers have created Stars of HOPE which have transformed 90 communities in 20 countries. Stars of HOPE has lifted the spirits of millions of people in communities impacted by catastrophic acts of nature including the Greensburg, Kansas tornado, the flooding of Hurricane Sandy, and the deadly Nepal earthquake as well as communities impacted by horrific acts of violence including the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting and the terror attacks in San Bernardino, California, Orlando, Florida, and Brussels, Belgium.

This White Paper examines three impacts of this program:

- (1) The transformative impact Stars of HOPE is making on corporate volunteerism by creating a new category of in-office, hands-on disaster-relief volunteerism;
- (2) The systemic impact Stars of HOPE is making by “changing the curve” for the long-term mental health, emotional recovery, and resiliency of individuals and entire communities impacted by disaster; and
- (3) The relationship between corporate volunteerism via the Stars of HOPE® Box of HOPE program and the acceleration of the healing process of disaster survivors as evidenced by the case study from San Bernardino, California.

Stars of HOPE® is a registered trademark of New York Says Thank You Foundation. The Stars of HOPE program operates as a joint project of New York Says Thank You Foundation and Groesbeck Rebuilds America.

For more information, please visit [www.starsofhopeusa.org](http://www.starsofhopeusa.org)



AnneMarie Staley, Global Business Continuity Manager at AmTrust Financial Services and Chair of Disaster Recovery International Foundation, painting Stars of HOPE in her New York City office in response to the San Bernardino terror attack.

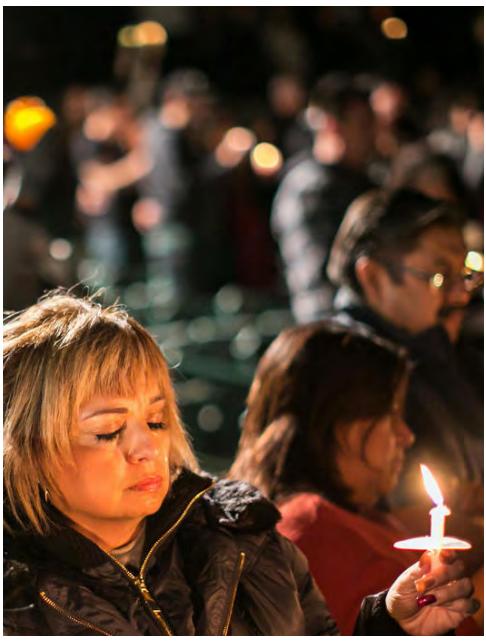
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*Global Map of Stars of HOPE*

*"Volunteer from your office and create more HOPE in the world."*



## Introduction

On December 2, 2015, Syeed Farook and his wife walked into the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California and opened fire with machine guns on fellow co-workers attending a training session and holiday party. They killed 14 people and injured dozens.

As the shooting victims, families who lost loved ones, and community started to grieve, San Bernardino and the entire nation tried to come to terms with the horror and shock of what had just happened. A home-grown terrorist inspired by ISIS carried out the deadliest terrorist attack in the United States since 9/11 amid the desert palm trees and snow-capped mountains of Southern California. Nowhere seemed safe anymore.

As the survivors, families, and nation mourned, caring individuals in corporate offices around the United States started to take a few minutes out of their day to respond to the tragedy using their creativity and compassion.

They started painting Stars of HOPE to lift the spirits of San Bernardino.

Within days, Stars of HOPE sprouted up around the shooting site. Over the Christmas and New Year's holidays, hundreds of Stars of HOPE painted by corporate volunteers and individual families transformed the darkened fence surrounding the Inland Regional Center into a beautiful art installation of compassion and love.

As survivors began the painful process to return to work, they could not help but notice the hundreds of individually hand-painted messages of hope and healing on the one-foot wooden stars which had transformed a place of darkness into a place of light.

*"The building we were in symbolizes a place of deep sadness and pain,"* wrote one survivor. *"But these stars provide hope that things will get better."*

As days went by, survivors of the terror attack started to post their favorite photos of Stars of HOPE on their personal Facebook pages. One survivor posted *"This is the one that I want to embody."* The Star said "Let your light shine."

And then something extraordinary happened. Exactly two months to the day following the tragedy, survivors of the San Bernardino terror attacks requested that volunteers with New York Says Thank You Foundation return to California to help the survivors and families who lost loved ones paint Stars of HOPE too. They wanted to take part in the healing process. They wanted to be empowered with this simple art project to express their creativity and compassion as well.

This is the moment when victims are transformed into survivors. When they feel empowered to help others as part of their own accelerated healing process and long-term emotional recovery.

Volunteers in offices around the United States helped make this life-changing transformation possible by expressing their compassion and connectivity through Stars of HOPE. This simple but powerful act of corporate volunteerism bolstered the spirits and resiliency of those directly impacted by the tragedy in San Bernardino and forever changed the trajectory of their long-term recovery.

To commemorate the  
9/11 Anniversary 2015,  
attorneys and staff of the  
global law firm DENTONS  
gathered in their conference room  
and painted Stars of HOPE  
to lift the spirits of  
Yazidi and Syrian children  
displaced by war at the  
Madrasat Ashtar Refugee Camp  
in Erbil, Iraq.



George Medina  
paralegal, DENTONS



"The Stars of Hope shine brightly against the gray dullness of weathered tents and improvised shelters. Their words bring messages of hope in otherwise desolate landscapes. Their bright colors stand out against and overpower the destruction that surround them, reminding us that human kindness always triumphs over cruelty and indifference." – John Balouziyah  
DENTONS Associate (USA and Spain)



## Meaningful and Transformative Corporate Volunteerism

“Stars of HOPE allowed me to respond to this global catastrophe in meaningful way. The words and symbols I painted gave me a creative outlet to express and give hope to those dealing with a sad reality. I am privileged to be amongst those who make this act of kindness and love possible to so many around the country and world. **When I saw my Star of HOPE hanging on the tent at the Syrian refugee camp with the four young girls, I was overcome with emotion to realize something I painted made its way to Iraq to touch the lives of these children.**”

- George Medina, paralegal, DENTONS, New York City

In the third quarter of 2015, America's Charities surveyed 120 companies in 17 industries representing 600,000 employees about trends in corporate volunteerism and giving. According to their 2016 research paper *The New Corporate DNA: Where Employee Engagement and Social Impact Converge*, 70% of corporate respondents strongly agreed that employees expected their companies to be socially responsible and to:

- provide opportunities for employees to connect with causes they cared about
- allow employees to volunteer during company time, and
- conduct effective giving programs that are engaging and empowering.

