

# STARS OF HOPE® MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT STUDY

**THE POWER OF ART AND HUMAN CONNECTION**



Gabby, a survivor of the 2015 San Bernardino terror attack and Corey, whose partner survived the 2016 Orlando terror attack at Pulse Nightclub embracing at the Stars of HOPE community painting event to mark the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the San Bernardino tragedy

The positive impact the Stars of HOPE healing arts program has made on the emotional recovery and resiliency of survivors of the San Bernardino and Pulse Nightclub terror attacks, the Greensburg, Kansas EF-5 tornado, and 2017 Northern California wildfires

**September 12, 2018**

Research study conducted by Florida State University College of Criminology and Criminal Justice and sponsored by New York Says Thank You Foundation with the generous support of the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund

# STARS OF HOPE® MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT STUDY

## THE POWER OF ART AND HUMAN CONNECTION

Survey Questionnaire, Research, and Analysis  
by Florida State University  
College of Criminology and Criminal Justice

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Jeff Parness, Executive Director, New York Says Thank You Foundation

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Krista Flanigan and Jillian Turanovic, Florida State University

April Naturale, Board Member, New York Says Thank You Foundation

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September 12, 2018

Since 2007, Stars of HOPE has been experienced by an estimated 95 Million people in 220 communities and 26 countries recovering from catastrophic acts of nature and historic human-caused tragedy. By leveraging compassion, creativity, connection, and the power of art and kindness, Stars of HOPE has changed the way people heal post-trauma by reminding them they are not alone.

In this first of its kind quantitative study, researchers at Florida State University College of Criminology and Criminal Justice measured the healing impact of Stars of HOPE on survivors of two of the worst mass-casualty terror attacks since 9/11 - the San Bernardino terror attack of December 2015 and the Pulse Nightclub attack in Orlando, Florida in June 2016. In addition to human-caused tragedy, the FSU researchers also measured the healing impact of Stars of HOPE on individuals in communities which experienced two of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history - the 2007 EF-5 Greensburg, Kansas tornado which destroyed 95% of the town, and the 2017 Sonoma County wildfires which destroyed over 6,300 homes in Santa Rosa, California and took countless lives in the firestorm.

The researchers measured the impacts of Stars of HOPE on people who witnessed Stars of HOPE displayed in their community post-tragedy, as well as on people who received and/or created Stars of HOPE post-tragedy. Highlights of the study include:

- 1) 84% of respondents who witnessed a Star of HOPE in their community post-tragedy felt “hopeful” and “supported”
- 2) 81% of respondents who received a Star of HOPE post-tragedy felt “connected to others”
- 3) Overall, 95% of people felt “grateful”, 93% felt “less alone”, 93% felt “valued”, 92% felt “less sad”, 92% felt “optimistic”, 80% felt “confident”, 73% felt “calm” and 63% felt “less anxious” because they experienced Stars of HOPE
- 4) Overall, 100% of respondents Agreed that Stars of HOPE *positively impacts people’s lives, helps communities recover emotionally from disaster, and helps people recover emotionally from tragedy* with “Strongly Agree” making up 75%, 70%, and 61% of respondents of those three positive outcomes.



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Stars of HOPE has empowered survivors of tragedy to transform their own communities through public installations of healing art and positive messages of encouragement. Stars of HOPE has fostered unique peer to peer support between individuals and communities recovering from tragedy through a “pay it forward” dynamic. And Stars of HOPE has empowered exponential healing by making it possible for anyone, any age, anywhere to create hopeful and encouraging art and have that art serve as public beacons of compassion for survivors to see on a daily basis through the long-term recovery period post-trauma.

At the core of this unique project is the exponential creation of survivor to survivor, community to community, and compassionate responder to impacted community *relationships* which foster meaningful human connection post-disaster that bolsters emotional recovery and resiliency. By “crowdsourcing compassion” and by creating mass human connection through hand painted art and expressions of encouragement which are seen on a daily basis post disaster, Stars of HOPE combats the loneliness which triggers long-term negative mental health and physical health impacts post-trauma.

New York Says Thank You Foundation would like to thank Dr. Krista Flanigan and Dr. Jillian Turanovic at Florida State University College of Criminology and Criminal Justice for designing and conducting the study and preparing the enclosed analysis of program impacts. We would also like to thank our Board Member, Dr. April Naturale, whose expertise in emotional support programs post-trauma was essential in helping shape our research process.

Finally, we would like to thank both Laurie M. Tisch and Rick Luftglass of the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund whose support made this first impact study possible after 10 years in the field of providing hope and healing to people in need through the power of art and human connection.

Jeff Parness  
Founder and Executive Director  
New York Says Thank You Foundation  
Stars of HOPE® Program

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## Stars of HOPE Program Impact Study 2018

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**Stars of HOPE Program Impact Study**

College of Criminology and Criminal Justice  
Crime Victim Research and Policy Institute

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## Acknowledgements

The authors thank New York Says Thank Your Foundation for funding this project and providing support throughout the research process. We extend a special thank you to Jeff Parness, Founder and Executive Director of New York Says Thank You and Stars of Hope and Josh Garcia, Director of Operations and Programs at Stars of Hope for initiating and supporting this study. Their passion and dedication to the program was apparent from the beginning and their enthusiasm was contagious. They know first-hand the significance and meaning of Stars of Hope and recognized the importance of establishing the program's value through empirical research. Finally, the authors thank all of the participants in the Stars of Hope impact study who shared their experiences, responses, and opinions regarding the impact of the program on their lives and in their communities. We admire their courage, resilience and messages of hope.



