

Choose Kindness Foundation (CKF) President and Board Member  
(Doug and Linda) Meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama

### Introduction

Doug and Linda were thrilled and humbled to receive an invitation from Tom Tait, leader of the Cities of Kindness project, to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama (HHDL) to share the accomplishments of the Choose Kindness Foundation. Those accomplishments have come from the passion, hard work, insights, and creativity the entire CKF team.

Earlier in the week we watched HHDL host two Compassionate Leadership Summit sessions with youth leaders from around the world. While some presenters shared their accomplishments, these youth mostly described the problems they were facing, both as individuals and as leaders

[Compassionate Leadership](#) Summit sessions with youth leaders from around the world. Not surprisingly, these youth mostly described the problems they were facing, both as individuals and in their leadership roles. A few of them also shared positive accomplishments as leaders.

In contrast, we decided to share only good news, focusing specifically on the positive accomplishments of the Foundation with individuals who most need kindness: students in high poverty/minority schools, youth in distress, and prisoners.

We were heartened by our sense that our good news brought joy to HHDL. Here, you can see us standing behind His Holiness, each holding one of his hands. To our surprise he drew our hands close to him so they were touching each of his cheeks, a moment etched forever in our hearts.



## **CKF Accomplishments**

The foundation is teaching mindfulness and loving kindness to almost 6500 prisoners and over 1,000 distressed youth of color. In addition CKF school kindness grants have impacted 72,829 students directly and an additional 211,500 students indirectly.

## Schools

- The CKF has had a direct impact on the 71,829 students who have attended schools that have received a CKF kindness grant. The grants focused on multiple ways to teach and encourage the use of these four kindness skills: being friendly, offering help, showing appreciation, and reaching out to those with serious problems.
- 211,500 students were impacted indirectly by CKF. Both Philadelphia and San Antonio Independent School Districts (SAISD) received funding for a small number of schools. The success of these grants stimulated these districts to *invest their own funds* to encourage kindness in more schools.

San Antonio ISD gave kindness funding to 70 additional schools (about 36,500 students), while Philly gave funding to every school in the district (about 175,000 students).

A grand total of approximately 283,000 students have attended schools that received funds to increase kindness.

- The Philadelphia CKF grants initially went to the subdistrict experiencing the greatest disruptive student behavior. A quasi-experimental research study on student perceptions of the prevalence of bullying found that the students in the CKF-funded schools reported less bullying than the comparison schools.
- Leaders from 59 schools that received CKF kindness grants indicated the CKF Kindness grants prevented reductions in student kindness that most schools experienced during the COVID 2021-22 school year.

## Social services

The CKF sponsored social service organizations to provide facilitated-group sessions to present mindful kindness to over 1,000 distressed youth of color using the CKF book “Lasting Happiness (LH):A Guide for Teens and Young Adults”. Research with youth from an alternative high school found that:

- 1) LH students continued their high school education with fewer dropping out of school as compared to the control group/
- 2) LH students reported a decline in the frequency of their negative mental thoughts, such as:

- I am often upset because of something that happened unexpectedly.
- I feel unable to control the important things in my life?
- I often feel nervous or stressed.
- I often cannot cope with all of the things I had to do.
- I am often angry over what has happened that was outside of my control.
- I often feel difficulties are increasing so much that I cannot overcome them.

The LH course has also been used with single mothers, youth in foster care, and wholistic enrichment programs involving sports and dance.

### **Public safety**

The initial work on Spreading Kindness began over 14 years ago with Doug's extensive correspondence and engagement with about a dozen incarcerated men, mostly convicted of murder. The original four men, who became co-authors of "Saint Badass: Personal Transformation in Tucker Max Hell," made remarkable transformations. Most of the other eight have made transformative changes as well. These experiences demonstrated that if these men, literally living in a hell, can transform their lives, then anyone can. NO excuses!

In recent kindness work, over 5000 incarcerated persons from 14 states have enrolled in a Mindful Kindness Program for adults, using the CKF book "How Love Wins." The program has spread through word of mouth. Four of the inmates in California recruited over 640 other inmates to take the Mindful Kindness Program. The visionary behind this public safety project, Ernesto Rodrigues, developed the Mindful Kindness Program and has made many other contributions, for example, writing an instructional program for how to end membership in a gang, which is very hard to do.

