



HOW WE DID IT

SCHOOL YEAR 2003-2004

1. The Olive Trees Foundation for Peace, Inc. (OTFP), a non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation was founded in 2003 in Orlando, Florida. The organization brought together Muslims, Jews, and Christians for peaceful dialogue and positive relationships. In 2003, the OTFP birthed the Education Project.
2. The OTFP Education Project was created in Central Florida as a prototype to develop young leaders and "ambassadors of peace."
3. The Education Project sponsored educational and community building projects for American Muslim, Jewish, and Christian middle-school students* (ages 11-14). The Education Project includes leadership training, greater knowledge of the three religious communities and peace education.
4. During the 2003-2004 school year, the first program was held between Jewish students from The Hebrew Day School in Maitland, Florida, and Muslim students from The Muslim Academy of Central Florida.
5. A series of "break-the-ice" games were designed to facilitate social interactions and greater understanding between the students.
6. Games included Human Bingo, allowing them to de-mystify the differences and diffuse tensions between them.
7. Students were grouped into mixed talking circles, to ask and answer questions about themselves, their faith, and their culture. The students informally began to exchange telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.
8. The students participated in an essay contest. One winner from each school had trees planted in the Holy Land in his/her honor.
9. Students traveled together to a local park for a tree-planting ceremony, which connected them to Holy land schools where students were also planting trees.

* Middle school age was chosen because at this stage, emotional maturation allows for the greater understanding of the "other" - as friend, not enemy - which can be sustainable throughout a lifetime.

SCHOOL YEAR 2004-2005

1. In 2004-2005, the project expanded to include Christian students from Orangewood Christian School.
2. The students continued their "getting-to-know-you" meetings.
3. The local tree-planting efforts continued in collaboration with the city of Winter Park.
4. This year the students participated in the Festival of Lights in downtown Orlando, forming a tri-school chorus to present songs of peace and justice.
5. In the spring, the second annual essay contest was held. The winner and her parent won a trip to the Holy Land as her prize, where she met a diverse population of leaders, students, teachers and planted olive trees with her Arab and Jewish counterparts.
6. The students also enjoyed a tri-school sports event (soccer, basketball, softball)

SCHOOL YEAR 2005-06

1. School administrators determined that the students were very interested in one another's religion and culture. The project name became THE MULTIFAITH EDUCATION PROJECT.
2. Visits to the three schools included presentations by the religious leaders and teachers. Students were invited to participate in selected portions of each other's service.
3. In place of the essay contest, an original poetry contest was held.

SCHOOL YEAR 2006-07

1. A second community of school directors and faculty continued meeting every month for their own education, bridge-building, planning and administration.
2. Students learned team cooperation on a ropes (obstacle) course.
3. A scavenger hunt was held, designed to increase the students' knowledge of one another's religion and culture.
4. The students submitted entries to this year's writing contest - family recipes to reflect the religious and cultural backgrounds and the stories that went with them. From these submissions, a cookbook titled *Breaking Bread: A Celebration of Three Faiths* was published and distributed in December 2007.
5. Winning recipes and stories were awarded all-expense paid trips to the multi-faith Face-to-Face Camp run by Auburn Seminary in Holmes, New York. Five students, two teachers and the director traveled to New York in July 2005 for four days spent in a life-altering experience of multifaith living and learning.

SCHOOL YEAR 2007-08

1. The *Breaking Bread* cookbook was launched on December 2, 2007.
2. Orangewood Christian School performed "The Diary of Anne Frank"
3. Hebrew Day School hosted a day that included art projects, religious education and storytelling.
4. A "Stewardship of the Earth" Day was held to demonstrate the teachings of the three traditions regarding the environment. This included tree planting in Winter Park.
5. The student writing contest this year highlighted "Words of Wisdom" from each tradition. Winning entries are posted on the MEP website.
6. The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding in New York conducted a retreat for MEP student leaders and faculty, teaching their COEXIST curriculum, modified for middle school students – June 2008.
7. The MEP attended the Interfaith Youth Core Conference in Chicago, October 2007.
8. The MEP attended the UN Conference on the Status of Women in New York, February 2008. Meetings were held with other peacebuilding projects.
9. Fundraising efforts have intensified to professionalize the staff and expand the scope of the project.
10. A collaboration with Valencia Community College Peace Studies (Humanities Dept.)
11. A new website was launched in 2007. www.multifaitheducationproject.org.
12. An electronic newsletter was created and sent to 1000 friends and supporters. A monthly edition will be sent to encourage support and knowledge of the project's work.
13. THE MEP filed for and received independent incorporation, employee identity number and non-profit status.

For more information, contact MEP Director, Louise F Sheehy at the above address.