

Roots of Peace— Turning Mines into Vines

Roots of Peace, a non-profit NGO, works hard to provide solutions to landmine stricken countries and communities around the world.

By Stacy L. Smith, MAIC

From Mines to Vines

Roots of Peace was founded in 1997 with a clear mission—"to rid the world of landmines by transforming toxic mine fields into thriving farm land," and also into vineyards. Founder/Director Heidi Kuhn established the non-profit NGO based in California's wine country after the death of Princess Diana in 1997. "Her legacy in catapulting the issue of landmines to the forefront of the international agenda during the last few weeks of her life inspired the hearts of global citizens to care about these deadly seeds of destruction," says Kuhn. With this legacy in mind, Roots of Peace is making progress by turning "Mines into Vines" and by extending beyond the traditional role of a NGO. Kuhn



■ In May 1999, a fundraiser for "Mines to Vines" raised \$30,000 for demining in Croatia. Pictured from left to right are Robert Mondavi, Margrit Brever Mondavi, Jerry White, Heidi Kuhn and Armand Assante.

believes that Roots of Peace will be "a catalyst that brings new resources, new energy and greater public awareness to the cause of a landmine-free world by creating innovative and highly energized public and private partnerships."

The Roots of Peace Solution

Roots of Peace provides a comprehensive, long-term solution to landmine-stricken countries and communities on the following four fronts: awareness, removal, treatment and restoration.

Awareness

In December 2000, the U.S. Department of State's Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs (HDP) joined efforts with Roots of Peace to launch a \$1 million (U.S.) ad campaign designed to make San Francisco, CA and Washington, D.C. residents and commuters aware of the threat of landmines. Advertisements displayed in backlit bus shelters force area residents and commuters to imagine the effect landmines would have on their lives. In addition, these advertisements provide information for residents and commuters interested in participating in the landmine effort through donations to Roots of Peace and the Slovenian International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victim Assistance. "This project is a prime example of public-private partnerships working together for peace," Kuhn said. Contributions from Digitas Advertising Agency, Infinity Outdoor



ROOTS OF PEACE

and BelAire Displays made the awareness campaign possible. The campaign ran from December 2000 to April 2001 in San Francisco and is still on display in Washington, D.C.

Management

The Roots of Peace solution, involving the removal of landmines/UXO, also includes public-private partnerships with companies such as AutoDesk, a software company working to assist demining activities worldwide. In cooperation with AutoDesk, Roots of Peace supports greater use of sophisticated Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. With the right data and information gathered and plotted accurately on digital maps, demining decisions are better and safer eliminating many of the threats faced by men and dogs in the field.

Treatment & Restoration

As part of the solution to eliminating the threat of landmines, Roots of Peace also provides victims with physical, psychological, and social treatment and rehabilitation. In addition, land affected by landmines is also restored for productive, environmentally responsible and sustainable agricultural use.

Joint Venture with the U.S. Department of State

In January 2000, a public-private partnership team composed of U.S. Department of State, NGOs and U.S. corporate representatives traveled to



■ In June 2000, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke at a reception on landmine awareness sponsored by Roots of Peace.

Croatia in support of the government's Croatian Mine Action Center (CROMAC) and its humanitarian demining program. The visit was organized by Roots of Peace Founder/Director Heidi Kuhn to bring awareness and a comprehensive solution to the Croatian demining program. Those present on the mission included the following U.S. Government officials: James Lawrence, Director of Public-Private Partnerships for the Office of Special Representative of the President and the Secretary of State for Global Humanitarian Demining; Pat Patierno, Director of the State Department's Humanitarian Demining Program; and William Wood, Director of the State Department's Office of the Geographer and Global Issues. Representing the private sector were Heidi Kuhn, Founder/Director of Roots of Peace; Ann Laurence, Treasurer of the San Rafael Rotary Club; Bill Rus, Senior Analyst for AutoDesk; Richard Koch, Director of Public Relations for AutoDesk; Victoria Stack, President of International Communication Initiative; and Ali Gallagher,

Landmine Consultant for the University of Texas in Austin.

Led by CROMAC officials, the team visited agricultural areas heavily laden with landmines/UXO. "In personally touring the terrain, we collectively agreed that the best agricultural region for our Mines to Vines initiative was in Zadar, a grape-growing region with an 8,000-year-old history of producing wine," Kuhn said. Once assessed, this area would be cleared of landmines/UXO and reused for agricultural purposes. At the time, members of the team also hoped to develop and implement a clear strategy for funding future clearance missions. As a result of the visit, many public and private supporters such as the North Face company and the FedEx Corporation announced plans to supply additional resources for clearance missions.

The Roots of Peace Initiative

Just five months after the joint venture to Croatia, Roots of Peace collected its resources and funds totaling \$500,000 and began its four-front initiative in the designated region of Zadar. Roots of Peace headed clearance operations that took place in the Croatian villages of Dragalic, Ciste Male and Ciste Velika.

In May 2000, Roots of Peace completed its first international demining initiative in the Croatian village of Dragalic. As a result of the Balkan War (1991-1995), Dragalic's fields contained countless landmines/UXO. Through the Adopt-A-Minefield program, Roots of Peace funded and implemented projects clearing approximately 9,000 square kilometers of land. In addition to clearance operations, Roots of Peace also replanted fields with grapevines in the once war-torn region.

Roots of Peace finished its second demining project in the villages of Ciste Male and Ciste Velika during

July 2000. In collaboration with the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy, and the International Trust Fund, Roots of Peace demined over 100 acres of land in the two villages.

Conclusion

Since 1997, the humanitarian efforts of Roots of Peace have led to funding and implementation of landmine awareness, removal, treatment and restoration. Kuhn attributes the success of the Roots of Peace solution and initiatives that convert landmine-laden fields into plentiful farmland due to the "persistence and partnership [of] ordinary citizens" who have turned "ideas into reality." ■

All photos courtesy of Roots of Peace



■ In March 2000, Kuhn (second from left) met with Roots of Peace activists Tor Kenward, Vice President of Beringer Wine Estates; Miljenko Grgich, President of Grgich Hills Cellars; and Nancy Night, Vice President of Public Relations for Robert Mondavi Winery, to define the "Mines to Vines" strategy.

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