### **Summary of our visit with His Holiness the Dalai Lama**

When HHDL joined us in his private meeting room lots of others came in with him— one was his personal photographer and one was his translator who sat very close to him. He never had a moment's break, tea or anything before he sat to meet with us. Linda presented him with the Kashmir Khata and one of her home-made mugs — noting its color, that of the monk's robes with a sparkly white rim, likened to the sparkling blessings of his teachings.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama started right off talking about his lifetime work in altruism, which he's pledging to spend the rest of his life teaching. Many times he touched his heart as he talked about teachings of the heart. The purpose of his life continues to be **to bring peace to the world**. He emphasized that his teaching is secular so that divisions over specific religions don't interfere with the message of his teachings. Doug assured him that CKF was also teaching in a secular manner.



We were surprised and encouraged to next hear of his recent visit from Chinese professors, who saw the value of teaching altruism and endorsed his ideas about Buddhism. His Holiness then shared with us that now there is renewed interest in Buddhism in China. It's happening because China has made Tibet part of China. And the increasing number of Chinese Buddhist gives HHDL great hope and comfort in the midst of the what he and the Tibetan people have and are going through.

Then he went into talking about education and youth and the importance of cultivating this altruism/compassion from the heart. He feels that western education focuses on the thinking mind while ignoring the heart. It doesn't develop altruism and warm, caring communities.

At this point Doug described how the Choose Kindness Foundation is teaching kindness to students, to youth who are in distress, and to prisoners. The translator translated all the messages very quickly. HHDL responded half a dozen times with "Wonderful", after Doug shared these different examples of the large-scale impact of the Choose Kindness foundation projects.



Suddenly there were lots of pictures being taken of us with HHDL as our interview time was coming to an end. We were delighted when His Holiness gave each of us a Buddha he first blessed to his forehead.



We were encouraged to hear HHDL finish by talking about his excellent health. (Other than problems we observed with his knees where he needs help moving from place to place). He said he sleeps nine hours a day and eats nutritious food. He plans on living another 15 to 20 years!

## Wrapping Up

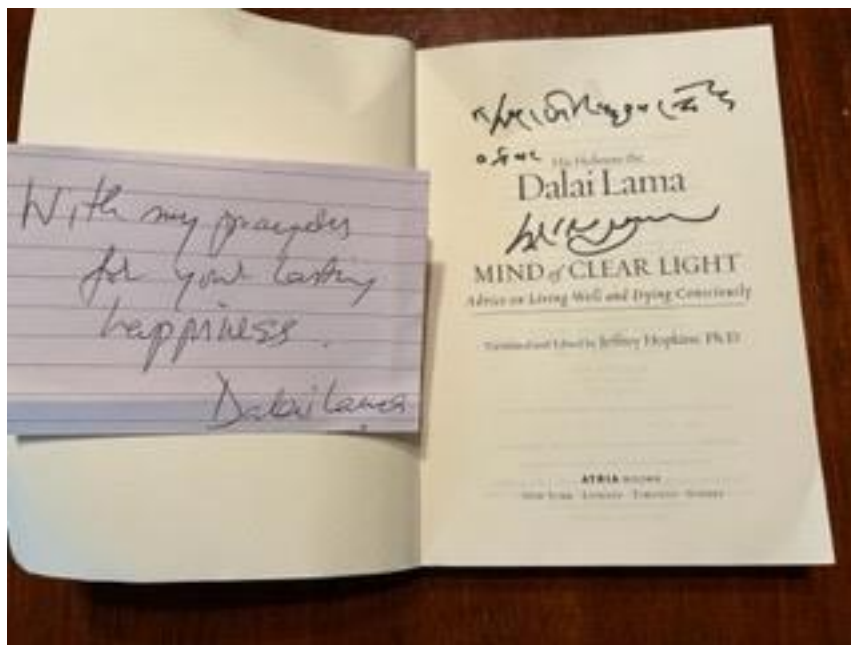


From our perspective one of the most important outcomes was that in our debrief after our visit with HHDL, Lama Tenzin, his Peace Envoy who arranges events and brings guests to meet with HHDL, requested two copies, (one for HHDL and one for himself) of the three CKF books. *Saint Badass: Personal Transformation in Tucker*



Max Hell, a book coauthored by Doug and several inmates describing the experiences of the incarcerated as they endured prison life and learned about mindful kindness;  
The other two books, Lasting Happiness: A Guide for Teens and Young Adults; and How Love Wins, which was written for individuals over 30 provide guidance in learning the practice of mindful kindness.

The meeting ended with a touching event: Doug brought a copy of HHDL's "Mind of Clear Light, Advice on Dying And Living a Better Life" which HHDL autographed with exquisite Tibetan script. Just as we left, one of his attendants came up with the translation on a piece of paper that said, "With my prayers for your lasting happiness" Dalai Lama. It struck Doug to see that HHDL's blessing used *lasting happiness*, the title of one of Doug's books.



Linda and I are deeply grateful to have spent this time with His Holiness, and, through the work of the CKF, will continue to spread kindness.