

# The Fairhaven Project



## THE PROGRAM

A public/private partnership program between the U.S. State Department and Fairhaven, MA - headquartered Northeast Maritime Institute, The Fairhaven Project is an inter-cultural leadership program that brings young adults from conflicted areas of the world to the U.S. for several weeks at a time to live and work together aboard a Tall Ship.

Part vocational training, part oceanographic research, part conflict resolution, part team-building, the program creates an opportunity for young adults whose lives have been personally affected by conflict and violence to live and work side-by-side with the 'perceived' enemy. Individuals who first consider themselves enemies, begin to bond as teammates and friends.

The Fairhaven Project's inaugural session was held in summer 2008 when three Israeli students joined three Palestinian students (seventeen year olds; male and female) in Fairhaven, Massachusetts for three-weeks to live and work aboard the 74-foot tall ship, *S/V Fritha*. A thirty-minute documentary of the inaugural session chronicles the lives of these six individuals during those three weeks.

In addition to learning topics such as coastal navigation, seamanship and marine ecology, students plan and cook their own meals, collaborate on projects and visit cultural sites – all the while learning vital lessons about teamwork and equality.

Guided discussions focus on ways to improve the prospects for peace. Above all, the program provides participants with a safe harbor ('Fairhaven') – a place to be safe and live as children. Students carry the dialogue forward to their homeland, bringing the program's message of peace and equality to a larger audience and through media such as the internet and video documentaries.

The plan is to use *The Fairhaven Project* in 2009, and in subsequent years, as a model for bringing together young adults from the world's hot spots, not just for conflict resolution but for economic development as well. Plans to expand the program to multiple-sessions per year both in the U.S. and foreign locals are also envisioned. Additional information on the program may be found at: [www.thefairhavenproject.com](http://www.thefairhavenproject.com).



The mission of *The Fairhaven Project* is to foster leadership development among young adults living in conflicted areas of the world through maritime education and training programs that integrate traditional sea-going experiences with ocean science, technology and media to augment conflict resolution and team-building exercises.

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The 2008 program brought the Arab-Israeli conflict to a very human level and, by program's end, each understood the "other side's" perspective. The students also returned home with an alternative vision of the United States. The transformative nature of this program advances the cause of peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, and provides impressionable youths in the region an alternative path to peace. The 2008 program was funded by Northeast Maritime Institute.

## The Fairhaven Project 2008 Inaugural Program

In August 2008, three Israeli and three Palestinian 17-year-old male and female students participated in The Fairhaven Project's inaugural session in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. The U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and the consulate in Jerusalem hand-picked the students based on leadership, strength of character and maturity. During the program, the six students learned to sail the 74-ft. brigantine vessel, *S/V Fritha*, and were introduced to topics such as GPS navigation and navigational chart reading, oceanography, port operations, marine ecology and biology. The students sailed to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, in Woods Hole, MA, where they met with oceanographers and other scientists to discuss their research. They also made a number of cultural tours stretching from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, MA, to Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, to a day with Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Rhode Island. Structured discussions enabled the students to express their feelings about the situation in their homeland, and there was plenty of quiet time aboard the vessel to contemplate and casually talk about ways to improve the prospects for peace.

The students lived and worked aboard the vessel, planned and cooked their own meals (keeping in mind the dietary requirements of each member of the crew), and learned vital lessons about equality and teamwork. At the conclusion of the program, the students sailed overnight from Nantucket Island to Fairhaven, MA, but their true final exam came in the form of understanding. Each student returned with a greater understanding of the perspective of the other crew members, and barriers were broken down. Among the collaborative activities undertaken by the six was the designing of a burgee, or maritime flag, that later flew on *S/V Fritha* to represent the program.



With the assistance of Northeast Maritime Institute staff and an internet-based social network, the six students from the 2008 program are continuing their dialogue. The students also meet in person to discuss how to advance the program's goals at home. One Palestinian expressed interest in attending college in the United States, and arrangements to make that happen are underway.

An important, enduring component of the program is the

30-minute documentary of the 2008 inaugural session, "ONE – Sailing Towards a Horizon of Hope", which chronicles the lives of the six students during the three-week session. It is being used by U.S. Embassies and Consulates in the Middle East and other conflicted regions to stimulate student discussions and extend the message of equality and understanding to a larger audience.

In summer 2009, the original six students are returning to the program as mentors to four new students. Plans in future years include: expanding the program to include individuals from other conflicted areas; bringing students from Gaza; adding additional formal training and maritime certifications; incorporating American students; engaging U.S. universities for possible onward placement; and adding multiple sessions per year.



## 2009

Ten students will participate in this year's 2009 session, including the original six students plus a set of four new students (for a total of 5 Israelis and 5 Palestinians). The 2009 program will run three-weeks, beginning in Washington, DC, followed by a roughly six-day ocean sail on the *S/V Fritha* to Fairhaven, Massachusetts. The students will spend the third and final week at Northeast Maritime Institute, where they will complete coursework leading to a special certification in Basic Safety Training.