In addition:

- 82% of corporations said their employees want the opportunity to volunteer with peers in corporate supported events
- 70% said their employees wanted to organize volunteer events
- 60% said their employees wanted to be able to recruit peers to support their giving and volunteer efforts, and
- **67% of corporations are increasingly requesting of their non-profit partners more meaningful ways to engage employees.**

This last statistic highlights a critical truth and “burns a sacred cow” in traditional corporate volunteerism as so eloquently stated in the subtitle of America's Charities presentation *Strategic Volunteerism: Stop painting the same wall seven times and start creating real impact with your non-profit partners!*”

**The report concludes that companies which offer volunteer opportunities that transform individual employees at a deeply personal level are those that will succeed in achieving the highest levels of employee satisfaction, productivity, and loyalty.**

“As a practice we need to start admitting that there is a significant difference between participation and engagement. **When corporate volunteering goes beyond transactional and is instead transformative, participants experience a fundamental change in how they think, feel, and act.** As a result workplace giving and volunteering are no longer ‘things to do’ but expressions of ‘**who I am.**’

- Chris Jarvis, Co-founder & Senior Partner, Realized Worth (as quoted in America's Charities report)





## The Evolution of Stars of HOPE: From schools to community events to home-based family volunteering to in-office corporate volunteering.

On May 4, 2007, an EF-5 tornado killed 13 people and destroyed 95% of Greensburg, Kansas, a small rural farming community in south-central Kansas. Over half of the 1,400 residents of Greensburg left after the tornado and the remaining residents, including 220 children, were moved to FEMA trailers in a field south of the devastated town. Greensburg looked like a nuclear war zone.

As winter approached, volunteers with New York Says Thank You Foundation arrived in town with a novel idea: to empower the 220 children of Greensburg to bring a sense of color, hope, and community back to the lifeless landscape by painting inspirational words and designs on wooden stars. Once dry, the painted stars were hung on every street corner of the tornado-ravaged town.

The Stars of HOPE transformed both the physical and emotional landscape of Greensburg, Kansas overnight.

**The innovation behind Stars of HOPE is that it took a traditional art therapy program and leveraged it into a public art installation in a disaster zone. This unique construct magnifies the inspirational and emotional impact to thousands of other disaster survivors throughout devastated communities who see these expressions of encouragement and compassion on a daily basis for years through the long-term recovery phase of disasters.**

Since that initial project in 2007, Stars of HOPE have been created or appeared in 90 communities and 20 countries impacted by natural or man-made disaster.

What started out as a unique disaster relief project intended to empower schoolchildren in communities recovering from tragedy to transform their towns through inspirational art, grew into community-wide painting events where thousands of residents in places like Joplin, Missouri and Minot, North Dakota gathered to collectively express their creativity and compassion by making Stars of HOPE together to transform their hometowns following tornadoes and floods.

As the popularity grew and impact of Stars of HOPE became more known, organizations like the National September 11 Memorial Museum asked to incorporate Stars of HOPE into their annual Family Day events. That was the transformative moment in the trajectory of Stars of HOPE as families attending the 9/11 Memorial event began asking to purchase the Stars of HOPE materials to enable their families to participate in this service project *from home* for birthday celebrations and holiday gatherings as a way to give hope to others.

In response to this market demand, New York Says Thank You Foundation launched the Stars of HOPE® Box of HOPE program in late 2015. “The Box” would now make it possible for anyone anywhere to participate in this healing art project and re-use “The Box” to send their Stars to anyone in need of hope in their community, throughout the United States, or across the world. Through automated production and outsourced fulfillment, New York Says Thank You could now scale volunteer engagement, scope of impact, and time to impact. Within days, companies began immediately asking to purchase Stars of HOPE® Box of HOPE to engage their employees in this new form of disaster response.



Following the Brussels terror attack, Jetblue employees painted Stars of HOPE during *Respectful Workplace Week* to lift the spirits of the people of Belgium.



## Creating a New Category of Corporate Volunteerism: In-Office, Hands-On Disaster Relief Volunteering

After safety, the traditional disaster relief model has always focused on three basic needs: (1) Food, (2) Clothing, and (3) Shelter. These immediate needs are focus areas of emergency managers and public sector organizations like the American Red Cross. As the post-disaster cycle extends into weeks, months, and years, faith-based and civic non-profits come in to assist with long-term rebuilding, social work support, and advocacy for those with unmet needs.

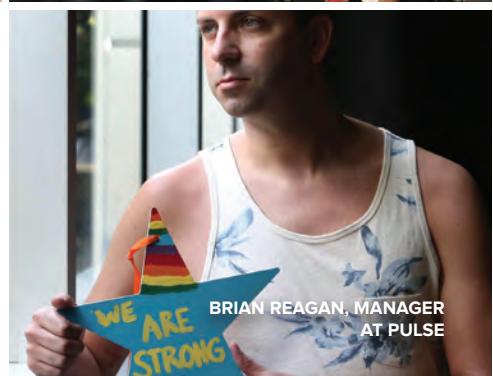
Based on this construct, corporate volunteerism in disaster relief has traditionally been limited to (1) fund-raising to support immediate needs; (2) collection and distribution of supplies; and (3) hands-on, on-site, clean up and rebuilding.

**The Stars of HOPE® Box of HOPE program is radically changing the traditional disaster relief model and the traditional model for corporate volunteerism in response to disasters in four ways:**

- (1) **It brings into play the fourth “basic need” – HOPE – by directly impacting the immediate, mid-term, and long-term mental health and emotional needs of individuals and communities in the post-trauma recovery phase through inspirational art and connectivity of caring individual responders.**
- (2) **It empowers unskilled and untrained volunteers to address the mental health needs of individuals and communities impacted by disaster by unleashing individual creativity and compassion of corporate volunteers to support long-term emotional needs and bolster survivor resiliency.**
- (3) **It expands the reach of corporate volunteers beyond traditional clean-up and rebuilding assistance in response to *natural disasters* by providing a means for corporate volunteers to engage and make a positive mental health impact in the wake of *man-made disasters* like mass shootings, acts of terrorism, plane crashes, or industrial explosions.**
- (4) **It dis-intermediates the disaster site from the traditional hands-on disaster relief volunteer *experience* by enabling corporate volunteers to participate in a hands-on disaster relief project from their office without major workflow disruption or necessitating travel to the actual disaster site in order to make a direct and meaningful impact.**

Stars of HOPE is creating a “new category” of corporate volunteerism by enabling in-office, hands-on disaster relief volunteering. This new dynamic empowers everyday volunteers, who have no experience or training in mental health to participate in the recovery process by expressing their compassion and connectivity in a way that provides daily emotional support for disaster survivors over the long-term recovery period. The “Box of HOPE” platform enables corporate volunteers to make an impact anywhere in the world by mailing their hand-painted Stars and messages of compassion. **In this new construct, Stars of HOPE is creating systemic change in traditional disaster relief protocols and corporate volunteerism in response to disasters by (1) empowering corporate volunteers to be part of the *mental health recovery process* for natural *and* man-made disasters, and (2) empowering corporate volunteers to make a hands-on impact *without leaving the office*.**

*Food, clothing, shelter, and HOPE.*



## 1,000 Loews Hotels employees respond to Orlando

Within four days of the Orlando terror attack at the Pulse Nightclub which killed 49 people and sent the entire community and nation into shock, the Director of Public Relations at Loews Hotels at Universal Orlando mobilized her team to ensure that grieving local staff members could do something positive with their pain and lift the spirits of the greater Orlando community.

