



Now more than ever.

GreatNonprofits has recognized Hands as a Top-Rated Nonprofit for the tenth year in a row



2019 Annual Report  
**hands**  
across the **sea**



Guidestar has awarded Hands its Platinum Seal of Transparency for the third year in a row

# PAN-DEM-IC

The arrival of Covid-19 in the Eastern Caribbean knocked us back on our heels. Our child literacy delivery model is based on giving every child access to borrowing and reading new amazing books via a lending library in their school. When community lockdowns were enforced and schools started to close, we thought: now we are going to have to get creative. So we did.

## Hands Takeaway Books Program

When Covid-19 hit Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Ministries of Education scrambled to ramp up online learning. We feared that, without books to read—especially for families without suitable devices or internet connectivity—children would lose ground on the

literacy gains they've made. With guidance from our Hands Literacy Links we created the Hands Takeaway Books Program.

For schools ready to participate, students could borrow and return books from Hands school libraries. Schools could also place library books, selected by teachers for their students, into homework packets that parents

It took the world by surprise.  
What do we do now?  
How do we go forward?



On Antigua, Hands Literacy Links Hyacinth Barriero (above) and Vernest Mack culled books from school libraries and delivered them to local children and parents.

would collect at the school gate. All virus protocols were strictly observed.

## Bringing Books to Communities

To keep children reading, we got creative in other ways. Hands Literacy Links Vernest and Hyacinth in Antigua culled older books from school libraries, sorted them by age and reading level, and traveled from village to vil-



Hands Literacy Links, working with school principals and following Covid-19 safety protocols, helped re-open school libraries.



Hands Literacy Links such as Dominica's Giselle Laurent (left) created video and audio read-alouds for children and parents on YouTube, and on local radio and TV channels.

lage, giving books away to children and grownups.

### Creating Read-Alouds for Kids

Hands Literacy Links Heidi, Giselle, and Yvette created numerous read-alouds for YouTube, local radio and TV channels, and in-person delivery to small groups at schools. The mix included books featured in the *Hands Teachers Resource Guide to the Library (Grades K-3)*.

### "Library Open Days"

In rural areas of Dominica, Hands Lit-

eracy Links Giselle and Lize hosted "Library Open Days." Children and parents attended for read-alouds, skits, plays, and book borrowing. It was a great way to provide moral support for all ages while schools were closed, and to help parents engage their children in literacy.

### Reestablishing School Libraries

Now that schools are back in session, our Literacy Links are hard at work helping schools to reassemble and reorganize their libraries and rekindle the passion for reading.



Across the region, Hands Literacy Links encouraged parents to read with their children at home.

# Charting Our Course

The new Executive Director of Hands, Amanda Sherlip, is continuing and building on the Hands mission to advance child literacy

I am delighted to serve as the Executive Director of Hands Across the Sea. These months since coming onboard with Hands have been incredibly rewarding as



I have jumped head-first into the work. The degree of activity and engagement at all levels of the organization has been remarkable—during a pandemic, no less. Just wow. What an incredible opportunity to get to work on something so meaningful with people so committed.

Amidst Covid-19 school closures and a health crisis, our on-island Literacy Links went above and beyond putting their skills and creativity towards ensuring children, families, and teachers had access to literacy resources. Internet access is expensive and not readily available. Our Literacy Links' grass-

roots-focused relationships with principals and communities made a positive difference in the midst of so much uncertainty. In Antigua and Barbuda, with Ministry of Education support, we culled old library books and gave them away in selected rural areas to keep parents and children reading. The response was overwhelmingly positive. In partnership with local broadcasters, we also created and distributed audio and video read-alouds to engage children and families who lack internet access. We could not have been prouder.

We are humbled that the USAID/OECS Early Learners Programme (ELP) has recognized Hands Across the Sea as a vital partner in education and literacy throughout the Eastern Caribbean. Recently, the ELP identified two gaps in the region's education system which were highlighted by the pandemic: the need for physical learning materials and books to be readily available, and better digital access. Both are key to ensuring fair and equitable educational opportunities. The ELP team also noted a third critical need: increased parental involvement. Primary school teachers are working to engage with and coach parents to reinforce their children's literacy skills and find opportunities to learn in everyday activities.

