



[www.hopefromthebottomup.com](http://www.hopefromthebottomup.com)

## Hope Newsletter March 2024

The Arts Bring Hope and Help:

### “WE ARE THE WORLD”



Click on this link to watch the 7 minute video: U.S.A. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AjkUyX0rVw>

One of the readers of the monthly Hope newsletter sent me an email with a link to a video which she thought would be fun and interesting to see and hear. Here are some words from her email: “Dear Bob, You may remember this song from the 80’s. Last night Jim and I watched an amazing documentary on Netflix about how they pulled it off in one all-nighter after the (AMA) American Music Awards they had all attended. It was the brainchild of Lionel Ritchie. With so many stars, they were actually writing the music as they went. Nostalgic and fun to watch. **We could use a little of this spirit.**” Another monthly Hope Newsletter reader sent me an email suggesting that I include this video in a Hope Newsletter. So, in response to their requests, I am including it in this Newsletter.

This performance was put together to raise funds help address the famine issues in Ethiopia and other African countries in the 1980’s. Raising funds to help fight the famine also helped some African countries to become more democratic in their constitutions and laws.

As I watched this seven minute video, I recognized some of the performers. But just to jog your memories, here is a list of the performers in the video:

**Soloists:** Lionel Richie, Stevie Wonder, Paul Simon, Kenny Rogers, James Ingram, Tina Turner, Billy Joel, Michael Jackson, Diana Ross, Dionne Warwick, Willie Nelson, Al Jarreau, Bruce Springsteen, Kenny Loggins, Steve Perry, Daryl Hall, Huey Lewis, Cyndi Lauper, Kim Carnes, Bob Dylan, Ray Charles.

**Chorus:** Dan Aykroyd, Harry Belafonte, Lindsey Buckingham, Mario Cipollina, Johnny Colla, Sheila E., Bob Geldof, Bill Gibson, Chris Hayes, Sean Hopper, Jackie Jackson, La Toya Jackson, Marlon Jackson, Randy Jackson, Tito Jackson, Waylon Jennings, Bette Midler, John Oates, Jeffrey Osborne, Anita Pointer, June Pointer, Ruth Pointer, Smokey Robinson.

**Hope-Filled Organization:**



## Viewing Our Children as Emerging Leaders

### Our Core Values

**Our values inform how we work and interact with each other and those we serve; our vision for a kinder, more equitable world; and underscore our enduring commitment to the future leaders of Chicago.**

#### Put People First

At VOCEL, we work collaboratively, embracing individual strengths and constantly striving to be better and stronger for our kids and families.

#### Welcome All

We convene champions from every corner; we value a collective of powerful, diverse individuals to inspire one another, collaborate, and create change.

#### Promote Equity

We acknowledge systems of oppression and work to help dismantle them, consistently elevating the voices of our children and families.

#### Innovate with Intention

We work purposefully to identify challenges both big and small, learn, grow and lead; we tackle the tough stuff and do it all over again.

#### Embrace the Child Within

We prioritize fun, approaching our work with playfulness and joy.

#### Build a Better Tomorrow

With passion for early education at the forefront, we pursue growth and improvement in everything we do to create meaningful and lasting impact.

**Hope-Filled Organization:** VOCEL's programs are distinguished by six key elements

1. **Science at our core, children in our hearts.** Children's brains develop most rapidly in their first few years – we capitalize on this crucial window of time.

2. **Driven by the Power of Community.** We build communities of supportive peers that become like a second family—because in community we can all become our best.
3. **Culturally Responsive.** We welcome all and embrace the diverse cultures and backgrounds of families. All of our family programs are offered dual language.
4. **Wellness Oriented.** We embrace the complexity and interconnectedness of wellness. Our Family Support & Community Engagement team partners with families to meet their emotional, mental health, and resource needs.
5. **School + Home Connected.** We elevate the importance of at-home learning and parents as children’s first teachers, providing tools for school-home partnership.
6. **Data Informed.** We collect data and use it as one of several key inputs to inform continuous improvement and grow our impact.

To learn more about VOCEL, Click on this link: [www.vocel.org](http://www.vocel.org)

### Hope-Filled Organization:

## West Ridge Chicago: A Chicago Neighborhood Welcoming Refugees



Why has a small corner of Chicago called West Ridge emerged as the hub of a national movement to address the unique challenges facing illiterate refugees?

But what is amazing that is happening in our little corner of West Ridge, Chicago, is that so many of the refugees who have been deliberately scattered throughout the country are now coming to our very special, little corner of the globe.

They are coming to our neighborhood for a reason. Because West Ridge has abundantly invited refugees since the 1920s. First German refugees after World War One. Then Jewish refugees after the Holocaust. Then Pakistani and Indian refugees after the 1947 Partition. And on and on. Croatian refugees after the Balkan Wars. And now Rohingya refugees. While approximately only 8,000 Rohingya refugees have been let into the United States in the past 20 years, there are 400 Rohingya families living within walking distance of FORA’s two empowerment centers. Approximately 2,000 people. Approximately 25% of all Rohingya in the United States are living in this neighborhood.