Ten days later, 1,000 employees of the Loews Hotels in and around Orlando had painted Stars of HOPE. The following week, they chartered a bus and travelled throughout the community hanging their beautiful stars and giving them to people directly impacted by the terror attack and its aftermath. Survivors of the Pulse Nightclub shooting, trauma surgeons and nurses at Orlando Regional Medical Center, 911 Call Center operators, firefighters and police officers, and staff members at LGBTQ Community support centers all received hand-painted Stars of HOPE from Loews employees in a simple but powerful act of compassion and connection.

Three weeks after the tragedy, our hearts still ache, but we are strengthened and inspired by what we were able to do together, with you. THANK YOU for helping our team get our hand-painted stars to many places and more importantly, into the hands of many of the survivors and heroes in our great city. Goodness will always triumph over evil and we will forever be #OrlandoStrong.

With gratitude from Orlando,

*Jennifer Hodges  
Director of Public Relations  
Loews Hotels at Universal Orlando  
July 4, 2016*



Greensburg, Kansas



## Measuring the Impact of Stars of HOPE: How to Measure Hope among Disaster Survivors and the Transformative Impact on Corporate Volunteers

In his book *Art Heals: How Creativity Cures the Soul*, author Shaun McNiff opens with the following simple but powerful dedication:

***"Art heals by accepting the pain and doing something with it."***

This profound statement applies to disaster survivors empowered to create Stars of HOPE as well as corporate volunteers who may feel powerless to respond to a devastating tragedy witnessed on TV and who yearn to express their compassion and shared grief in a meaningful and tangible way. Stars of HOPE allows the volunteer, whether a disaster survivor in their own community or a corporate volunteer thousands of miles away, to "heal" by "accepting the pain" and "doing something with it."

This section explores eight years of anecdotal evidence of how Stars of HOPE has accelerated the healing process and positively impacted the near-term and long-term mental health, emotional recovery, and resiliency of both individuals and communities who have survived natural and man-made disasters and whose communities have been transformed by 45,000 hand-painted messages of hope and healing inscribed on one-foot wooden stars.

This section will also examine the social science methodologies used to analyze and measure the impact of Stars of HOPE on disaster survivors. It will conclude with recommendations by which to quantitatively measure the transformative impact Stars of HOPE is making on corporate volunteers engaged in this unique disaster relief and growing global community art project.

### Understanding the Power of Inspiration

On September 6, 2008, *sixteen months after* an EF-5 tornado destroyed 95% of Greensburg, Kansas and *nine months after* the first Stars of HOPE project empowered 220 children from Kindergarten through High School to transform the town with hand-painted messages of hope displayed on every street corner, an elderly gentleman approached New York Says Thank You founder Jeff Parness and said:

"I am a 5<sup>th</sup> generation resident of Greensburg, Kansas. And we have been blessed by so many people from around the world who have come to help us rebuild after the tornado. But I wanted to let you know that **nobody did anything as inspiring for us** as what you did for us with those Stars of HOPE."

*Nobody did anything as inspiring for us....*

That was the first testimonial for Stars of HOPE and the first marker acknowledging the program's fundamental impact. The gentleman did not use the word "helpful" as there were many organizations rebuilding homes for displaced residents. The word he chose was "inspiring" meaning that Stars of HOPE created hope for the community during the service project and the stars were continuing to provide hope in the *ongoing aftermath and long-term recovery period*. Here was the first tangible expression from a disaster survivor that Stars of HOPE was "working."



Pedernales, Ecuador

Employees at Refinery 29, a leading fashion and media company in NY, organized a Stars of HOPE event in response to the deadly Ecuador earthquake.

Since that initial testimonial in 2008, the New York Says Thank You Foundation has received hundreds of personal e-mail messages and Facebook posts from survivors of natural and man-made disasters around the world describing the deep and lasting emotional impact Stars of HOPE has made on their personal and communal recovery.

**In order to understand why Stars of HOPE “works” and begin to measure the impact the stars are making on the long-term mental health and resiliency of individuals and entire communities recovering from natural and man-made disasters, it is important to understand the components of the “Post-Trauma Mental Health Curve” used by disaster recovery and mental health professionals to assist people traumatized by circumstances beyond their control and who are struggling to recover.**

It is through this deeper analysis that we can begin to explore both the transformative impact Stars of HOPE is making on disaster survivors as well as the transformative impact Stars of HOPE is beginning to make on corporate volunteers engaged in this meaningful and growing global service project.

### The Post-Trauma Mental Health Curve

In 1969, Swiss psychiatrist Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross wrote the seminal book *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*. The Kubler-Ross model was adapted by mental health professionals to assist bereaved people grieving the loss of family members. The model was also used to assist people suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The field of transition psychology adopted the model to help people deal with traumatic upheaval and even cope with business change management. While the grief curve is not always linear as various stages can overlap or recur, the basic foundation for the model was outlined in the following five stages:

**Denial. Anger. Depression. Bargaining. Acceptance.**

## Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle

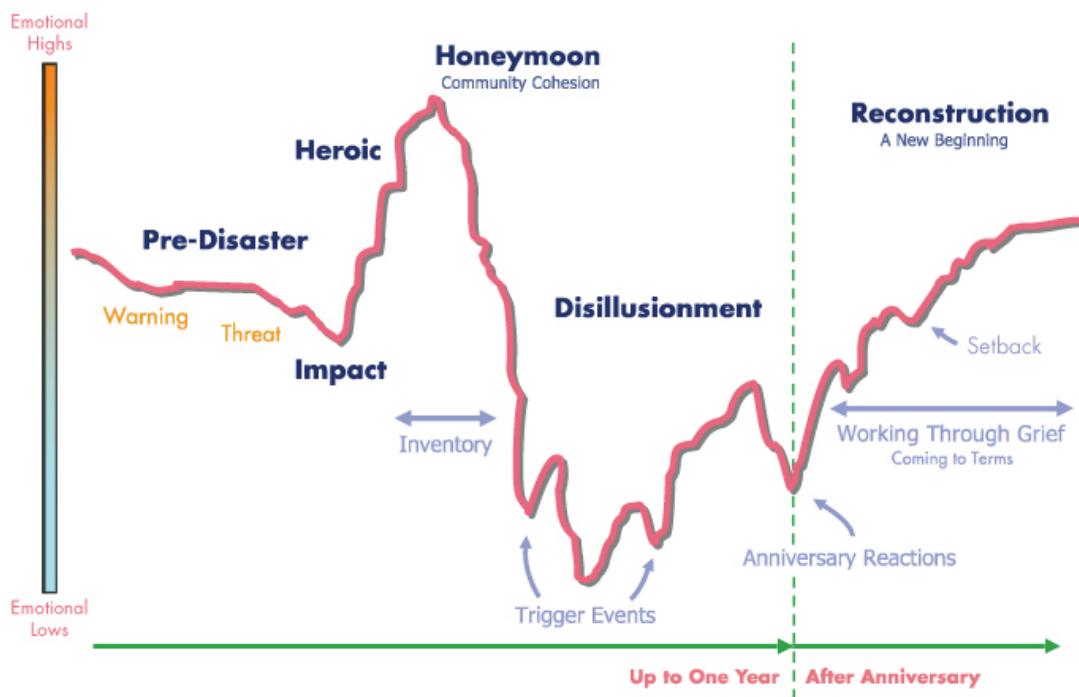




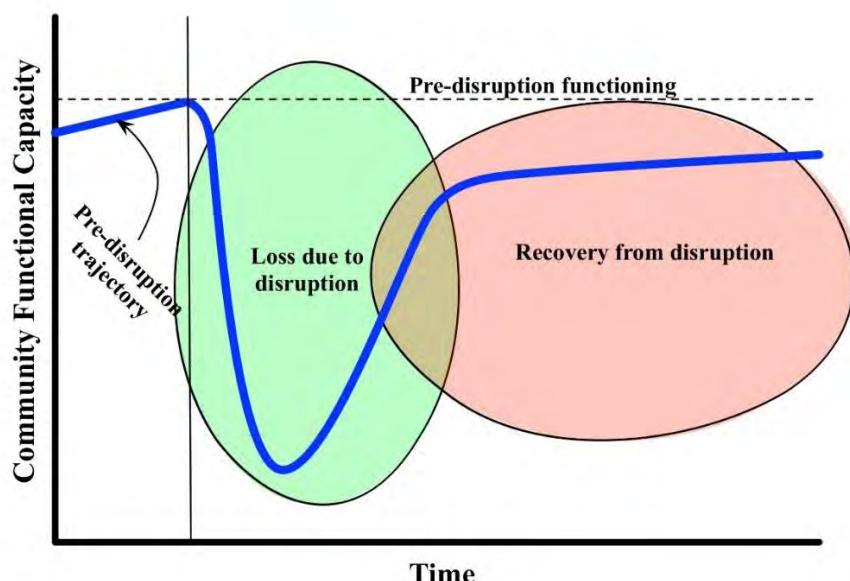
Viacom employees in New York City and Long Island painted Stars of HOPE on ViacomCommunity Service Day to lift the spirits of Ft. McMurray, Alberta, Canada devastated by a massive wildfire which forced the evacuation of 90,000 residents.



The Zunin & Myers (1990) curve was adapted for use in disaster response by SAMHSA, The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to assist emergency managers and disaster response professionals better understand individual and communal mental health and emotional resiliency needs of disaster survivors. The curve shows “**The Emotional Phases of Disaster Response**” which take into consideration the five stages of loss and overlays those stages over time as expressed below in the unique phases of the post-disaster recovery cycle.



While emotional trauma is fundamentally a personal dynamic, the collective trauma of communities impacted by natural or man-made disasters also expresses itself in the collective loss of functional capacity and productivity over the near-term, mid-term, and long-term recovery period. This is expressed in the “Resilience Loss Recovery Curve” created by the Community & Regional Resilience Institute (CARRI) in 2011 below:





Breezy Point, NY

## How Stars of HOPE is Positively Disrupting the Post-Trauma Mental Health Curve: Sample Testimonials

The first time I saw some stars, I smiled. The second time, I stopped to read them. The next time, I found myself looking for them and excited to see new ones. That was the moment I realized your beautiful stars became my focus instead of the destruction that was once our beautiful life. Thank you for the beauty you are bringing back to us.

Dana C., Hurricane Sandy survivor, Sheepshead Bay, NY

I am so grateful that the stars hanging from the fence surrounding the Inland Regional Center compelled me to pull over and investigate more. It was humbling to see the love, support, and hope sent from around the country and know that we are not alone in the journey of healing. As I continue to say, the symbolism of these Stars of HOPE surrounding that awful place is so powerful.

Jessica B., San Bernardino, CA terror attack survivor

I live in Staten Island, NY and 3 years later I still see the beautiful stars your group painted throughout our neighborhood. As we are still rebuilding today, it's a beautiful reminder of all the people that sent us hope and love and they still remain hanging on the poles in the area to this day.

Stacy Lynn S., Hurricane Sandy survivor, Staten Island, NY

I live in Newtown, Connecticut and in the aftermath of the horrific (Sandy Hook Elementary School) tragedy, there were countless memorials, tributes, signs and banners all over our town and neighboring towns offering messages of love and support from all corners of the globe. But one example that really stood out for me were these brightly colored wooden stars that were springing up on poles all around town. Each different, each beautiful, with special words of encouragement, support and love. I didn't know where they came from, or who put them there, but they moved me beyond words. That perfect strangers would take the time and effort to do such a beautiful thing offered reassurance that people are loving and kind and caring and good...just what this town needed to hear!! This past week I was able to visit the Rockaways and view the terrible destruction from Hurricane Sandy. As we toured through the devastated areas, I was brought to a standstill, and to tears, by a familiar looking brightly colored, beautiful star posted on a telephone pole. This one said "We believe." Please let the amazing people behind these special stars know that they are making a real difference. To offer messages of compassion and hope to strangers in despair is a truly a remarkable and inspirational gift. THANK YOU!!

Sue D., Newtown, CT



**"Hello, My name is Rob** and I live here in Breezy Point NY.

I just wanted to say thank you for your great work. After Sandy myself like many of my neighbors lost everything. I will never forget the first day I saw your Stars of HOPE. At first I was taken aback as I was standing by what's now known sadly as the fire zone. Everything was black from the fires, but this colorful star caught my eye so I approached it. I don't recall what it said, but I do recall how it made me feel. I felt comfort, healing and happiness that someone was thinking of us because at that moment in time it sure didn't feel like it.