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## Purpose

The purpose of the Stars of HOPE Impact Study was to determine the influence of the program’s community, school, corporate, family, and service projects on participants and recipients. This evaluation assesses the impact on individuals that have participated in, received, and/or witnessed Stars of HOPE in various settings in response to and following both natural and human-caused tragedies.

## Overview of Stars of HOPE



Stars of HOPE is a unique disaster relief and community arts program started by the New York Says Thank You Foundation in 2007. Stars of HOPE aims to transform the physical and emotional landscapes of communities devastated by acts of nature or acts of violence by empowering individuals impacted by tragedy to create colorful art and messages of hope and healing on one-foot wooden stars. These Stars of HOPE are displayed in public places in communities worldwide in the immediate and long-term aftermath of tragedy serving as beacons of hope and

compassion for all to see. The Stars are also created by communities impacted by past disasters to “pay it forward” to others who later suffer similar tragedy.

Stars of HOPE has reached people in communities impacted by catastrophic acts of nature, such as the tornados in Greensburg, Kansas (2007), Joplin, Missouri (2011), and Albany, Georgia (2017); the Japan tsunami (2011); the flooding in Minot, North Dakota (2011); the wildfires in Sonoma County (2017); and the Texas hurricanes (2008, 2017). Stars of HOPE have also been sent to help communities impacted by horrific acts of violence, such as the terror attacks in San Bernardino, California (2015), Orlando, Florida (2016), and Manchester, England (2017); as well as the shootings in Las Vegas (2017), Parkland, Florida (2018), and Sutherland Springs, Texas (2017). Since 2007, over 80,000 hand-painted Stars of HOPE have reached disaster survivors in over 200 communities and 26 countries.

## Methodology

A total of 62 adults who have participated in, received, and/or witnessed Stars of HOPE in various settings participated in an online survey about its impacts. These individuals were invited to participate in the survey via email between June and July 2018. Their names and contact information were provided by the New York Says Thank You Foundation. The survey was administered through Qualtrics, a secure online survey tool, and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. All responses were anonymous and confidential, meaning that no names or contact information were recorded in the data, and participants’ names and email addresses were destroyed upon completion of the survey. The online survey and consent procedures were reviewed and approved by Florida State University’s Institutional Review Board (Human Subjects Committee). An invitation was sent to 100 individuals from a list provided by the New

York Says Thank You representing the communities of Greensburg, KS and Santa Rosa, CA which were impacted by natural disasters and San Bernardino, CA and Orlando, FL, effected by human caused tragedy. After the initial invitation, two follow-up reminders were sent to participants who had not yet opened or completed the survey. The survey response rate was 62%, which is an above average return rate for similar type surveys.

**Overview of Survey Participants**

Participants were involved in Stars of HOPE in a variety of ways. In total, 50% ( $n = 31$ ) had received a Star of HOPE, 69% ( $n = 43$ ) had created a Star of HOPE, and 71% ( $n = 44$ ) had seen a Star of HOPE on display in the community. The participants were 65% female and 35% male; 84% white; and 54% were between 45 and 64 years of age. The majority (63%) reported being married or in a domestic partnership, and most had high levels of educational attainment. All participants had achieved at least a high school or equivalency degree, and 57% reported having a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree. (See Table 1)

*Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants N = 62.*

	%
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	65%
Male	35%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
White	84%
Latino/a	11%
Asian	5%
<b>Age</b>	
25-34 years	13%
35-44 years	23%
45-54 years	24%
55-64 years	30%
65-74 years	10%
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Single, never married	19%
Married or domestic partnership	63%
Widowed	11%
Divorced	7%
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>	
High school degree or equivalent	13%
Some college, no degree	19%
Associate degree	11%
Bachelor’s degree	34%
Master’s degree	23%
<b>Employment Status</b>	
Employed full time	56%
Employed part time	19%
Unemployed	3%
Retired	15%
Unable to work	7%

*“It provided all members of the community young and old [the opportunity] to come together to do something uplifting, creating unity and hope, whether they were directly affected or not.”*