In the mid-2010s, when the Rohingya crisis was initially receiving international attention, we —the founding board members of FORA—wanted to play our part in welcoming these refugees into the United States. To accomplish this goal, we became a part of local organizations’ refugee and asylee welcoming teams. Over the course of the past decade, we have hosted more than a dozen asylum seekers in our home. Furthermore, we also welcomed scores of refugees by personally meeting them at O’Hare International Airport and preparing in advance for their initial living situations. These asylum seekers flourished in the United States. The refugees, most of whom were Rohingya, faced significant challenges, but their determination was truly inspirational. Not only were we struck with their plight, but we also admired their resourcefulness and generosity of spirit toward us. As more and more Rohingya individuals came to the United States and settled in the West Ridge neighborhood of Chicago, we gained their trust, fostered long-lasting connections, and were privileged to see these families have the opportunity to rebuild their lives in America.

However, it quickly became apparent that the Rohingya children we were getting to know were sinking at school with overwhelmed parents unfamiliar with the US education system. As their friends, numerous refugee mothers demanded that we take action.



*Kathleen O’Connor with two refugee mothers and a FORA staff member*

The refugee mothers were so strident in their demands, not only because they were desperate, but because they knew Kathleen O’Connor—who is now the Head of the HDT Program at FORA—was a great professor and teacher. She is a specialist in the educational field. Professor O’Connor earned a doctorate in child development psychology with a focus on educational reform for marginalized youth. Similar to parents across the world, these immigrants were looking to leverage their relationships to help their kids. So, they did... and the founding board members and our children were tutoring more than a dozen students in students’ cramped living rooms, on their front stoops, in their back alleys, and local parks. While our efforts felt gratifying, we acknowledged that they did not recognize the true need at hand. So, in January 2019, we established Forging Opportunities for Refugees in America (“FORA”), a non-profit organization aimed at helping refugees achieve the American Dream.

We are tremendously proud of how hard our students have worked to improve their reading and math skills. But we are also proud and grateful for how our staff has inspired the kids and how much joy they have infused into the learning experience at FORA. The positive atmosphere of our learning center cannot be described succinctly, but it is telling that we regularly attract visitors who are drawn in off the street as they pass by. The happy energy and active learning are palpable even through the windows of our storefront, with visitor after visitor saying that our storefront “glows.” Nobody can resist the joy of helping a child learn to read—and that joy resounds throughout the welcoming space that we have created together.

To learn more about FORA, click on this link: [About FORA | Refugee FORA](#) To view a 5 minute interview with one of the founders of FORA, click on this link: [Today’s hero: Kathleen O’Connor’s dedicates efforts for refugee students – NBC Chicago](#)

**Hope-Filled Organization:**



## **About the Sierra Club**

**The Sierra Club is the most enduring and influential grassroots environmental organization in the United States. We amplify the power of our millions of members and supporters to defend everyone's right to a healthy world.**

### **Mission Statement**

- To explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth.
- To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources.
- To educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.

### **The Challenge**

Today, there are serious challenges ahead: a warming climate, unprecedented levels of pollution, and powerful special interests undermining basic protections. There's no time to waste in coming together for new solutions which is why the Sierra Club is bringing people together to build the most powerful and effective environmental movement the world has ever seen.

### **How We Do It**

We've built a national community of volunteers, advocates, and grassroots activists who show up when and where it counts. From securing protection for 439 parks and monuments, to winning passage of the Clean Air and Endangered Species, to putting over 281 coal plants on the path to replacement with clean energy, to securing the right of every kid in America to visit a national park, we have an unmatched record of success and impact.



### **A Diverse Coalition**

We work with other partner organizations, nonprofits, and campaigns to build a diverse, inclusive movement that represents today's American public. We know that environmental issues can't be separated from social justice—because we all breathe the same air and share the same land. The Sierra Club also works with and supports companies that know strong values are a part of smart business.

### **Enjoying the Outdoors**

And we help people enjoy the earth we're protecting. Each year, Sierra Club volunteers lead over 15,000 trips annually, from extended trips across the world to afternoon hikes not far from home.

To learn more about the work the Sierra Club does, click on [2030 Strategic Framework | Sierra Club](#)

To find a Sierra Chapter near you, click on this link: <https://www.sierraclub.org/chapters>

## Share this Newsletter!

If you find this Newsletter to be a positive contribution to promote Hope and positive changes for now and in the future, please forward this Newsletter to people you think would enjoy it and who may want to share their hopeful stories and programs for future Newsletters. They can sign up for the monthly Newsletters by doing the following:



Hope From the Bottom Up website link: <https://hopefromthebottomup.com/>  
Or send me an email ([robert@robertbeezat.com](mailto:robert@robertbeezat.com)) with the name and email address of the person you think would be interested. I will then contact them.

**Thank You**