

TOUCHSTONES® DISCUSSION PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT 2018



BUILDING CRITICAL THINKERS AND COLLABORATIVE LEADERS



A Letter from the Board

Touchstones continued to thrive in 2018 and reached a key milestone: 35 years of building community by engaging people in 47 countries in collaborative discussions. We are proud of that longevity and have launched a three-year, \$5 million legacy campaign to ensure we continue to develop skills and improve lives globally through our participatory learning activities.

35 YEARS AND COUNTING

We have now reached more than 30,000 schools and organizations worldwide with Touchstones textbooks and teacher training and this year welcomed schools in Guadeloupe and Thailand into our global reach. In recognition of educators who advance Touchstones in extraordinary ways, we selected Dr. Rick Vanosdall of Middle Tennessee State University's School of Education as our 2018 Teacher of the Year for his exemplary work using Touchstones with Master teachers, graduate students, and rising administrators. And as Howard Zeiderman retired from his role as President at Touchstones, we honored his decades of service and volunteerism in naming him our Volunteer of the Year.

Our NEH-funded veterans program, which helps returning military men and women to reintegrate into their communities, continued to assist dozens with that re-entry, as staff and volunteers extended that work over the summer into urban homeless centers for veterans.

Notably, the recidivism rate for Touchstones participants at the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women remains at 4%, contrasted with the national average of 70%. These outcomes speak to how cooperative learning, listening, and leadership developed through our programs lead to more successful post-release lives.

Our successes at Touchstones are possible only through the generosity of donors and the hard work and unceasing commitment of our staff and volunteers. I thank you all for your contributions and yet immodestly ask for more. At a time when our society seems increasingly divided, our \$5 million campaign seeks funds to expand programs and build capacity so more and more people have skills to communicate and listen—not just within similarly-minded communities but in any community. The American ethicist and psychologist Carol Gillian once said love is like democracy because each works only when everyone involved has a voice. Touchstones can give us that voice to be better citizens and leaders, creating better communities for all.

Warmest regards,
Debra Valentine, Treasurer
Touchstones Board of Directors

2018 *in review*



\$88,574 in donated books & program services



61 new school sites that started Touchstones programs



922 participants in free community programs nationwide



2018 Teacher of the Year

Rick Vanosdall,
Associate Dean,
College of Education,
MTSU



2018 Volunteer of the Year

Howard Zeiderman,
Touchstones
Co-Founder
& Director
of Leadership
Programs



Prison Programs

At 4%, the recidivism rate of women participants in Touchstones prison programs is 70% below the national average.



VETERANS PROGRAMS

In 2018, Touchstones expanded its NEH-funded discussion program, *Completing the Odyssey: A Journey Home* to a second group of veterans that was led entirely by veterans trained in Touchstones discussion leadership. Whereas most of the participants in the initial program were veterans from recent conflicts, the second group included primarily veterans from the Vietnam War. Several of the trained discussion leaders then piloted the program at the Maryland Center for Veteran Education and Training (MCVET) in Baltimore. MCVET provides housing, social services, and education for homeless veterans. In total, more than 50 veterans participated in that volunteer-led programming during the summer.

Through Touchstones' engagement with the Library of Congress's Veterans History Project, several veterans completed and submitted projects about their experiences in service to the Library's permanent collection. For the Library's observation of Veterans' Day in 2018, Touchstones participated in a panel discussion in "The Road Home," a program about writing on experiences in service.

Based on our program success, Touchstones applied for and has been awarded a new grant from the NEH to expand our work with veterans in 2019.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Touchstones in public elementary, middle, and high schools saw some exciting growth in 2018, including a new implementation in Kodiak, Alaska. Thanks to efforts by teacher Geoff Bechtol of the Kodiak Island Borough School District, the district received a grant to purchase Touchstones class sets for use in a blended-learning high school class. That grant introduced Geoff and his students from seven sites around Kodiak Island to Touchstones via web-based discussions in which student leadership rotated from site to site on a weekly basis and with the teachers' supervision. Touchstones staff provided pro bono remote professional development and secured additional funding through a Happy Tuesday fundraiser to send a staff member to Kodiak in March to run training on-site for more than 20 teachers.