**Findings**

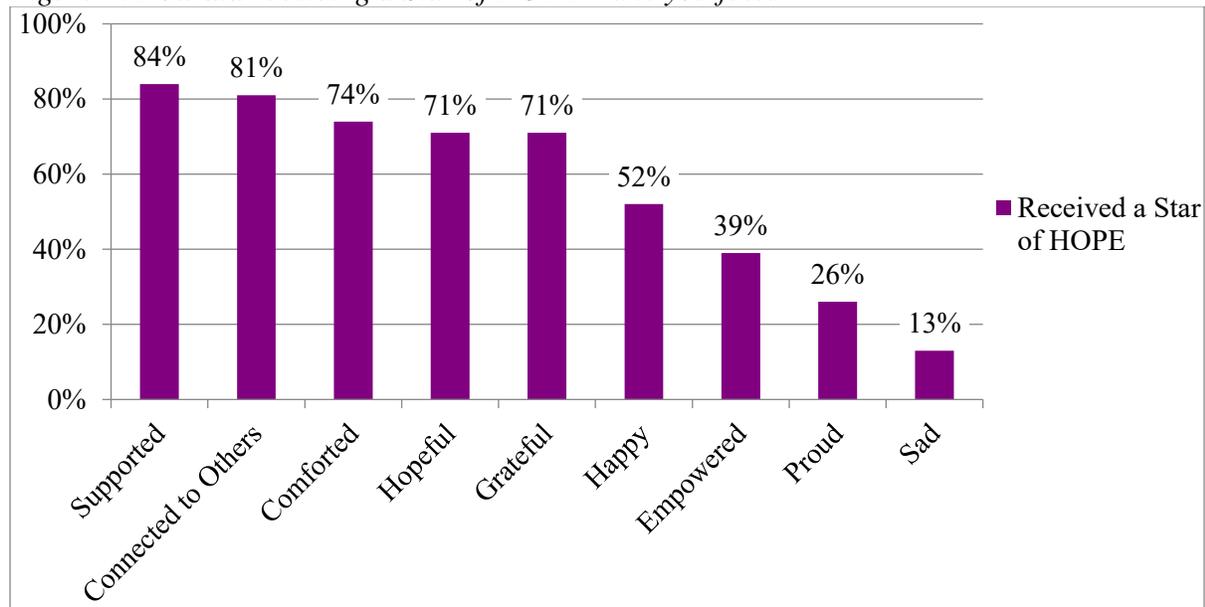
**Impact of Receiving a Star of HOPE**

Half of participants (50%) had received a Star of HOPE. These individuals were survivors of the 2015 San Bernardino Attack (35%), the 2017 Northern California Wild Fires (26%), the 2007 Greensburg Tornado (23%), and the 2016 Pulse Nightclub Shooting (6%).

All participants who received a Star of HOPE were directly impacted by a tragedy. They reported that as a result of the tragedy, they lost someone close to them (45%), their property was damaged (48%), they were emotionally impacted (58%), and/or they were physically injured (6%). Many participants reported being primary victims of the tragedy for which they received the Star of HOPE (58%), several were secondary victims (i.e., someone close to them was directly affected by the tragedy; 29%), and others were witnesses or members of the community where the tragedy occurred (13%).

Overall, participants felt positively about receiving a Star of HOPE. Receiving a Star of HOPE made the majority of survivors feel supported (84%), connected to others (81%), comforted (74%), hopeful (71%), and grateful (71%). Some reported that receiving a Star of HOPE made them feel happy (52%), empowered (39%), and proud (26%). A few participants indicated feelings of sadness (13%), but these same individuals also reported feeling comforted, supported, hopeful, and connected to others upon receiving their Star of HOPE. A summary of responses is provided in Figure 1.

*Figure 1. How did receiving a Star of HOPE make you feel?*





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*“There is so much support when we needed it most.”*

*“The Stars made us feel supported, not alone.”*

*“When I saw and read the first Star I cried, actually sobbed...knowing someone took the time to show their support. A small gesture made a HUGE impact!”*

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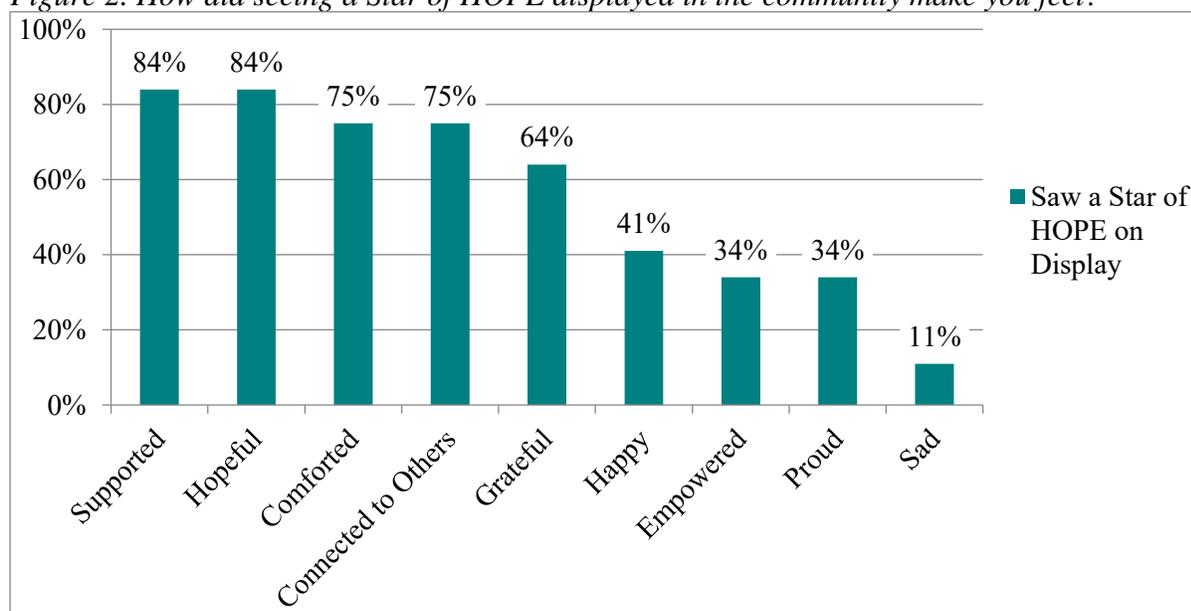
**Impact of Seeing a Star of HOPE Displayed in the Community**

A large portion of participants (71%) had seen at least one Star of HOPE on display in the community. Participants saw stars displayed for the 2017 Northern California Wild Fires (41%), the 2015 San Bernardino Attack (25%), the 2007 Greensburg Tornado (27%), the 2017 Las Vegas Massacre (7%), and the 2016 Pulse Nightclub Shooting (5%).