We are as committed as ever to being a partner in filling these programmatic gaps with culturally relevant books, teacher engagement, and now parental and broader community outreach. Hands Across the Sea is maintaining its investment in the CLASS program in primary and secondary schools, and now we are extending to include 491 preschools across the six countries we serve. In the upcoming school year, we are piloting pre-school programming in Grenada (more on next page), and look forward to building new and exciting community-oriented activities that invite parents and other family members into the joy and value of participating in their children's reading journeys. For the upcoming school year, we are expanding the book giveaway too: Literacy Links in three countries will be in communities distributing over 1,600 new books for students to keep as their own.

Covid-19 highlighted the importance of Hands Across

the Sea's literacy work, and thanks to you we are here to meet this moment. Now more than ever, it is critical that we sustain and grow the literacy gains that have been made over these years. The children, educators, and families we serve

cannot do this alone, and we cannot do this without you.

Hands is in the best position it has ever been thanks to the vision and leadership of our Co-Founders, Harriet and T.L. Linskey, our highly engaged Board of Directors, our skilled and passionate Literacy Links, and you—our dedicated community of friends and supporters. Our foundation is strong and there is so much for us to build upon as we advance

our mission in the years to come. I look forward to connecting with you and to the important work ahead.

*With gratitude,  
Amanda Sherlip*



Brand new, asked-for, culturally appropriate books arrive at Anse-La-Raye Primary School, St. Lucia (photo prior to Covid-19)

# Grassroots Mover Earns a Seat at the Table

Our approach has been and will be bottom-up and direct: We ask principals, librarians, teachers, and children what they need, and we get it to them. Now we've partnered with the region's intergovernmental organization, the OECS, to do even more

For years, Hands Across the Sea has been recognized as a leading literacy NGO providing books and reading resources to schools in the six independent OECS countries. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is an intergovernmental organization devoted to good governance and economic, social, and educational integration and collaboration. In 2015 we were invited to sit on the Regional Advisory Group for the Early Learners Programme, a \$10 million USAID/OECS-sponsored project with a goal to improve literacy levels by training the early grade teachers. We were the sole grassroots NGO in this group and our involvement has helped elevate the importance of school libraries as a resource for teachers.

This year we formalized the recognition of our work by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the OECS' Education Management Unit. The MOU provides Hands with a regional "stamp of approval." We are now a member of the "REG,"



the Regional Education Group whose other members include the Global Partnership for Education, the World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, USAID, UNICEF, and UNESCO.

In a recent webinar hosted by USAID and the OECS, Hands was cited several times as a valuable partner. We are becoming a household name in the region as a promoter of literacy and a supporter of students and educators. It is thanks to our donors who have helped us achieve so much in the region that we are offered a seat at this table.



# Where Literacy Begins

Early readers grow into lifelong readers. The historic 2020-2021 Hands Wish Lists shipment of 10,728 books to 491 pre-schools is sowing the seeds of a reading boom

The 2020-2021 school year presents a new and exciting endeavor for Hands Across the Sea as we expand our CLASS program to include most pre-schools serving children ages 3 to 5. With the addition of 491 pre-schools, we more than double our reach and help plant the seed of a love for reading in thousands of young



children throughout the Eastern Caribbean.

