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Letter from the Managing Editor

## Hands for change

How many hands have you touched this year? In the two years that *SOCIETY Charlotte Magazine* has existed (happy second birthday, team!), our goal has been to cover an average of 30 nonprofit events each month. In the one year that I have been Managing Editor, I have covered about 15 of those events each month. Let's say every occasion warrants at least one handshake. That means I have touched an estimated 180 hands in one year. Although, the day I wrote this letter, I did get seven handshakes and one hug at a charity golf tournament.

The significance of these simple connections struck me when I interviewed *Silent Images'* founder David Johnson (pages 20-21). We missed our handshake because we spoke while he was in Myanmar, though I did make up for it when I met two of his staff members, Lydia Walker and Holly Gernatt, for a follow-up interview. Johnson tells stories of hope in spite of unjust circumstances, and we spent some time talking about *Silent Images'* exploration of child homelessness through videography. One thing he said was: "It's not just about child homelessness and a bunch



of stats, it's about these young children with names and with dreams and with stories, and that's what's going to keep people caring and engaging in our city."

Handshakes keep me engaged. They root me to a conversation at a nonprofit event, which in turn activates my own storytelling through *SOCIETY Charlotte*. These hands are attached to people with all types of backgrounds and missions.

**These hands build houses.** At *Habitat for Humanity's A Night with Habitat* (page 26), I met Ashley Stevenson, who received (and helped construct) the house she dreamed of for her children. I met Mike Warner, Director of Development, and David Welter, a Habitat Young Professionals board member, who both expressed the meaning behind a build.

**These hands propel children's futures forward.** At the *Celebrating Community Collaboration* breakfast for *Citizen Schools North Carolina*, Executive Director Jake House expounded on the gifts of "citizen teachers" who bring real-life experiences to kids in our community (page 30). At the *Charity League of Charlotte's* 33rd annual *Fashion Show and Silent Auction Luncheon* (page 6), Nanine Hartzenbusch Fox, President, discussed how women in the community can commit to helping supply children with school essentials.

**These hands supply support systems:** Andrea Bushrod, a volunteer at *Wing Haven Gardens* during *Hands On Charlotte Day 2014* (page 35), helped expedite the work of the nonprofit's small staff by spending a morning beautifying the

children's garden. Kim Mauney, a host for the *Mint Museum Auxiliary's Room to Bloom* series (pages 8-9), opened the doors of her home to hundreds of arts patrons for the *CommenceMINT* fundraiser.

Every event that I attend, with a notebook and pen in my own hands, I notice so many hands for change in our city, whether they belong to the beneficiary presenting the mission moment, the board member issuing a call for action, the CEO welcoming the crowd, the volunteer handing out name tags, or the quiet guest who is just along for the ride and perhaps a glass of fine wine. **Whoever you are, you have inspired us and our storytelling for two years, and we hope to inspire others to join your efforts.**

So think about it. Who will you shake hands with today? Who will you reach for, and who will you reach out to? The best part of our life stories is this element of suspense—and we're ready to see what you do next. Surprise us.

—Katie Toussaint

**On the cover:** A volunteer model slung his jacket over his shoulder during the *Charity League of Charlotte's* 33rd annual *Fashion Show and Silent Auction Luncheon*, much to the delight of the crowd. He and other young models were outfitted in children's attire by Magic Windows at Phillips Place for the benefit, which took place at Carmel Country Club on March 27. The ensemble: Ike Behar blazer, Ralph Lauren shirt, Vineyard Vines bow tie, Florence Eiseman shorts. Photo by Dianna Augustine. Story on page 6.

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