Several participants were primary victims of the tragedy for which they saw the Star of HOPE displayed (43%). Others were secondary victims (i.e., someone close to them was directly affected by the tragedy; 34%) or members of the affected community (23%). Many participants who reported seeing a Star of HOPE were personally impacted by the tragedy for which it was displayed. They reported that, as a result of the tragedy, they lost someone close to them (34%), their property was damaged (34%), they were emotionally impacted (89%), and/or they were physically injured (5%). Only one participant reported seeing a Star of HOPE on display for a tragedy for which he or she was not personally affected by.

Overall, participants felt positively about seeing a Star of HOPE on display in the community. Seeing a Star of HOPE made the majority of participants feel supported (84%), hopeful (84%), comforted (75%), connected to others (75%), and grateful (64%). Some reported that seeing a Star of HOPE made them feel happy (41%), empowered (34%), and proud (34%). A total of five participants indicated feelings of sadness upon seeing a Star of HOPE on display (11%), but feelings of sadness co-occurred with feelings of support, comfort, hope, happiness, gratefulness, and connectedness to others. A summary of responses can be found in Figure 1.

*Figure 2. How did seeing a Star of HOPE displayed in the community make you feel?*



*“[The Stars] bring communities together and give words of hope.”*

*“They [have] a surprise factor because I’ve never heard of them until the stars started popping up around my community and then I found one hanging in my yard.”*

*“Community is larger than those directly affected.”*



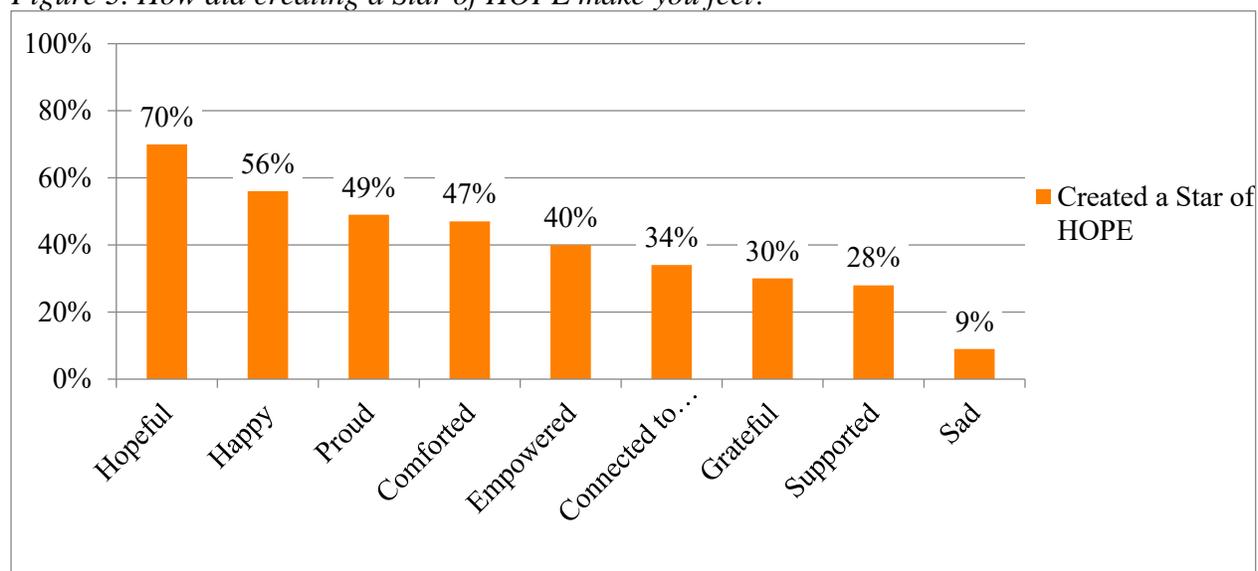
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### Impact of Creating a Star of HOPE

Over two-thirds of participants (69%) created Stars of HOPE for victims of tragedy. Many participants created Stars of HOPE for multiple different tragedies, including the 2017 Northern California Wild Fires (21%), the 2007 Greensburg Tornado (21%), the 2016 Pulse Nightclub Shooting (19%), the 2015 San Bernardino Attack (14%), the 2017 Las Vegas Massacre (14%), 2017 Hurricane Harvey (9%), the 2017 Manchester Arena Bombing (7%), the 2011 Souris River Flood (2%), the 2009 Mena Tornado (2%), the 2017 Texas Church Shooting (2%), the 2017 North Park Elementary School Shooting (2%), the 2017 Tornado in Albany, Georgia (2%), the 2011 Joplin Tornado (2%), the 2011 Japan Tsunami (2%), and the 2018 Stoneman Douglas High School Shooting (2%).

