FOR OUR SUPPORTERS

2011 Highlights

This report provides examples of the work your generous support has made possible this year. As you read it, we are confident that the progress shown on these pages will fuel your optimism and determination. Thank you for being part of our community!

AFSC’s Youth Programs

Once upon a time, teens and young people were thought to be the “next” generation—as if they were in a holding pattern waiting to fulfill their promise.

Today we know that the youth of this nation and those around the world are often the inspiration for social movements and the catalysts of change. With fearlessness and boundless energy, participants in our programs for teens and young adults share with us their visions for the world they want to inherit and also guide us in how to achieve it. As we share the tools of leadership with young people, we enable rich and exciting changes for today—and invest in tomorrow.

AFSC youth programs are helping high school students push back against the Department of Defense and its recruiters who want a larger military presence in our schools. We’re training organizers for peace and justice on college campuses. We’re establishing apprenticeships and internships to bolster leadership skills. We’re setting up training and mentoring programs in high schools and in communities. And we’re helping young people embrace alternatives to war, conflict, and violence.

Channeling Energy, Joy, and Optimism

More than 300 students in Washington, D.C. learned about the history and implications of laws and treaties that secure human rights and they acquired skills to advocate for public policies based on these rights. This photo shows some of the students who attended a Global Classroom Conference at the U.S. State Department.

Linking policy and people in hopes for home

Channeling the energies and hopes of young people in Gaza, our Palestinian Youth Groups take the lead in shaping their future and improving their communities. Here, a youth group decided to clean their streets to benefit the entire neighborhood. With this project, they simultaneously developed skills to engage civic leaders, self-confidence, and a commitment to the wider society.

“The program proves that youth are citizens of today and they are able to make change and create strategies to improve their society. It also gives them the chance to let their voices be heard.”

— Sarah Salipa, participant in 2005 and now a coach in AFSC’s Palestinian Youth Groups program
Art speaks to those who view it in a very personal way; often, art touches the soul as news reports or casualty counts cannot. That’s the power of Windows and Mirrors: Reflections on the War in Afghanistan. AFSC’s traveling exhibit displays the work of more than 40 artists who created murals about war along with the art of students in Kabul who drew their daily realities. Together, these works are a powerful witness to the horror and violence of war.

As Windows and Mirrors has traveled the nation, AFSC has used the occasion to host community discussions and events, including forums on war and militarism, guest speakers, discussions on a variety of topics, and media outreach to encourage attendance at the exhibition. In some locations, artists work with local elementary and middle school children to create a mural for their own community.

“For the exhibit schedule, please check www.windowsandmirrors.org.”

WEST VIRGINIA

Finding Trust in the Aftermath of Disaster

On April 5, 2010, a series of explosions at Massey Energy’s Upper Big Branch mine killed 29 coal miners and seriously injured one. It was the worst American coal mining disaster in 40 years.

To understand what happened and how such a disaster could be prevented in the future, West Virginia’s governor appointed an Independent Investigation Panel. One of the appointees was AFSC staff member Beth Spence, who has worked in our West Virginia Economic Justice Project for years.

Beth has earned the trust and respect of the local community through her long years of service and her great respect for the people she serves.

The investigation took more than a year. Its conclusion stated: “The story of Upper Big Branch is a cautionary tale of hubris. A company that was a towering presence in the Appalachian coalfields operated its mines in a profoundly reckless manner, and 29 coal miners paid with their lives for the corporate risk-taking.” Building on the carefully documented findings of this panel, federal investigations into possible criminal wrongdoing are under way.

“The report can be downloaded at: www.afsc.org/upper-big-branch
The Unseen Wounds of War: Trauma Healing in the Horn of Africa

Fleeing extreme drought, ongoing brutal conflict, and a weak central government, tens of thousands of Somalis cross into Kenya and enter the already-overcrowded Dadaab refugee camp. Tensions all too easily flare into violence with each wave of new arrivals desperate for food and shelter.

AFSC has partnered with people in the Horn of Africa for decades. Today, we’re providing humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable (including mothers, the elderly, orphans caring for brothers and sisters, and the disabled or mentally impaired). And we’re conducting trauma healing, in group settings, to address the horrors of prolonged conflict. Among other affected Somalis, we work with girls and young women who have been raped as a tool of war.

Our goal is to provide safe space for social interactions and help the refugees return to physical and mental health. We believe that will reduce tensions in the camps. Although peace may seem far off, AFSC’s work is planting the seeds of peace that can grow into mutual respect, security, and stability.

Tools for a Brighter Future: Haiti Education Program

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in 2010, the young people of Haiti face a grim future. Literacy rates were low before many schools in the capital city and environs were leveled, and hopes for a good job have faded for too many.

AFSC has partnered with the St. Charles Borromeo School to provide a different path for 650 children from kindergarten to 8th grade. In addition to core subjects, students are being trained in conflict resolution, peer mediation, and leadership techniques so they can be peace leaders in their own community.

And job training programs include family members, too, so all can hope for a good living and the security of self-sufficiency. This pilot program offers the hope of transformative change to participants in their home, in the school, in their neighborhood, and in their nation.
For decades, the American Friends Service Committee has worked with immigrants and prisoners in this nation, highlighting the often malicious treatment they face. In 2011, the private prison industry advocated for increasing detentions in many states. AFSC’s research has shown that private prisons have little accountability and poor safety conditions. We oppose profiting off human misery, and have worked to improve prison conditions and reduce the number of people detained.

Arizona When contracts for 5,000 new prison beds in Arizona went to for-profit prison operators, AFSC filed an injunction and a temporary restraining order to stop them. In the injunctions and public hearings, AFSC raised concerns about the lack of oversight and poor prisoner safety policies in the for-profit prisons.

California AFSC staff in San Francisco served as mediators for prisoners engaging in a three-week hunger strike to demand humane conditions. AFSC has been at the forefront of exposing prison conditions in California to remove the need for such drastic action. Prisoners in the Pelican Bay State Penitentiary began the strike in July, and after word spread, 12,000 prisoners in California’s state prisons joined. Another hunger strike began in September to protest use of solitary confinement.

Colorado Human rights advocates gather monthly outside the oft-forgotten GEO detention center in Aurora, Colorado, to expose the corporations that profit from detaining deporting immigrants. GEO Group, Inc. has a contract with the federal government to detain immigrants for $130 a day. In one quarter the multi-national corporation posted profits of $21.2 million.

New Jersey AFSC’s Newark staff marched with human rights advocates and immigrants from downtown Newark to the Essex County Correctional Facility. The march protested an expansion of immigration detention beds in New Jersey. In a AFSC co-authored report released earlier this year, county facilities came under scrutiny for preventing contact with families and legal representation and poor governmental accountability. The report and the protest garnered more news stories and public scrutiny about immigrant detention.

Rooting Out Injustice in the Justice System

Poet Bobby Lefebre at the Aurora, CO protest.
“You cannot imprison or detain the hope of a better tomorrow. Today we stand with [the detainees] in solidarity. Our hearts are broken like their families. Prayer candles lit with the flame of fighting for dignity.”

“"This detention center represents the huge focus that our government has paid to jailing and deporting immigrants without regard to the impact on our families and communities.”
— Amy Gottlieb, AFSC director of Newark’s Immigrant Rights Program

For more information about our programs, please visit AFSC.org or contact us at (215) 241-7000.

American Friends Service Committee
1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Who we are
The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.