Given the initial success of that pilot, Geoff then applied for a Teaching Tolerance grant from the Southern Poverty Law Center. That grant provided additional Touchstones books to

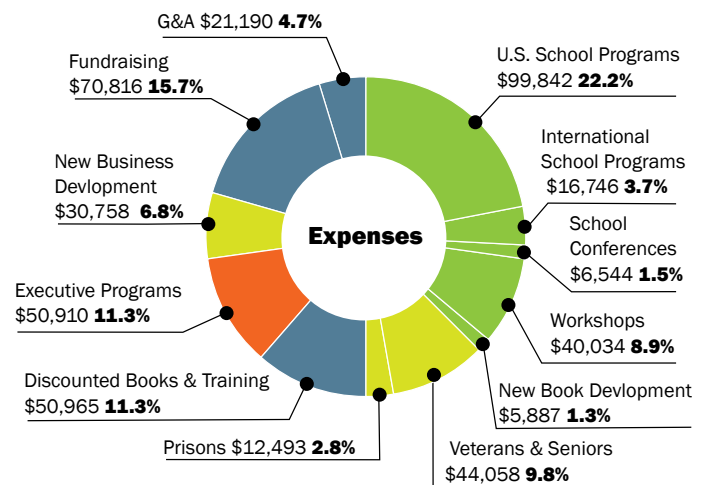
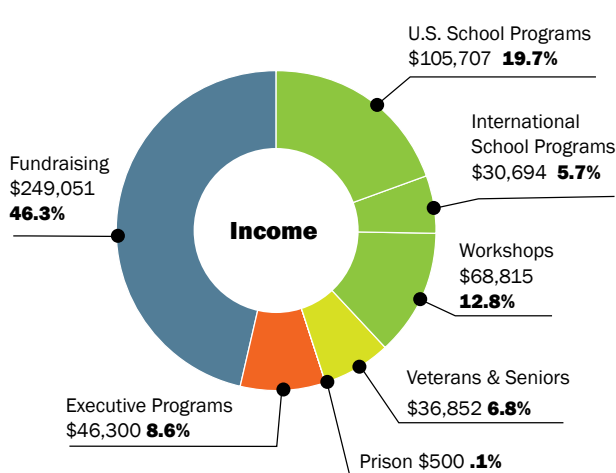
expand programming to the middle grades, around themes of inclusion and cross-cultural understanding. Throughout the year, students from the diverse populations on the island have used Touchstones to strengthen their cooperation and collaboration skills. In November, Touchstones provided additional *pro bono* coaching for several teachers participating in that project, thanks to Advisory Council member and expert Touchstones teacher, Sharon Thomas, who was on the island for other educational work.

The Teaching Tolerance grant includes a final event in April of 2019 that brings all of the Touchstones students together for a pot-luck meal featuring foods from their respective communities and traditions.

“*One of the teachers I worked with so believes in the power of Touchstones that her eyes welled up with tears when describing her students' responses in the circle. She feels strongly that Touchstones directly addresses the issue of giving voiceless people a voice that can change their world and their future.*”

*Sharon L. Thomas, MEd, NBCT
Educator, Writer, Advocate*

INCOME AND EXPENSES



* Unaudited financials



LOOKING AHEAD

The \$5,000,000 Touchstones Legacy Campaign launched in 2018 seeks to raise funds for program expansion, operations and capacity building, and sustainability. By December 31st, the organization secured more than \$675,000 in gifts and pledges.

Building on the Success of Over 35 Years



Touchstones has raised and generated more than **\$20,000,000** and



engaged more than **5,000,000** participants in **six** languages and **47** countries.

Targeted Impact in the Future

5 years

500,000 new students globally

10 years

3.2 million new students globally



SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Individuals

Alice Ericsson & Robert Wagner

Laura Machanic & Thomas Dabney

Beth Stewart & Mikael Salovaara*

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TOUCHSTONES[®]

DISCUSSION PROJECT

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