The participants who created Stars of HOPE were concerned citizens (41%), community members (35%), secondary victims (15%), and primary victims (9%) of the tragedies for which the stars were created. Approximately half of the individuals who created Stars of HOPE were survivors of tragedies, and had also been the recipients of a Star of HOPE. Participants reported that they created Stars of HOPE because they “felt for those who were hurting,” that they were “paying it forward,” that “it was sad to see what the community was going through” and that they “just wanted to help.”

Figure 3. How did creating a Star of HOPE make you feel?



Creating Stars of HOPE was a positive experience. Participants most commonly reported that creating stars made them feel hopeful (70%), happy (56%), and proud (49%). Several individuals also noted that they felt comforted (47%), empowered (40%), connected to others (34%), grateful (30%), and supported (28%) by creating Stars of HOPE. A few participants reported that creating the stars made them feel sad (9%), but these same individuals also noted that doing so made them feel happy, hopeful, and empowered (see Figure 3).

STARS OF HOPE PROGRAM IMPACT STUDY



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*“Love, compassion, engagement, artistic expression.”*

*“The healing and calm from art therapy”*

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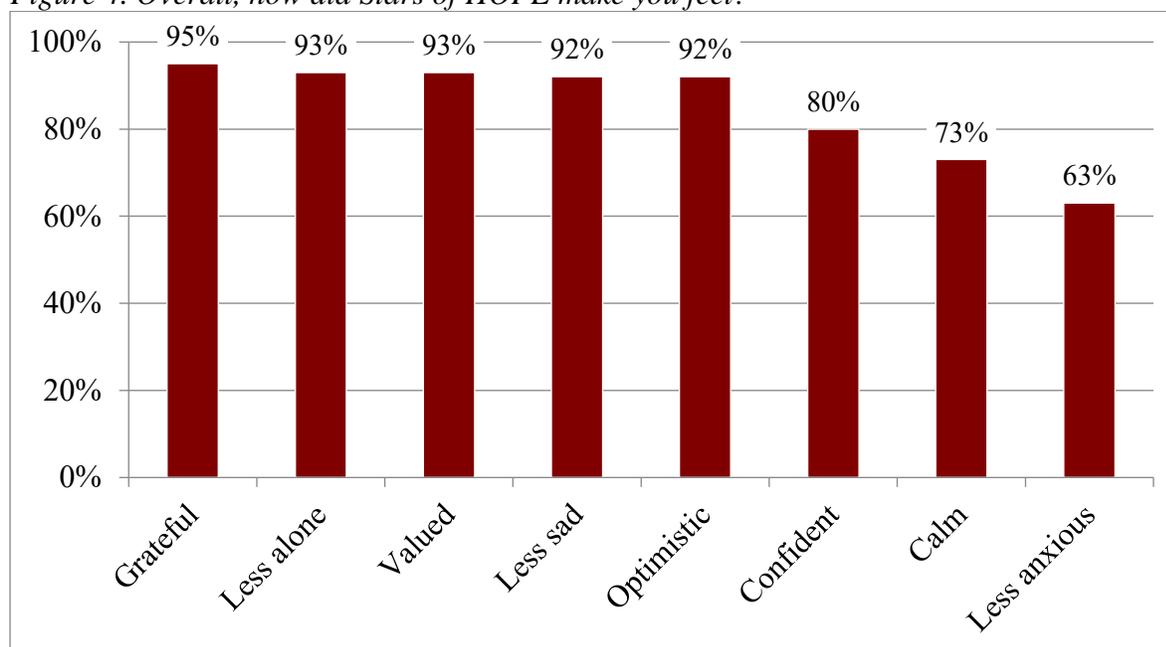


### Overall Impact of Stars of HOPE

To determine how Stars of HOPE impacted people more broadly, all participants were asked about the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: (1) “Stars of HOPE helped me feel grateful,” (2) “Stars of HOPE helped me feel less alone,” (3) “Stars of HOPE helped me feel valued,” (4) “Stars of HOPE helped me feel less sad,” (5) “Stars of HOPE helped me feel more optimistic about the future,” (6) “Stars of HOPE helped me feel confident,” (7) “Stars of HOPE helped me feel calm,” and (8) “Stars of HOPE helped me feel less anxious.” Participants indicated their agreement to each of these items on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The vast majority of participants either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with each of these statements. Indeed, nearly all participants either agreed or strongly agreed that Stars of HOPE helped them feel grateful (95%), less alone (93%), valued (93%), less sad (92%), more optimistic about the future (92%), confident (80%), calm (73%), and less anxious (63%). A summary of these responses is provided in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Overall, how did Stars of HOPE make you feel?




