

May 20, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for Green Tree Yoga (GTY) with their request for funds to continue the trauma-sensitive and pain management yoga program serving communities of refugee background. This program fills a unique and vital gap in support services for displaced people -- those who have been forced to leave their homes due to political, economic, or other emergency disasters, and do not normally have access to the emotional and physical benefits that yoga can provide.

I first came in contact with Yael Calhoun and the great work of GTY when I served as director of University Neighborhood Partners, a department of the University of Utah with the purpose of bringing together university faculty, students, community agencies, and residents to offer programming that develops community capacity and overcomes many economic, linguistic, and social barriers. Over the years, GTY and UNP along with the College of Social Work have partnered on a variety of programs serving displaced populations locally. About 5 years ago, we began brainstorming about how to take the success of these programs locally to vulnerable populations still living in forced migration globally. Additionally, we wanted to develop programs that are culturally sensitive and can be implemented with non-native English speakers in ways that are sustainable? We hoped that what we were learning locally would inform the global work and vice-versa.

In 2015, the partners began a pilot program using the curriculum and the materials developed by GTY for teaching trauma-sensitive yoga inside refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border and this year, we will begin the pain management yoga program in Ban Mae Nae Soi and Mae La camps. There are still 150,000 people living in 9 refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border. Many families who are divided with family members here in Salt Lake City and other US locations, while grandparents, aunts and uncles continue to live in the camps. These camps were established about 35 years ago, as the Karen and Karenni communities fled the conflict and persecution in Burma. The living conditions in these camps are difficult and malnutrition continues to be the #1 problem in these communities. There is significant trauma from the war experiences and from living in harsh conditions that keep people separated from their families and communities. There is also much physical labor necessary just to do the daily chores of carrying water and wood, rations, etc. Through the Bridging Borders program, <https://continuum.utah.edu/features/bridging-borders/> teams of faculty, students and professionals work inside these camps annually providing valuable trainings in a Train the Trainer model. The addition of the GTY Yoga programs has been powerful in these settings, as it is a healing practice that can be used with all ages and people varying abilities. The success of this program represents several years of work as Yael and colleagues worked on different approaches with local communities of refugee background and incorporating their feedback all along the way.

GTY has adapted program design to incorporate cultural considerations to ensure successful implementation that can be benefitting a broad range of populations. Most importantly, GTY is an organization that is making a positive difference in the lives of individuals in our community and globally.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosemarie Hunter".

Rosemarie Hunter, Ph.D., LCSW  
Associate Professor  
Director, Bridging Borders  
College of Social Work  
University of Utah