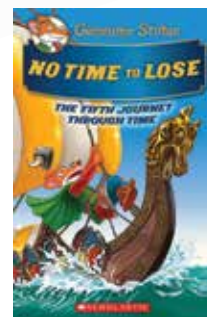
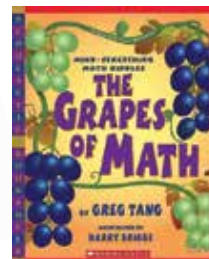
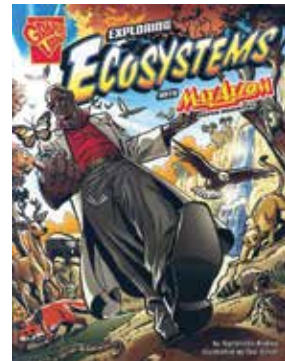
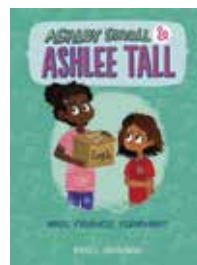
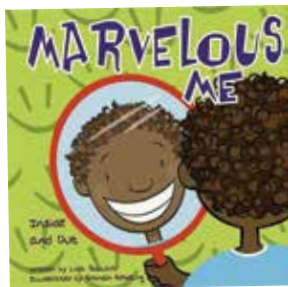
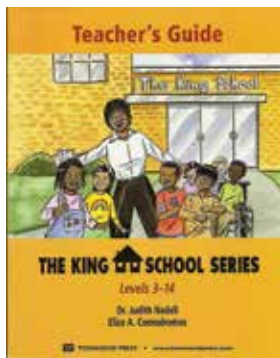
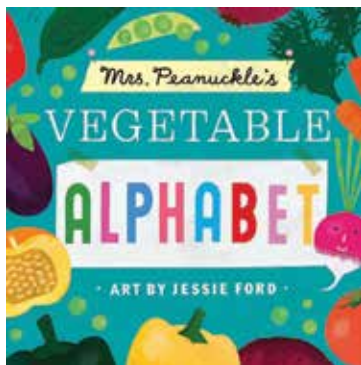
None of this would be possible without publisher World Book, whose donation of 520 sets of beautiful hardcover books about animals provided the impetus. Thanks to Hands donors, we have paired these books with an additional 10 to 15 fiction books per pre-school for their reading corners.

As we have learned over the past 13 years, it helps to engage teachers as much as possible. That's why we also shipped 10 Big Books to our Literacy Links in each country. Starting with Hands Literacy Links Gloria and Bernadette in Grenada, we will model for teachers and parents how to use the Big Books for read-aloud sessions, blanket nights, and "Open Library Days." The goal is to share the Big Books among schools, pilot a training program, and learn what works best. All of our Literacy Links will partner with the Early Childhood Education Officers on each island to determine how best to engage the youngest learners, their teachers, and parents in literacy and language development.

The timing of our pre-school pilot is perfect—as the OECS embarks on pre-school teacher training, we are complementing their efforts. From this strong foundation, we'll be growing our pre-school program in the years to come.

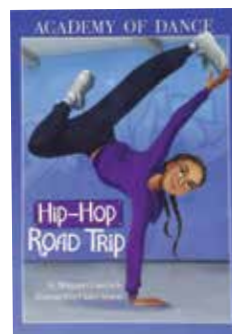
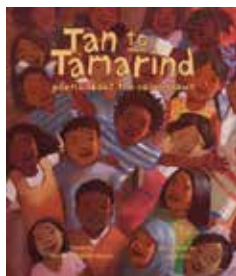
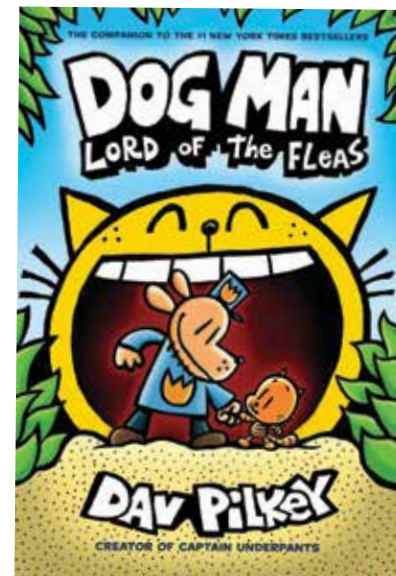
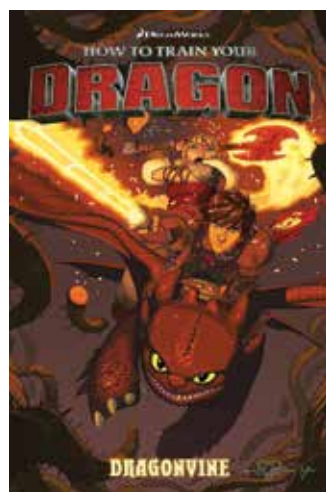
# The Books You Sent

For the **2020-2021 Hands Wish Lists** you helped send **20,441 books**—brand new, asked-for, age-appropriate—to **508 schools**, reaching **19,272 children**





## NEW AMAZING BOOKS



Since our start in 2007, we've kept busy . . .

