MORE THAN 60 YEARS ago, a Youth Education Organization was founded in Viet Nam, named “Gia Dinh Phat Hoa Pho”. It was later renamed to “Gia Dinh Phat Tu Viet Nam (GDPT)” and still continues on today. After another turn in Viet Nam’s history, GDPT was reborn and grew strongly in the United States. Still, its mission remains the same: to educate youth in the age of children to young adults.

In the 1960s, we witnessed the volunteer movement of the Peace Corps program established by President Kennedy which achieved great results. The pioneer experiences of the Peace Corps program are precious experiences that our generation can learn from and draw upon for beneficial lessons when we now begin the Bodhi Youth of America’s journey.

In the spirit of “learning the past to better understand the present”, we followed the strong will and pioneer spirit of our predecessors to create our own path of serving others. On this path, we put our hearts and minds into actions, even with just one small good deed a day. So, I sincerely invite all of You to embark on this path together. In the Dharma context, walking on the Bodhisattva path is to vow to recognize and transform our unwholesome mental formations and to help others to have peace and happiness. Whatever difficulties and obstacles come our ways are just challenges that would help us to become stronger and more determined. If we take a good look around us, we can see that there are young kids that need a gentle hand of a big sister or encouragement from a big brother. And in this way, our activities can heal and nurture those kids. The young generation of today is very active and contributive. Let us put our heads together to create, and work on projects which have exciting actions as well as benefiting others in order to bring to the young generation a precious opportunity of growing up holistically and solidly in a meaningful spiritual practice.

Remember, we can only give what we have. If you don’t have a loaf of bread, how can you give someone a loaf of bread?! We need to be honest with ourselves about our inner peace and ability, and not go against this natural law. Therefore, when working on BYA projects, we should not work until we are completely exhausted; but rather, remember to take it easy, relaxed, and approach work with an attitude that nurtures and increases our inner peace. Most importantly, we need to have a program of Spiritual Practice for individuals and groups among BYA’s activities. Cultivate to make yourself fresh and happy, and then you will definitely be able to pass on that freshness and happiness to everyone around you. Thanks to today’s modern technologies, we can be close to one another regardless of the distances. What a great happiness to be able to do that! Let us open our hearts to welcome and accept each other in any circumstances. And let us find ways to work productively, effectively, and efficiently then share those ways with everyone.

May we always have Unshakable Faith in the Dharma and a Smile on our faces to walk confidently on the path of service.

Venerable Thich Tu Luc
Translated to English by Sung Nguyen
Angela had a kick-off meeting in August 2008 to introduce BYA to Northern California. As a result, a solid core of youth leaders—Jennie, Mimi, Adam, Quyen, and Kate—emerged and are leading a pilot project that will launch in the next few months.

The group meets monthly to practice together and to design a BYA program suitable for the Bay Area. Because we recognize the economic challenges as well as a small leadership base, we chose to provide a youth program that would insert into existing programs. We are learning the CK-10 forms and have developed a preliminary program targeted at 6th graders (12 year olds) in an after-school program that will be delivered over 4 weeks. Our goal is to develop a 4-week introductory curriculum that a chapter anywhere could use to work with 12 year old kids by linking up with an existing organization—such as an after school program, boys & girls club, and boys & girl scouts. Our vision is to complement these well-established programs while introducing the MBA (Mind-Body-Action) ethos of BYA. We hope to launch the pilot program in May 2009.

In February, we had a weekend long Leadership Retreat guided by the Venerable Master ce Hang Truong. We started the retreat with these goals: to brainstorm and explore for ideas, activities, and programs, to find clarity, to create focus, and to learn. We began practicing leading warm-up exercises and CK-10 Forms. Then throughout the retreat, Master ce Hang Truong helped to guide the discussions and taught us in details the theory and philosophy of Integral Tai Chi as well as the needs for new, holistic organizations and programs for the youths to unfold their potential. Later, the brainstorm and evaluation sessions provided a chance to explore communication and leadership skills, to focus our youth leaders’ individual practice, and to strengthen the group’s commitment to each other and the project. We ended the retreat with a great sense of team commitment, a fun time, and good food. Most importantly, we clarified our purpose: that we are here to Motivate Youth in Changing Reality in an Engaged Way (CREW) and to support caring, compassionate youth.

Next month (March 2009), we are going to sponsor a special event to promote well-being and compassionate service. This outreach meeting at the Berryessa Branch library will provide us an opportunity to share some of the CK-10 forms and to assemble LN-4 prosthetic hands. It serves as a “test run” of the program we will provide over 4 weeks for the 12 year olds.

The CREW
(by various NCal Chapter members)
HB Chapter 2008 Report

The Bodhi Youth of America (BYA) kicked-off on April 20th, 2008 with positive energy. Exciting volunteer opportunities and new learning experiences were presented, along with a talk on how one can transform mind and body into action. The practice of mindfulness and Integral Tai Chi were introduced to provide mental and physical health benefits—when one is at one’s best mentally and physically and can improve oneself that is when one can truly help others.

BYA held two outdoors events in 2008 which took place in Corona Del Mar Beach in and Zion National Park. The BYA picnic held at Corona Del Mar Beach on August 23rd was filled with games, food, fun, and laughter with new and old friends. This event was followed shortly by an August 30th Labor Day weekend camping trip at Zion National Park. BYA members took a challenging hike at Angel’s Landing. Angel’s Landing, though challenging, was very well-worth the hike. The following day, BYA members hiked the Narrows, an extremely scenic hike along the riverbed. The focus of these outdoor events was to enjoy and appreciate our surroundings.