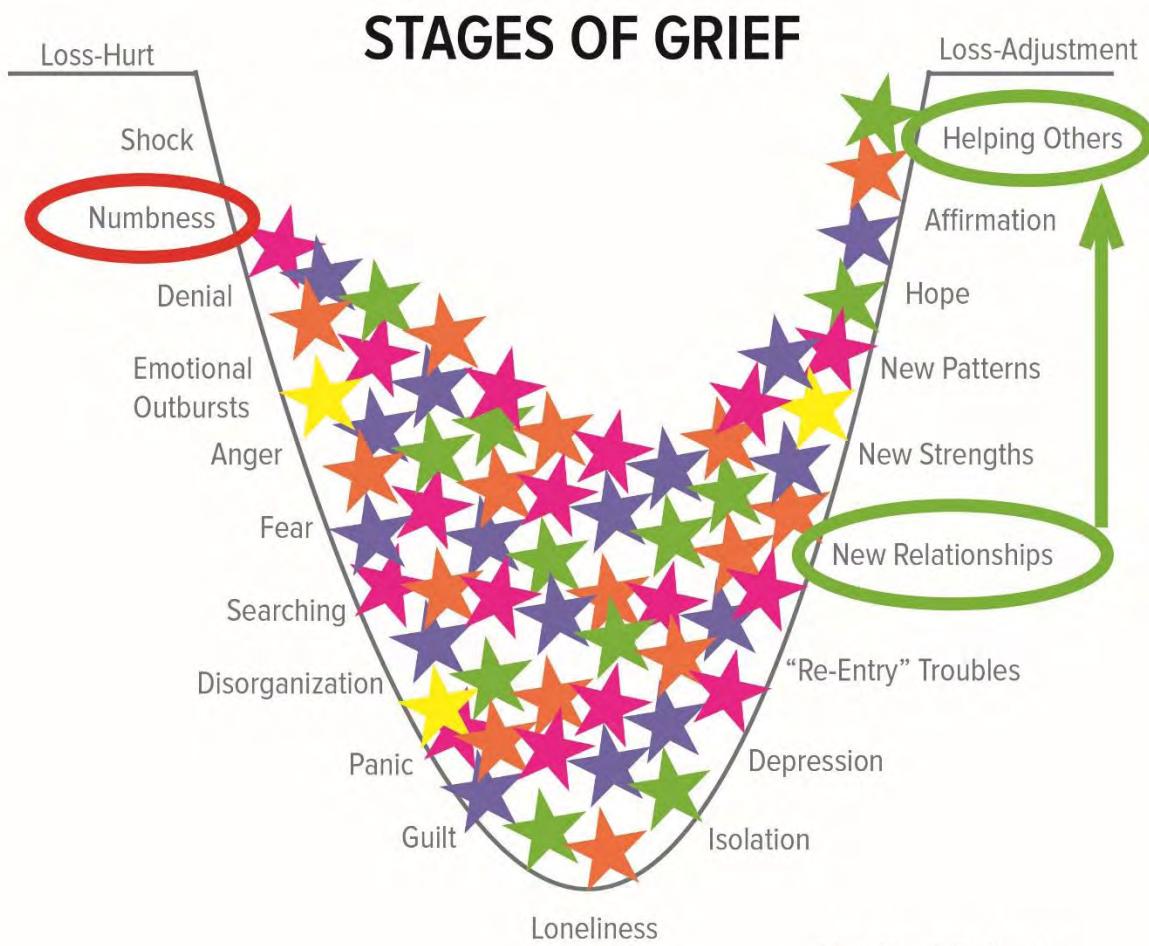
Looking into destruction and seeing people digging through soot to find a plate from their grandmother was something I will never forget. But these stars were a constant reminder to keep our heads up as many of us have.

After a few months construction slowly started and I noticed the stars were disappearing from the new poles and some were fading badly. So I collected a few to preserve. I will have these on display on my newly built deck for all to see. So thank you for the words of inspiration and know it's working. We still think about you all almost daily when we see these stars. While faded their message is still strong." -Rob

**Each one of these testimonials highlights the innovation and positive disruptive impact Stars of HOPE is making on the Kubler-Ross and Emotional Phases of Disaster Relief curves.**

These are but a few of the hundreds of e-mails and Facebook posts that the New York Says Thank You Foundation has received since 2008. They provide anecdotal evidence of how Stars of HOPE provides direct and transformative emotional support to survivors of natural and man-made disaster throughout the near-term, mid-term, and long-term aftermath phases of historic tragedy.

**Stars of HOPE succeeds at accelerating the healing process for disaster survivors because the stars are deployed during the “Numbness” phase and take people directly across the curve to the “New Relationship” phase and upwards to “Helping Others.”**





Responding to a mass shooting at Excel Industries, NFL Community Teammates in New York City created Stars of HOPE that were hung by volunteers on fences throughout the town of Hesston, Kansas.



"To see other cities supporting us, that's been very powerful."  
Cindy Loucks, Hesston, Kansas  
resident of 32 years

## How Stars of HOPE is Disrupting the Post-Trauma Mental Health Curve: The Innovative Impact on Process and Time

By deploying Stars of HOPE painted by caring individuals outside the disaster area and hanging them throughout impacted areas in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, disaster survivors are “positively shocked” by these beautiful and creative messages of hope and healing during the “**Numbness**” phase of the disaster.

As corporate volunteers are encouraged to write personal messages on the back of their hand-painted Stars of HOPE and most importantly, to include their names and home towns, the disaster survivors are immediately brought to a positive realization of “**New Relationships**.” Disaster survivors can see first hand that individual people from far away cared enough about their situation to commit the time and create individually hand-painted messages and designs of hope and healing to help them through the long-term recovery.

**We believe this critical personal connection and creation of the new relationship, of the caring “Star of HOPE responder” to the disaster survivor, is what pre-empts and disrupts the traditional sense of abandonment that often overwhelms disaster survivors and takes them on a trajectory towards panic, loneliness, and depression.**

Furthermore, and as evidenced by the sample testimonials selected above, Stars of HOPE provide disaster survivors **daily reminders of connection** to caring individuals and **daily encouragement to find the strength within** to carry on during the difficult long-term aftermath. In doing so, Stars of HOPE serve as colorful beacons of emotional strength, recovery, and resiliency that change the traditional grief curve and inspire disaster survivors on a daily basis with “**New Strengths**”, “**New Patterns**”, “**Hope**,” and “**Affirmations**.”

**Finally - and most significantly - when disaster survivors impacted by Stars of HOPE are empowered to participate in this transformative disaster relief and community art project and paint stars as a way to magnify the healing power throughout their own community - or paint stars to “pay it forward” and help other individuals and communities struggling to recover from *their* tragedies, Stars of HOPE helps to elevate the disaster survivor to the ultimate level of recovery in the grief curve, “Helping Others.”**

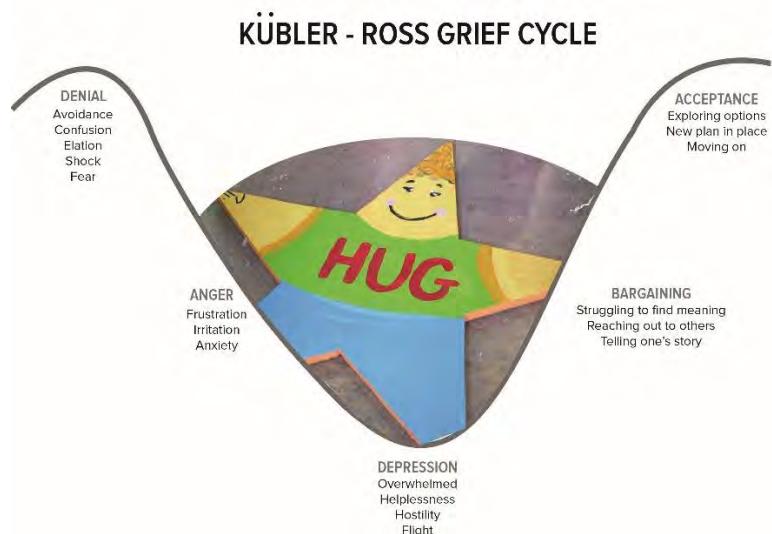




Photo courtesy of Orange County Register  
Terry Pierson staff photographer



Julie Swann-Paez updated her profile picture.