**526,263** NEW AMAZING  
ASKED-FOR  
READING BOOKS

CHILDREN REACHED **139,986**

**873** SCHOOL LIBRARIES  
CREATED OR  
REJUVENATED

COMMUNITY LIBRARIES  
& READING PROGRAMS **50**



# When Your School Gets Turned Upside Down

"Dear Hands Across the Sea, We received all the wonderful new books from your organization, and my principal asked me to be the coordinator for our new library. I am happy to say that we got our Student Librarian team (right) trained, we formed a library committee, and we timetabled a library period for all classes. Our library was in full, wonderful swing.

"But one of our beloved teachers died. And then Covid-19 hit. The lockdown was so sudden we did not even have time to get the borrowed library books returned. Class teachers like myself had to start from scratch to set up and teach online. Our school was turned upside down.

"But our students are still reading. One called me last week and read to me over the phone to show me how much



he had improved. He truly had! Another showed me over Zoom that he had started writing his own comic book.

"The impact of making new and interesting books available for our children is magical! Thanks to your organization we were able to see the light bulb go off in the heads of our students as they dis-

covered the joy and wonder of reading. Yesterday yet another parent called to thank me for her child's 'improved reading appetite.' Smile! That was music for my ears.

"I have also been very impressed with your two Hands Literacy Link ladies, Vernest Mack and Hyacinth Barriero, who helped us pack up the library and secure the books in case of a

hurricane. They are inspirational. They truly go above and beyond.

"Please keep up the great work you are doing. Let those who donate and sponsor know that they should not stop, because they are a part of life-changing work."

*Josanna Lockhart-Brown, Library Coordinator  
Antigua Wesleyan Junior Academy*

# When Your School Lacks a Library

St. Lucia Hands Literacy Link Clara Paul did not build a library for Reunion Primary School. She mentored and inspired the school's principal, teachers, and students to create their own



Clara (center) met with teachers to form a Library Committee to manage the project.



Book sale! Farewell to the school's assortment of decades-old "donation dumped" books.



School staff and volunteers painted murals, built bookshelves, and got the floor tiled.



Clara trained eight Student Librarians, from Grade 3 to Grade 6, to run the library.



The books are here! Hands sent 1,583 new asked-for books. Students color-coded the collection.



Grand opening! With government officials and alumni attending, the school swelled with pride.

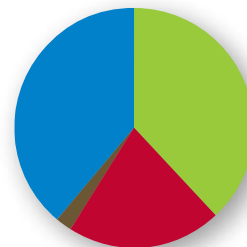


# Income & Expenses

Full financial documents are publicly available on our website

We are profoundly grateful and humbled by the tremendous show of support for child literacy in 2019. You stepped up for the American Sailing Association/Hands Across the Sea Caribbean Getaway Sweepstakes, and for our matching grants campaign during

#GivingTuesday. As a result, Hands came of age. Our book shipments are more targeted, our support materials are more effective, and our Literacy Links are creating, rejuvenating, and sustaining more school libraries than ever before. We owe it all to you.



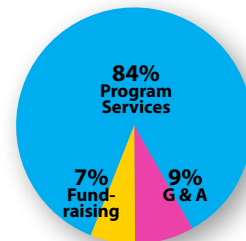
## 2019 Income: \$574,196

Individual \$220,283 • 38%

Foundation \$221,444 • 39%

Corporate \$117,690 • 21%

In Kind \$14,329 • 2%



## 2019 Expenses

As a U.S.-registered 501(c)(3) non-profit charity, our finances, including audited financials and IRS Form 990, are publicly available for inspection and download at: [www.handsacrossthessea.net/HandsCrew.htm#documents](http://www.handsacrossthessea.net/HandsCrew.htm#documents)

## Corporate Partners and Foundations

AIT Worldwide Logistics  
Allstate  
Amazon Smile Foundation  
American Sailing Association  
Baird Foundation  
Benevity Causes  
Bright Funds Foundation  
Caribbean Actuarial Association  
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Lasell College  
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Tropical Shipping  
Wishing Well, Inc.  
The Verandah Resort & Spa  
Vermont Community Foundation

## Family Foundations and Funds

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William Ewing Foundation  
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Ladera Foundation  
Donald R. and Cathey C. Lynn Fund

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Stephen E. Taylor Fund  
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## 2019 Hands Donors

Thanks to you, more Caribbean children are growing up reading.

