One Year of Working Hand in Hand:

Dear Friends of Hand in Hand,

What a year! Hand in Hand was birthed in Fall 2010 alongside the bold and visionary leadership of the National Domestic Workers Alliance during a time of severe attacks on workers’ rights to organize, aggressive policies to criminalize immigrants, and rampant cuts to the social services that allow people with disabilities, seniors and others to live independently.

One year ago, a few of us decided to take a leap of faith. We boldly—

- seized the opportunity to organize domestic employers nationally, alongside domestic workers, to transform the industry together;
- supported employers of housecleaners, nannies and direct care-givers to develop fair employment relationships that result in mutual-respect and well-being;
- developed San Francisco and Los Angeles chapters focused on the CA Domestic Workers Bill of Rights and continued to organize with our founding partner, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice in NY;
- and, nationally, helped launch Caring Across Generations, to address the care crisis impacting all of our communities.

The “us” of Hand in Hand is now much larger. Our leadership includes the grandchildren of elders who seek the support of homecare workers; middle-aged people with disabilities who could not get up each day to go to work without their attendants; students raised by nannies; mothers struggling to figure out nanny-shares; people of faith who employ part time housecleaners; and thirty-somethings facing the challenge of having a parent with early-onset-Alzheimer. In one year, this deeply committed and growing leadership laid a strong foundation towards fulfilling our mission:

Hand in Hand is a national network of individuals, families and organizations of people who benefit from the work of directcare-attendants, nannies, housecleaners and other domestic workers. The Hand in Hand community comes together around the conviction that good working conditions benefit workers and employers alike. We envision a future where people live in caring communities that recognize all of our interdependence. Therefore, Hand in Hand focuses on a two-fold mission. First, we support domestic employers to collaborate with workers in establishing fair, mutually beneficial employment arrangements. Second, we pursue changes in cultural norms, public policies and labor regulations that promote dignity and respect for domestic workers and all of our communities. (Work in Progress Draft, 11/1/11)

Fulfilling our mission is not easy—our communities are pitted against each other- affluent and low-income; Black and White; immigrant and citizen; home-attendant and person with a disability. Each of us has much to learn about each other’s communities and how we can work together to build the cross-generational caring communities that we all need. Our work is transforming our communities and ourselves. We are transforming from frameworks of fear to hope, from scarcity to abundance, from narrowness to spaciousness. This is what Transformative Organizing is all about… and Hand in Hand is doing it!

As Hand in Hand enters our second year, there are a wide range of individuals and communities occupying (or liberating) public spaces in cities and towns across the country. The Occupy Movement brings renewed attention and energy to a commitment that Hand in Hand shares—however challenging it may be, working together is worth it. I am so grateful to be working with all of you, taking steps forward every day, to build the caring communities we all need and deserve.

With Respect,
Danielle Feris
National Director
Building Campaigns:  
The CA Domestic Workers Bill of Rights  
& Caring Across Generations

The CA Domestic Workers Bill of Rights campaign is lead by the California Domestic Workers Coalition to right the wrong of historical exclusions of domestic workers from labor law and provide rights specific to the industry. Hand in Hand helps develop campaign strategy and advocates for the bill at press conferences, rallies, at lobby visits and legislative hearings. We are hopeful for a victory in 2012! For more information, visit: www.domestic-workers.org and www.cadomesticworkers.org

“Having clear guidelines helps employers understand what to do. We want to provide the best working environment possible for the people caring for our children.”
–Meg Yardley, Hand in Hand Nanny-Employer Leader testifying at a Human Rights Tribunal on the CA Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.

Caring Across Generations (CAG) is a national campaign that aims to transform the direct-care industry so it works for everyone. Someone in our country turns 65 years old every 8 seconds. In that context, domestic workers originally hired to do housecleaning are increasingly asked to provide eldercare to aging members of the household. CAG is a broad visionary campaign to bring together worker and employer communities that have historically not worked together in this much depth on a national level. Hand in Hand is on the CAG Leadership Team and brings in the voice of domestic employers, seniors and people with disabilities, to help craft legislation, messaging, and strategy; and to plan meetings, educational events and public actions. For more information please visit: www.caringacrossgenerations.org.

Caring Across Generations aims to:

- Protect the social safety net, including Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security,
- Create millions of new quality homecare jobs, with a path to unionization,
- Provide training that benefits worker and employer,
- Develop a path to citizenship for homecare workers,
- Build new supports for individuals and families who need support and care in the home.