1 hr ·

Julie Swann-Paez  
January 31, 2016

These stars were sent to the shooting site by Stars of Hope USA organization. A co-worker of mine posted pictures of some of them, and **this is the one that I want to embody.**

I haven't had the courage to go see the memorial site in person, but have decided that it is time.

This week I will go.



## Accelerating the Healing Process in San Bernardino: One Survivor's Story

Adaptations of the Kubler-Ross curve take into consideration the time-based elements specific to the disaster recovery cycle (i.e. anniversaries of the tragedy), acknowledging that everyone's personal emotional recovery is impacted by their unique strengths and weaknesses pre- and post-disaster, including their sense of self-esteem and empowerment. Yet the personal story of Julie Swann-Paez, a survivor of the San Bernardino, California terror attacks, highlights the impact Stars of HOPE can make in *accelerating* the healing process and "changing the curve" for the traditional grief cycle and time-based recovery process.

**December 2, 2015.** Two ISIS inspired terrorists attack the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California killing 14 co-workers and injuring dozens. Julie Swann-Paez, an employee of the San Bernardino County Health Department who was attending a training session and holiday party, is one of the severely wounded survivors of the attack.

**December 2, 2015.** Within hours of the terror attack, people around the U.S. begin painting Stars of HOPE to lift the spirits of San Bernardino residents.

**December 4-21, 2015.** Over a 3 week period, volunteers at Salesforce.com in San Francisco, and DENTONS, Disaster Recovery Institute International, and AmTrust Financial in New York, join individual families and service groups around the U.S. to paint Stars of HOPE for the people of San Bernardino.

**December 15, 2015.** With the help of JetBlue Airways, volunteers from the New York Says Thank You Foundation begin to hang Stars of HOPE at the site of the shooting in San Bernardino and throughout the grieving community.

**December 27, 2015.** New York Says Thank You volunteers return to the shooting site in San Bernardino to hang hundreds of Stars of HOPE painted by volunteers from around the Nation and sent to be hung in the community via the Stars of HOPE® Box of HOPE platform.

**January 12, 2016.** The first message comes into the Stars of HOPE Facebook site from a survivor of the terror attack, Jessica B., thanking us for the stars.

**January 14-30, 2016.** Survivors of the terror attack start to post messages to the Stars of HOPE Facebook site acknowledging the positive impact the stars are making in their difficult emotional recovery process. Survivors also start sharing photos via Facebook of the Stars of HOPE surrounding the fence at the Inland Regional Center with fellow survivors still unable to return to the site for physical and/or emotional reasons.

**January 31, 2016.** Julie Swann-Paez, the last survivor to leave the hospital following the shooting, makes her favorite Star of HOPE her personal profile picture on Facebook and posts the following message on her Facebook page:

*"These stars were sent to the shooting site by Stars of HOPE USA. A co-worker of mine posted pictures of some of them, and this is the one that I want to embody. I haven't had the courage to go see the memorial site in person, but have decided that it is time. This week I will go."*



February 20, 2016  
San Bernardino survivor and family paint



March 25, 2016  
Stars of HOPE from San Bernardino being hung at Excel Industries in Hesston, Kansas



"I LOVE this. I am proud to be part of something that spreads goodwill and HOPE, instead of hate and angst."  
**Julie Swann-Paez**  
April 7, 2016

**February 2, 2016.** Members of the San Bernardino survivor and family group request that New York Says Thank You volunteers return to San Bernardino to facilitate a Stars of HOPE painting event. The shooting survivors, and family members who lost loved ones in the attack, want to paint Stars of HOPE together as a group following a group therapy session for the survivors.

**February 20, 2016.** Approximately 40 survivors and family members impacted by the deadly terrorist attack in San Bernardino gather for almost three hours to paint Stars of HOPE at a church near the site of the tragedy. Julie Swann-Paez is among the survivors who participates in the intimate group painting project which was punctuated with lots of hugs, tears, and laughter.

**February 25, 2016.** A mass workplace shooting occurs at the Excel Industries factory in the small town of Hesston, Kansas. 3 workers are killed, and 14 injured. The following day, the San Bernardino survivor who organized the survivor and family paint the prior weekend, calls to see if their Stars of HOPE can be sent to lift the spirits of the community of Hesston, Kansas.

**March 25, 2016.** Volunteers from New York Says Thank You travel to Hesston, Kansas and hang the Stars of HOPE painted by the San Bernardino shooting survivors and family members. The stars are hung all around the community including the fence in front of the shooting site at the Excel factory.

**March 31, 2016.** NBC News from Wichita, Kansas visits Hesston, Kansas to see how the community is doing in their recovery five weeks after their tragedy. Hesston residents speak on TV of the positive impact the Stars of HOPE are making in their community and how much it meant to them to know that the San Bernardino survivors and families created these Stars of HOPE for them.

**April 7, 2016.** After viewing the NBC news piece on Facebook and the impact the San Bernardino survivors and families made on the grieving community of Hesston, Kansas through Stars of HOPE, Julie Swann-Paez posts on Facebook:  
***"I LOVE this. I am proud to be a part of something that spreads good will and HOPE, instead of hate and angst."***

The traditional grief and emotional recovery process takes years to evolve. In the above case, four months after an historic tragedy changed her life and the lives of her colleagues and their families forever, Julie Swann-Paez expressed both ***a sense of belonging*** to a movement of compassion and connectivity and ***a sense of accomplishment*** in an art-based disaster relief project helping her to "heal by accepting the pain and doing something with it."

***Seeing the positive impact Stars of HOPE made on the grieving community of Hesston, Kansas, Julie Swann-Paez affirmed her connection to the highest level of loss-adjustment on the Stages of Grief curve: "Helping Others."***

Since that initial experience, Julie and her extended family and friends continue to paint Stars of HOPE on a regular basis to help other communities and individuals heal following tragedy, including survivors of the Orlando attack.