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*“The surprise that there are people out there that do not know you but want to support you, very powerful!”*

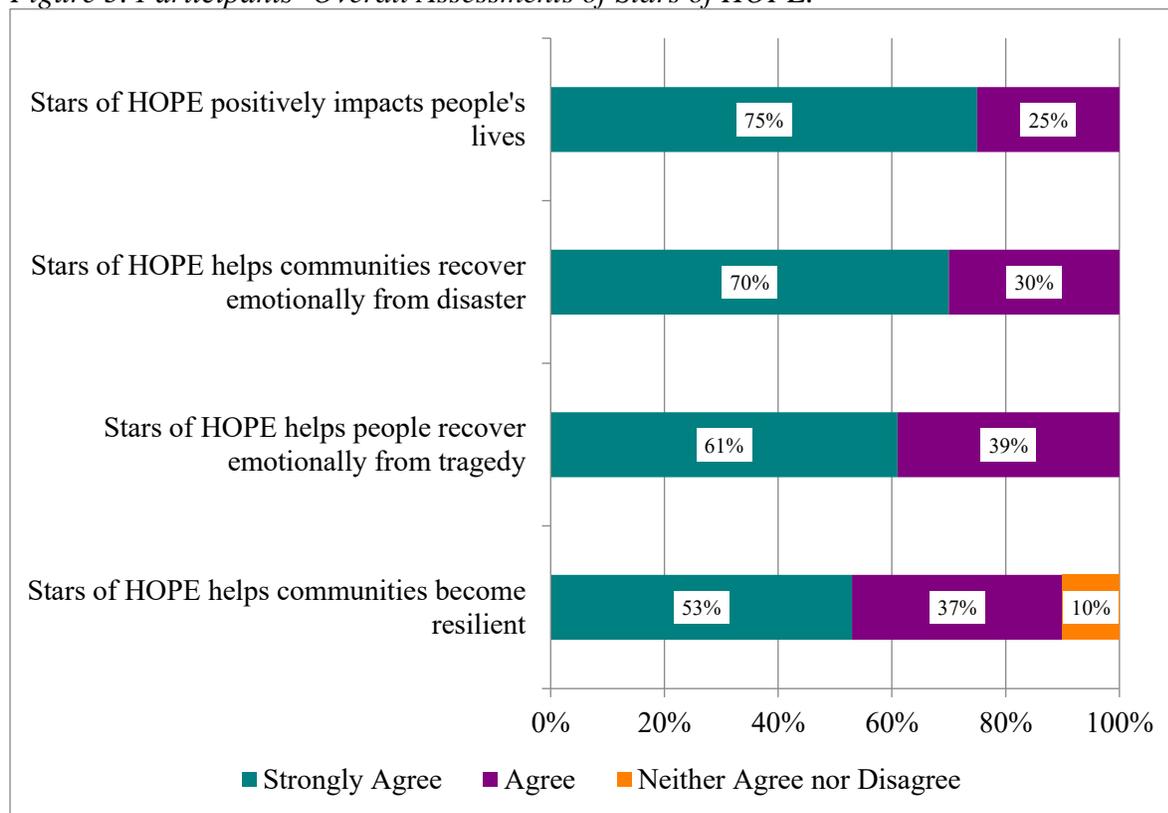
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**Participant Assessments of Stars of HOPE**

Participants were also asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following four statements: (1) “Stars of HOPE positively impacts people’s lives”; (2) “Stars of HOPE helps communities recover emotionally from disaster”; (3) “Stars of HOPE helps people recover emotionally from tragedy”; and (4) “Stars of HOPE helps communities become resilient.” Agreement to each statement was indicated on a scale of 1-5, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

None of the participants “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” with any of the statements presented. All participants (100%) either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that Stars of HOPE positively impacts people’s lives, helps communities recover emotionally from disaster, and helps people recover emotionally from tragedy. Nearly all participants (90%) also agreed that Stars of HOPE helps communities become resilient. An overview of responses is provided in Figure 5.

*Figure 5. Participants’ Overall Assessments of Stars of HOPE.*




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*“Seeing them [the stars] truly brings hope and togetherness.”*

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## In Their Own Words: What Works

*“People helping people find a bright spot in the midst of darkness...”*

As part of the survey, participants were asked to describe, in their own words, what is best about the Stars of HOPE program. Overwhelmingly, people remarked about the value of connecting to others and how that helped them feel less alone.

*“Stars of Hope help individuals feel connected to not only their community but the rest of the country.”*

*“They connect communities so we can remember we aren’t alone when bad things happen [and that] people care.”*

*“It brings people together and gives them a voice.”*

*“Feeling connected to others who care during a challenging time.”*

*“Not only the visual comfort but [being] connected to people who encouraged, supported and listened, especially to the pain of the experience and journey.”*



Participants remarked about how meaningful it was for survivors of different tragedies to be able to share their support with each other.

*“Stars of Hope allows you to pay it forward and share hope and light with communities outside your own.”*

*“Stars of Hope was of HUGE importance to (sic) the survivors from one disaster being empowered and given strength and opportunity to heal within by being able to reciprocate and pay it forward by sending stars to another disaster area.”*

The Stars of Hope offered renewed feelings of hope knowing that others care.



*“When I saw and read the first Star I cried, actually sobbed...knowing someone took the time to show their support. A small gesture made a HUGE impact!”*

*“Helps to express that those around the people who suffered care.”*

*“When it feels like there is nothing else that you can do to support your community...creating and seeing Stars of*

*Hope brings light. I felt empowered to create and hang the stars as an individual and as a community. Seeing them truly brings hope and togetherness. I LOVE THIS program!!”*

There were also several comments about the accessibility of creating the stars and that anyone of any age, gender, culture can make a star.