“As a domestic employer, it has always been important to me to create a just workplace and a respectful relationship with the people who help me support my loved ones. I am impressed that Hand in Hand has found such a powerful and positive way to articulate the value of the interdependence inherent in these relationships.” – Robin Shaffert, Hand in Hand member, employer of homecare workers.
Building Leadership:
Personal Reflection, Employment Practices, Political Analysis & Organizing Skills

Hand in Hand’s programs are largely member-led. To support our member leaders, we provide leadership development opportunities for employers, their family members and allies:

- Engages members about our personal experiences with domestic workers and supports us to understand our stories in a societal context.
- Provides support to employers to build positive relationships with workers in our homes through best employment practices and other resources.
- Educates about movements for worker, immigrant, disability and gender justice through community forums and trainings.
- Develops community-organizing skills through training, work-planning, practice and action-reflection.

“Growing up as the daughter of a diplomat, my family employed domestic workers at various points while living in the Global South. I also grew up in a house where my mom was my primary caregiver- she cooked us meals, cleaned the house, cared for myself & my little brother. Coming to an understanding of domestic work as a gendered division of labor that has been largely ignored & unacknowledged has been a central part of my participation in Hand in Hand, and has allowed me to develop a deep appreciation for all the care given to me throughout my life. Hand in Hand has expanded my vision for change and supported me in developing concrete organizing skills in base-building, facilitation, mobilization, event planning, and so much more”

-- Steph StClair, Hand in Hand Bay Area Nanny & Housecleaner Employer Working-Group Coordinator.

Building Partnerships & Alliances:
Interfaith, Disability and Senior Rights Organizations

Hand in Hand works in partnership with faith-based organizations including, Jewish Funds for Justice/Progressive Jewish Alliance and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ). Hand in Hand collaborates with local leadership on developing and sharing best organizing practices and connects local organizations to State-wide and National strategy.

Hand in Hand allies with senior and disability rights organizations, including ADAPT, Gray Panthers, the National Council on Independent Living, Planning for Elders, and the Silicon Valley Independent Living Center. Hand in Hand supports these organizations to participate and take leadership in Caring Across Generations; and brings these organizations to National Domestic Workers Alliance gatherings to facilitate disability and senior rights workshops.
What Our Partners and Allies Say About Working Hand in Hand:

“Hand In Hand is a key partner in the CA Domestic Workers Bill of Rights campaign. Having employers speak on behalf of the bill makes a huge difference in developing successful media and legislative strategies. The relationships Hand in Hand is building on a one-on-one and community level between workers and employers (people with disabilities, seniors, nanny-employers and others) helps us broaden our understanding of who is a part of our community, and what it will take to transform the domestic work industry so that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.”
– Andrea Cristina Mercado, Lead Organizer for the CA Domestic Workers Coalition, www.cadomesticworkers.org

“Since the passage of the New York State Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in 2010, JFREJ has continued to organize domestic employers as we have done since 2002. The emergence of Hand in Hand has allowed JFREJ to link local to national and expand the community of employers we work with. Together, JFREJ and Hand in Hand are better positioned to help create a just system that brings dignity to all.”
– Rachel McCullough, JFREJ Community Organizer, www.JFREJ.org

“Working with Hand in Hand has given ADAPT the ability to strengthen its networks with organized domestic workers. The demonstration of power through Hand in Hand’s collaboration came with the presence of workers at the Medicaid Matters rally in Washington, DC. I appreciate the authentic relationship, community and respect in the work with Hand in Hand.”
– Rahnee Patrick, Leader of ADAPT, www.ADAPT.org

Find out more & get involved!
www.domesticemployers.org,
or contact Hand in Hand National Director, Danielle Feris:
domesticemployers@gmail.com, 646-202-3962
“like” us on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/domesticemployers

To Donate: Make checks out to: Jewish Funds for Justice (write Hand in Hand in the memo)
and send to: Hand in Hand, 1822 Carleton St, Berkeley CA 94703.
By credit card, visit: http://bit.ly/hihdonation

Thank you to all Hand in Hand leaders, donors and allies for your commitment and vision. Special thanks to Hand in Hand’s National Leadership Team: Betsey McGee, Elly Kugler, Gayle Kirshenbaum, Jessica Lehman, Jill Shenker, Lane Levine, Linda Wells, Vered Meir.