### Gifts of \$25,000 and above

Benjamin R. Bibler Memorial Fund  
Beverly Foundation  
CIBC FirstCaribbean ComTrust Foundation  
Mustique Charitable Foundation  
The William Ewing Foundation

### Gifts of \$10,000 to \$24,999

David & Gretchen Cantor Caribbean Actural Association  
Christophe Harbours Foundation  
Meredith & Whitney George  
Ladera Foundation  
Mill Reef Fund  
Sandals Foundation  
Whitehead Foundation

### Gifts of \$5,000 to \$9,999

Aspen Grove Foundation  
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Nevis  
Chris Doyle & Ginny Barlow  
George Lewis  
The Donald R. Lynn and Cathcy C. Lynn Fund  
Stony Point Foundation  
Kerry Taylor  
Wishing Well, Inc.

### Gifts of \$2,000 to \$4,999

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Anthony Ferroni  
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MFUND, Inc.  
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Network for Good  
Russell & Jamie Niemie  
Galley Bay Resort & Spa  
Palm Island Resort & Spa  
Rotary Club of West Bay, Camden, Maine  
Mark Scott

### Gifts of \$1,000 to \$1,999

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### Gifts of \$250 to \$999

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Peter & Hilary Zachary  
John Zolck  
Steve Zuckerman and Debra Meyerson Family Fund

### Gifts of \$100 to \$249

Nancy Acaster  
Tammy Adair  
Wayne Alderman  
Rashawna Alfred  
Amazon Smile  
Robert Anderson  
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Anne Peirce Landis  
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Renee Leonard  
Sally Lippert  
Timothy Liston  
Fletcher Little  
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# HELLO HANDS

The library is a very peaceful, calm, and quiet place we go to let out all our worries and stress and clear our mind. —*Neferteffy*

Ciceron RC Combined School  
St. Lucia

I love to read because it will help me in my school work. —*Kiara*

Fancy Government School  
St. Vincent and the Grenadines

One day I read a story books. I love it. I love it so much. I want to say, thank you. —*Deundre*

Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School  
Grenada

Thank you Hands Across the Sea for donating these lovely and useful books to our school, I really appreciate them. I wish you will donate more things.

—*Charmaine*

Dublanc Primary School, Dominica

We love the books because they are colorful. —*Abrielle*

Millet Primary School, St. Lucia

Thank you for the books you have gave to my school to help us learn more and to give us a chance to have books to read.

—*Student, Grade 4*

Buckleys Primary School  
Antigua and Barbuda

Thank you Hands Across the Sea for sending us the marvelous and interesting books. Reading is a critical part of our education especially in Language Arts. I really appreciate your huge contribution to our school's library.

—*Orica*

Anse-La-Raye Primary School  
St. Lucia

It is good when you read. It can help you get what you need. So read. Read! Read! —*Ramey*

Antigua Wesleyan Junior Academy  
Antigua and Barbuda

Thank you for the books. They make me be a better reader. I really like the stories in the books. After reading the books I want to be a teacher. —*Student, Grade 6*

Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School  
Grenada

I'm thankful for the opportunity you have given us to rebuild our imagination and vocabulary.

—*Student, Form 3*

Mountain View Adventist Academy  
St. Vincent and the Grenadines

I think reading is important because it is fun! It teaches me if I should eat junk food. It makes my voice stronger. —*Shofar*

Laborie RC Boys Primary School  
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Thank you hands across the sea for donating books for My School and me. And God bless you always! I know that books are my future. —*Anjala*

Calder Government School  
St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Thanks for your continual contribution to the development of our children's literacy skills.

—*Teacher*

Union Island Secondary School  
St. Vincent and the Grenadines

I am happy for our new books. We will read them all! —*Shem*

Dorsetshire Hill Government School  
St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Thank you for the donation of books that will spark new brains in our country. Fireworks of knowledge will blow up and stars of inspiration will shine in the future of the night. —*Sheron*

Grenada Boys Secondary School  
Grenada

Thank you for the books you have send to me. I hope you keep sending more fun books to me. I will keep on reading the books you send to me. I appreciate the the books you have send to me and I will keep thanking you for the books you send to me. My friends read the books you send and they say the books is fun. I think they appreciate the books too. —*Your friend R, Grade 4*

J.T. Ambrose Primary School  
Antigua and Barbuda

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**P.O. Box 55071, Suite 85043**  
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