*“It teaches even the smallest child to have empathy for others and to give back even in the midst of your own tragedy.”*

*“Anyone can make a star.”*

*“SOH allows you to do something concrete to help, all ages can participate- empowering children as well as adults.”*

### **“In Their Own Words: Suggestions for Improvements**

*“It’s hard to improve the love this program brings.”*

Lastly, participants were asked to provide suggestions in their own words for how the Stars of HOPE program could be improved. Overall, participants were pleased with the program as it is structured. Suggestions for improvements include marketing of the program so that more are aware of its purpose and value. In addition, a concerted public relations campaign could generate more volunteers and revenue, which was indicated as a need. It was also mentioned that continued connection with the communities that have received the stars would be appreciated, such as through a newsletter or email updates.

*“I’d love ... to bring attention [to Stars of Hope] so every community gets involved. I think you are all doing a wonderful act of kindness that changes lives.”*

The survey further suggested that the cost of shipping and purchasing stars could be somewhat prohibitive. Recommendations include corporate sponsorship and/or fundraisers to mitigate some of the expense.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Overall, the response to the Stars of HOPE program was extremely positive. Moving forward, a larger international survey of Stars of HOPE participants and volunteers is needed to gain a deeper understanding of how the program impacts people’s lives and communities. Specifically, an intensive look at how the program influences participants’ resilience, coping, grief and levels of depression. Although Stars of HOPE have reached disaster survivors in over 200 communities and 26 countries, all participants in the current survey were U.S.-based, and people of color were underrepresented. Still, the evidence presented here clearly shows that Stars of HOPE has a meaningful and positive impact on individuals affected by tragedy.



*“A simple act of kindness that was Priceless!”*

## APPENDIX

### *Loneliness*

Rob, Hurricane Sandy survivor, and Vivek Murthy, former U.S. Surgeon General

### *Empowerment*

Julie, San Bernardino terror attack survivor, and Stages of Grief curve

### *Bios*

Krista Flanigan and Jillian Turanovic, Florida State University

April Naturale, Board Member, New York Says Thank You Foundation

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"I will never forget the first day I saw your Stars of HOPE. 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."

- Rob, Breezy Point, NY - Hurricane Sandy survivor



"It looks like you have figured out a way to combat **loneliness** post-trauma. That is what leads to negative mental and physical health impacts after a disaster."

Former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy  
as told to Jeff Parness, Founder & Executive Director  
New York Says Thank You Foundation/Stars of HOPE  
Aspen Arts & Ideas Festival  
July 2017

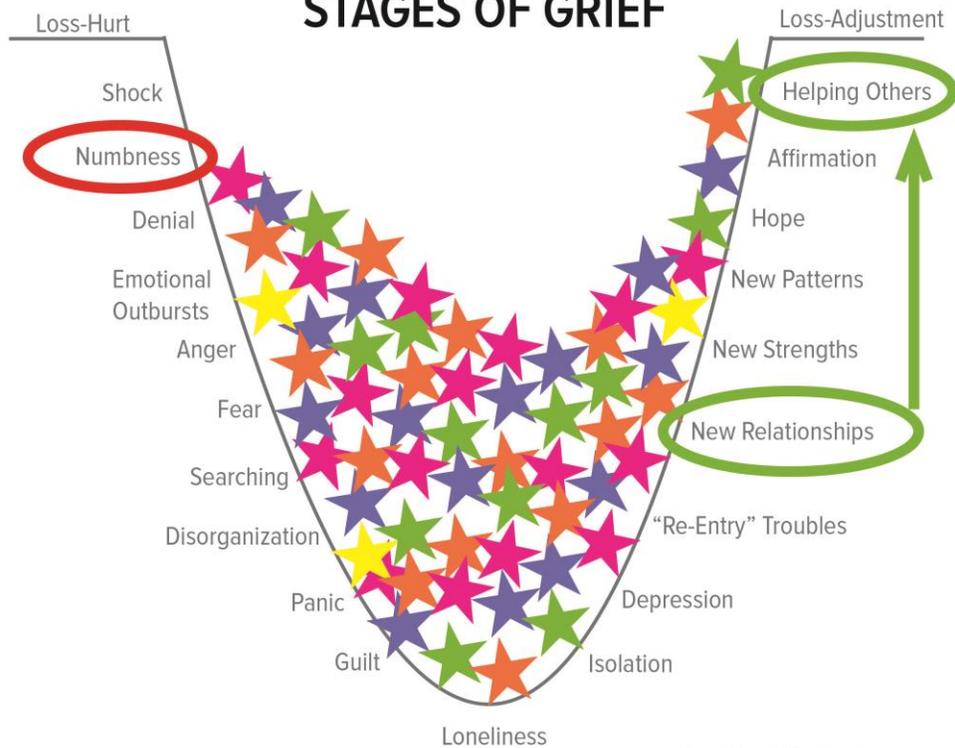


January 31, 2016

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

- Julie Swann-Paez, survivor, San Bernardino terror attack

## STAGES OF GRIEF



Adapted from Kubler Ross Curve



April 7, 2016

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

## STARS OF HOPE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT STUDY / RESEARCHER BIOS



### **Krista Flannigan,**

Director of the Institute for Crime Victim Research and Policy at Florida State University  
College of Criminology and Criminal Justice

Krista R. Flannigan, J.D. is an attorney and advocate experienced in emergency response and management, media relations, community collaboration and program development. She is also practiced public speaker and educator. Dr. Flannigan has vast experience providing training to lawyers, law enforcement, victim advocates, mental health professionals and educators regarding a variety of issues, including trauma informed care and intervention with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. She has trained nationally on coordinated community response for victims of mass tragedy, high profile trials as well as on the impact of mass tragedy on victims and communities. Dr. Flannigan and a colleague wrote two guidebooks and developed a training video about community response to victims of high profile mass tragedy trials. They also co-authored a book, *Hope Gets the Last Word*, depicting lessons learned as they journeyed alongside those recovering from tragedy.