In addition to fun, BYA held a fundraising event for less fortunate children. The Hug-a-thon fundraising event had two purposes: to raise money, and, of equal importance, to encourage people to hug. The funds
raised were used to purchase and make gift packages for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. BYA was able to produce over one hundred gift packages for kids ranging in age from infant to seventeen years of age. Each package was labeled by gender and age group. Personal gift delivery was also given to various children in group homes, children’s battered shelters, and children hospitals.

BYA also participated in a weekend College Retreat (Nov. 7-9) at Deer Park Monastery to practice meditation, mindfulness, relaxation, and awareness. The retreat helped us to slow down life and enjoy the peaceful present moments.

HB Chapter 2009 Activities

Many exciting projects were identified—the following three will be the focus for the HB Chapter in 2009:

**BYA Monthly Hikes**

Adults and kids often forget to take the time to enjoy the outdoors and the beauty around us. Hiking is a great way to not only appreciate nature but also a fun way to exercise, meet new friends, and simply slow down our pace and enjoy life.

Each month BYA will organize a hike. Parents can choose to join in the hike or allow their kids to hike with BYA members. BYA can supervise kids as young as seven. For each hike, we will integrate one BYA activity or practice for the day. BYA activities may include: storytelling, starting kids to be “change agents” (teaching kids collecting change for charities), a recycling activity, etc.

For the month of February BYA has organized a hiking trip to Anza Borrego, located on the eastern side of San Diego County. Potential hikes for the year include: Holy Jim’s Fall, Weir Canyon Wilderness Park, Borrego Canyon to Red Rock Canyon, Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve, and any others suggested by the hikers.

**Hug-a-thon**

BYA will continue to promote Hug-a-thon fundraising for the year 2009. Funds raised will go to less fortunate children.

**Crafty Production from Recycling Project**

BYA supports going green. The Crafty Production from Recycling project educates children about recycling by creating crafty art, gear, material, or objects from used items. BYA plans to send the green message by practicing, providing ideas, and making recycling fun.

*Anh Tu*
ON OCTOBER 3RD, 2008, BYA launched its very first HUG-A-THON. The purpose of the hug-a-thon was to encourage people to embrace the wonderful practice of hugging as an innovative way of reaching out to others for healing and self-transformation through a hug of love and gratitude. The hug-a-thon was also to raise money to give less fortunate children a happy and hope-filled future.

The innovative idea of the hug-a-thon was inspired by Master CE Hang Truong. Unlike a walk-a-thon where you walk a certain number of miles on a specific day, the hug-a-thon huggers continue to hug and spread joy, love, and gratitude during the entire time of the hug-a-thon challenge. Huggers hug their loved ones and friends every day in a mindful way. Huggers were also encouraged to extend the hugging spirit to the outer circle of friends and even strangers. And of course, huggers asked their friends and family to sponsor them by donating at least one dollar a hug. This year the money raised by the hug-a-thon was dedicated to help providing a better future for less fortunate children.

“Give a happy hug for healing
Give a mindful hug for peace
Give a caring hug for compassion”

HUGGING DAY AT HB CENTRAL PARK - NOV. 30TH, 2008
We are happy to report that we had over 50 registered huggers and 100 sponsors for the 2008 Hug-A-Thon. We have achieved more than 6,500 hugs in total with lots of love, smiles, and happiness. We raised $4,692.12, 100% of which went to the international children’s hunger relief organizations and local children’s serving organizations. T-shirts were also sold to cover the administrative costs of the hug-a-thon so that 100% of the fund raised could go directly to the cause. Below is the detailed accounting of the funds raised and distributions of the funds to different children’s charitable organizations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hug-a-thon 2008 Fund Raising Report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funds received during the Hug-A-Thon:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funds received after the Hug-A-Thon:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Funds Raised by the Hug-A-Thon 2008:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donated to Children’s Hunger Relief Funds:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donated to International Children Assistance Network:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donated to Cambodia-People Improvement Organization:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gift bags hand delivered to Children in Veronica’s Home of Mercy in San Bernardino, Village of Hope Homes and Young Life Group Homes in Orange County, and Mattel Children’s Hospital in Los Angeles:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Funds Distributed from the Hug-A-Thon 2008</strong>*:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Remaining Funds to be used for BYA’s children programs:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Amount of distributed funds was estimated and sent forward before all raised funds received.

We are very excited at the success of our first hug-a-thon and the effect that the money raised will have on future generations. We hope you will continue to mindfully hug with love and gratitude and will spread the word to support us in our future hug-a-thons.

A really big and joyful HUG to you from the BYA Hug-A-Thon Team! And don’t let the hug end with you!

For the Hug-A-Thon Team,

Angela Vu •

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Hug-A-Thon - November 2008
BYA's 2008 Hug-a-thon for Children's Hope in Pictures

Hugging is Healing
by Master Ce Hang Truong

Hugging is as Old as Human History.
We hug to express our love and affection.
We hug in time of joy and grief.
But hugging can be very spiritual.

Why? How? When hugging, try to embrace and give yourselves up totally. Embrace each other’s good and ugliness, beauty and faults; embrace and accept all. Let our heart open as we embrace. Let our mind be totally free from prejudice and fear. Let the moment we touch each other become the moment our hearts open to a boundless space, transcending our little self to merge with the bigger, infinite Self. True love flows out from this kind of hug and heart. It is transformational. It is magical. Hugging opens up doors of wonders. Thus when we hug, close our eyes and open up our heart, relax our body and rest our arms, free our fear and feel the warmth and lights from each others’ heart. There is nothing we need to do or not do; just let it be and be in the light where the notion of self and other disappears as if morning dew evaporates when sun dawns.

Do not wait, friends, let us hug so our Spirit can soar.
Let us hug so hope and healing unfolds in all hearts.
Let us hug so grief and pain forever transformed.

Hugging Day
at HB Central Park
in November...