“The Stars of HOPE project brings to the forefront a sense of altruism and solidarity, particularly in the wake of tragedy. At our Firm, we had the opportunity to create stars for those affected by the attacks in San Bernardino, CA. To know that something so simple (and enjoyable) can have such a profound impact on those that need it most is truly remarkable. A simple act not only inspired much-needed hope for others, it also inspired our own respective sense of humanity, and that's what made this experience truly positive and uplifting. I look forward to volunteering in the future.”

**Salvatore Imperati**  
Supervisor, Guest Services & Facilities  
Dentons US LLP

## Conclusion:

### Creating Systemic Change for Corporate Volunteers and Disaster Survivors

In the first years of the Stars of HOPE program, the New York Says Thank You Foundation's methodology was to wait a few months until after a disaster, organize a school-based or community paint with local members of the impacted community, and empower those directly affected by the tragedy to transform their own community through Stars of HOPE in the *mid-term* or *long-term* phase of the recovery cycle.

With the advent of the Stars of HOPE® Box of HOPE program in the Fall of 2015, and with the support of automated manufacturing and fulfillment capabilities, it is now possible for corporate volunteers to directly participate in the process to bolster the emotional well-being and resiliency of disaster survivors in the *immediate aftermath* of disasters, thereby accelerating their healing process. In the case of San Bernardino, this led to the empowerment of survivors to help others recovering from tragedy just two months after their own disaster.

**We believe this new construct is systemically changing the mental health curve for survivors of natural and man-made disasters and is also creating transformative and meaningful change in the way corporate volunteers are able to respond to disasters including the ability to impact the mental health and resiliency of survivors through creativity, compassion, and connection.**

**In the future, quantitative longitudinal studies need to be conducted on both communities of disaster survivors impacted by Stars of HOPE and the growing community of corporate volunteers creating Stars of HOPE.**

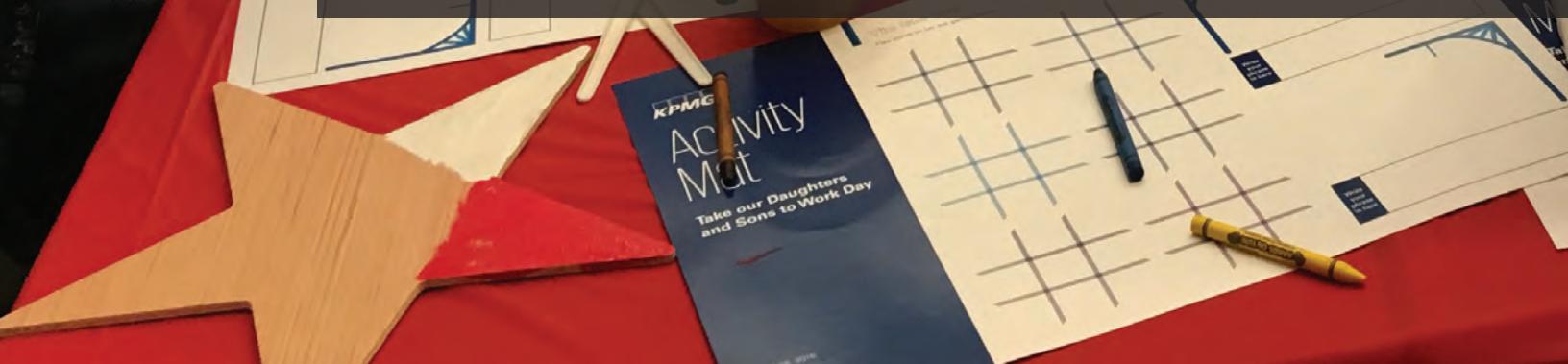
The purpose of these studies will be to quantitatively measure:

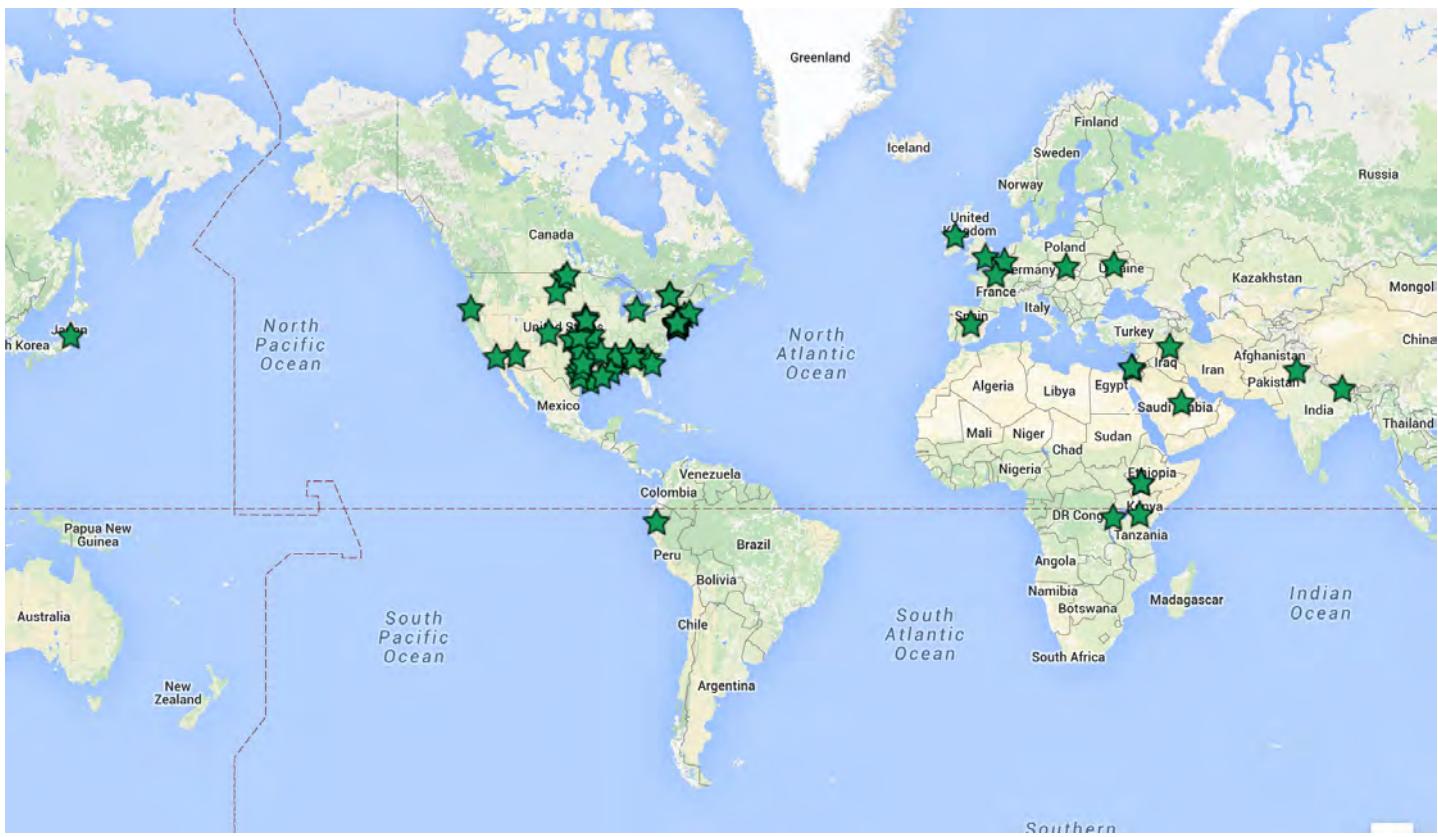
- (1) **The time-based acceleration of the healing process for disaster survivors** across the community as a whole in the out-years following the tragedy (post 1-year anniversary) and the **level of sustained emotional impact** on survivors across the recovering community who are inspired by Stars of HOPE and empowered to make Stars of HOPE to help others as compared to impacted communities where Stars of HOPE are not created; and
- (2) **The sense of personal transformation of corporate volunteers** engaged in the Stars of HOPE platform as they define the impact on their sense of empowerment to help others in need, as well as their **sense of increased connection and appreciation to their corporate employer** for giving them the opportunity to participate in this program as compared to traditional workplace volunteering opportunities.