Dr. Flannigan has worked with several prosecutors' offices in various capacities including prosecutor, director of the nationally recognized Victim Services 2000 program, director of public information & community partnerships and victim advocate. She also provided consultation and acted as spokesperson for a Colorado mountain District Attorney's Office during a high profile sex assault case. Dr. Flannigan has served on a variety of non-profit boards whose missions were to promote the fair and just treatment of crime victims.

Dr. Flannigan was also a victim services consultant for Jefferson County in response to the Columbine High School shooting. She previously served as Co-Director for the Colorado Oklahoma Resource Council ("CORC"). CORC was a community-based group created to oversee a collaborative effort to identify and coordinate available resources for the survivors and families of the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing while they attended the bombing trials in Denver. Dr. Flannigan has worked working with the Office for Victims of Crime (program of the Department of Justice) and the Center for Disease Control to develop a victim assistance response to biological and chemical terrorist attacks. She also provided services to families of the September 11 tragedies and offered training and consulting to other professionals providing services. In addition, Dr. Flannigan was involved in the victim and media response during the Aurora, Colorado Theater shooting.

Dr. Flannigan is currently the Director of the Institute for Crime Victim Research and Policy at Florida State University, College of Criminology. The goal of the Institute is to collaborate with victim services professionals and ultimately provide policy and practice recommendations that are based upon need and the best available research and evaluation evidence. She also teaches classes in the FSU College of Criminology and Human Sciences. In addition, Dr. Flannigan serves as an advisor to the Office for Victims of Crime in the development and implementation of a national resource E-toolkit for response to incidents of mass violence.

### **Research Interests**

Crime Victim Services and Policies Relating to System Effectiveness and Victim Impact | Criminal Justice System Service/Response and Impact on Crime Victims

### **Education**

J.D. 1989, University of Denver; College of Law

M.S.W. 1989, University of Denver

B.S. 1984, Florida State University; Criminology and Social Work

<http://criminology.fsu.edu/faculty-and-staff/center-for-criminology-public-policy-faculty/krista-flannigan/>

## STARS OF HOPE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT STUDY / RESEARCHER BIOS



**Jillian Turanovic**  
Assistant Professor  
Florida State University College of Criminology and Criminal Justice

Jillian Turanovic received her Ph.D. in Criminology and Criminal Justice from Arizona State University. Her research focuses on violent victimization and offending, correctional policy, and the collateral consequences of incarceration. She is a Graduate Research Fellow and W.E.B. DuBois Fellow of the National Institute of Justice, and her recent publications have appeared in *Criminology*, *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, *Justice Quarterly*, and *Journal of Pediatrics*.  
Research Interests

**Violent Victimization | Crime and Deviance | Incarceration | Life Course Education**

**Ph.D. 2015, Arizona State University; Criminology and Criminal Justice**  
**M.S. 2011, Arizona State University; Criminology and Criminal Justice**  
**B.A. 2009, Grant MacEwan University; Psychology**

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A very special thank you to **Dr. April Naturale**, Board Member of New York Says Thank You Foundation who helped shape the process that led to this research study and provided invaluable guidance and coordination to the staff of New York Says Thank You Foundation / Stars of HOPE Program in advance of the independent survey process by Florida State University

April Naturale, PhD, is a traumatic stress specialist with 30 years of experience as a health/mental health care administrator, and a clinician specializing in response to traumatic events. After 9/11, Dr. Naturale directed Project Liberty, the New York State Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH)'s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funded mental health response to the World Trade Center disaster, the largest crisis counseling assistance and training program awarded in the program's 30-year history.

Dr. Naturale spends considerable time in the field assisting with operations management and training, public communications and crisis intervention. She was project director for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Disaster Technical Assistance Center (SAMHSA DTAC), and has collaborated on disaster response work with the Veterans Administration's National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (NCPTSD), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and most states across the nation as well as 7 countries in post disaster and armed conflict situations.

In 2004, she helped launch SAMHSA's National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, then spent several years working in each of the states affected by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Wilma, and Ike. She worked with the Mental Health Association—New York City to launch the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Distress Helpline, now known as the Disaster Distress Helpline and to oversee the 9/11 10th Anniversary Healing and Remembrance program. Dr. Naturale was the architect of the Boston Marathon Bombing Behavioral Health response and is currently assisting the states of Nevada and CA determining the needs of the victims of the Rte. 91 Harvest Festival Shooting as well as assisting in program development efforts for the Pulse Nightclub and Parkland Shooting incidents.

The message on the back of this Star of HOPE was written by a 16-year-old student at The Hun School in Princeton, NJ and presented to survivors of the San Bernardino terror attack at the official 1-year Anniversary Memorial Service.

Dear fighter,

This will pass. There is always a light that will find you. No one knows how hard this is but you, but we stand with you... Take moments to view the good that is created through the horrible. Understand, feel, let yourself cry... But then stand tall. Stay strong, passionate, and optimistic. Let this create light and don't become satisfied until all are healed and united.