**HOPE IS SOMETHING EVERYONE NEEDS. IT IS ALSO SOMETHING ANYONE CAN CREATE AND GIVE TO ANYONE IN NEED, ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. THEREIN LIES THE ART OF HOPE.**



Children at KPMG Take Your Children to Work Day paint Stars of HOPE for Syrian and Iraqi children. The stars will be distributed at refugee camps by volunteers from DENTONS and the Saudi Red Crescent.





Stars of HOPE® have brought light into darkness in 86 communities in 16 countries. ★ Greensburg, KS Galveston, TX Little Sioux, IA Mena, AR Fort Hood, TX Elijah, GA Joplin, GA Tuscaloosa, AL Kesennuma, JAPAN Bastrop, TX Minot, ND Bucyrus, ND Howard Beach, NY Staten Island, NY Belle Harbor, NY Rockaway Beach, NY Broad Channel, NY Breezy Point, NY Far Rockaway, NY Long Beach, NY Seaford, NY Oceanside, NY Union Beach, NJ Island Park, NY Babylon, NY Massapequa, NY Point Lookout, NY Coney Island, NY Belle Harbor, NY Toms River, NJ Seaside, NJ Long Branch, NJ Highlands, NJ Sea Bright, NJ Montoloking, NJ East Rockaway NY Gerritsen Beach, NY Newtown, CT Stratford, CT Adairsville, GA Calhoun, GA 9/11 Family Day Boston, MA West, TX Omagh, IRELAND Prescott, AZ Moore, OK Nairobi, KENYA Archie, MO Louisville, MS Tupelo, MS Auschwitz-Birkenau POLAND Jerusalem, ISRAEL Bethel Acres, OK Vilonia, AR Rwamagana, RWANDA Bottineau, ND Madrid, SPAIN London, ENGLAND Ottawa, Canada Paris, FRANCE Little Nepal neighborhood in Queens, NY Katmandu, NEPAL Chattanooga, TN Lafayette, LA San Bernardino, CA Riyadh, SAUDI ARABIA Erbil, IRAQ Paris, FRANCE Colorado Springs, CO Rowlett, TX Brussels, BELGIUM Hesston, KS Flint, MI Lahore, PAKISTAN Charleston, SC Cuenca, Ecuador Omo River, ETHIOPIA Kiev, UKRAINE ... and we are just getting started!



### About New York Says Thank You Foundation

Started in 2003 at the suggestion of a 5-year-old boy, New York Says Thank You Foundation is a growing national and global “pay it forward” service movement that is creating transformative solutions based on survivor empowerment in disaster relief, education, and the arts.

The mission of New York Says Thank You is to build hope and provide healing to people around the world as a way to continually “pay it forward” for the humanity, kindness, and volunteer spirit New Yorkers – and all Americans – experienced on 9/12.

Over 80,000 volunteers across the United States and the world have participated in New York Says Thank You Foundation’s programs including its signature 9/11 Anniversary disaster relief “barn-raisings”, Hurricane Sandy First Responder Rebuilding Fund, 50-state restoration of The National 9/11 Flag, and growing Stars of HOPE disaster relief and community arts program which has lifted the spirits of millions of disaster survivors in 90 communities and 20 countries.

In addition, 500,000 middle and high school students participated in the Foundation’s 9/12 Generation Project which was based on an educational version of the full-length feature film *New York Says Thank You* which premiered at the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival. In 2015, The 9/12 Generation Project was spun off to American Public Education Foundation.

In November 2015, New York Says Thank You Foundation announced its new 10-year goals:

- Empower 1,000,000 people to bring more hope and healing into the world through the new Stars of HOPE® Box of HOPE program, and
- Empower 100,000 cancer survivors and their friends and family to rebuild the homes of cancer patients in disaster areas through its Build For LIFE rebuilding program.

New York Says Thank You Foundation is supported by some of the country’s leading philanthropists, corporations, and institutional donors. The Foundation has been featured on over 1,500 television news programs in the United States and acknowledged in the prestigious 2011 CNN Heroes program.

For more information, please visit [www.NewYorkSaysThankYou.org](http://www.NewYorkSaysThankYou.org) or [www.starsofhopeusa.org](http://www.starsofhopeusa.org)

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# VOLUNTEER FROM YOUR OFFICE AND



## CREATE MORE HOPE IN THE WORLD.

"Seeing the stars brought a sense of calmness in the storm. They stood out among all the destruction. They showed the precious goodness in humanity." - Francesca, Hurricane Sandy survivor

Since 2007, Stars of HOPE® have lifted the spirits of millions of disaster survivors in 86 communities and 16 countries. From Greensburg, Kansas to Newtown, Connecticut. From the 9/11 Memorial Museum to Katmandu, Nepal.

You can now **volunteer in your office**, paint heartfelt messages on Stars of HOPE, and send them to anyone who needs hope in your community, in the U.S., or across the world. **Stars of HOPE® Box of HOPE** contains everything you need to turn any office gathering into a creative, meaningful "pay it forward" service event.

To order your Box of HOPE, please go to [TheHopeShop.NET](http://TheHopeShop.NET)



To schedule an in-office presentation on Stars of HOPE and the history of *New York Says Thank You* from founder (and 2011 CNN Hero) Jeff Parness, please send an e-mail to [Jeff@NewYorkSaysThankYou.org](mailto:Jeff@NewYorkSaysThankYou.org). or call 917-806-8061

Stars of HOPE® is a registered trademark of New York Says Thank You Foundation. Stars of HOPE is a joint project of New York Says Thank You Foundation and Goebel Rebuilds America. For more information, please visit [StarsofHOPEUSA.org](http://StarsofHOPEUSA.org)