



**HI USA**

**2024 Annual Report**

**90 Years of  
Opening Doors:**

**A Hostelling  
Legacy**



**HOSTELLING INTERNATIONAL USA (HI USA)** believes in the power of travel to foster a deeper understanding of people, places and the world around. This passion is at the heart of everything we do.

We bring travelers together in the largest hostel network in the USA, but that's just the start: From local tours and experiences to experiential learning programs, HI USA strives to bring moments of cultural understanding to our guests and community members. HI USA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, member-based organization.

***HI USA's Mission: To help all, especially the young, gain a greater understanding of the world and its people through hosting.***

For 90 years, HI USA has provided a network of affordable hostels in converted mansions, reinvented lighthouses, and historic urban buildings across the country:

## URBAN LOCATIONS

### HI BOSTON

Boston, MA

### HI CHICAGO,

**The J. Ira & Nicki Harris Family Hostel**

Chicago, IL

### HI LOS ANGELES SANTA MONICA

Santa Monica, CA

### HI NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans, LA

### HI NEW YORK CITY

New York, NY

### HI SACRAMENTO

Sacramento, CA

### HI SAN DIEGO DOWNTOWN

San Diego, CA

### HI SAN FRANCISCO DOWNTOWN

San Francisco, CA

### HI SAN FRANCISCO FISHERMAN'S WHARF

San Francisco, CA

## COASTAL LOCATIONS

### HI HYANNIS

Hyannis, MA

### HI MARTHA'S VINEYARD

West Tisbury, MA

### HI PIGEON POINT LIGHTHOUSE

Pescadero, CA

### HI POINT MONTARA LIGHTHOUSE

Montara, CA

### HI TRURO

Truro, MA



### Our SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

open doors to novice travelers and provide cultural exchange opportunities domestically and abroad:

**IOU Respect**

**Great Hostel Give Back**

**Explore America Travel Scholarship**

**Explore the World Travel Scholarship**

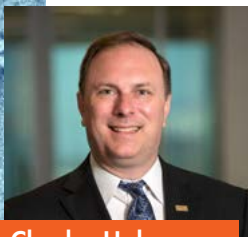
**Explore the World: First Passport Edition Travel Scholarship**

[hiusa.org/educational-programs](https://hiusa.org/educational-programs)





**Russ Hedge**  
HI USA President & CEO



**Charles Hokanson**  
HI USA Board Chair

In the early 1930s, Isabel and Monroe Smith witnessed the transformative power of hostelling during a trip to Europe. This new approach to youth travel emphasized accessibility – empowering young people, regardless of origin and means, to explore the world under their own initiative and immerse themselves in unfamiliar surroundings. Inspired by this vision, the Smiths opened the first U.S. youth hostel in Northfield, Massachusetts in 1934, laying the foundation for what would become HI USA.

Ninety years later, the travel landscape and hostelling have evolved, but our passion and mission have endured – “to help all, especially the young, gain a greater understanding of the world and its people.”

**This year’s annual report celebrates 90 years of hostelling in the United States. From the bike clubs of yesteryear to today’s volunteer-led guest experiences, from the life-changing Trips Program to travel scholarships that open doors for young people to explore the U.S. and world – HI USA’s achievements have only been possible thanks to our dedicated community of members, donors, volunteers, partners, guests, and staff. This is a tribute to the vibrant hostelling community that believes in the transformative power of the hostel stay.**

Our 90th year was one of remarkable growth and impact. In 2024, we welcomed 620,711 overnight stays across our 14 hostels, a testament to the continued appeal of our mission and the experiences we offer. Our volunteer program expanded to 422 dedicated volunteers, who helped enrich guest experiences, select scholarship recipients, and provide organizational leadership. We awarded 55 travel scholarships through our Explore America, Explore the World, and Explore the World: First Passport Edition programs, helping launch new journeys and dreams.

We were honored once again at Hostelworld’s Hoscars Awards as the Best Hostel Chain in North America, with special recognition for HI Boston and HI New Orleans. Our Explore the World Travel Scholarship program was also named as a finalist in the Global Youth Travel Awards, awarded by the World Youth, Student and Educational Travel Confederation. Through these milestones, we continued to open doors to understanding, connection, and global impact – welcoming guests and program participants from across the country and globe.

As we reflect on our history, we extend our thanks to the donors and partners recognized in this report. We also celebrate the dedication of our staff, past and present, and the unwavering support of HI USA’s Hostelling Legacy Society members, a special group of hostel supporters who have committed to leaving a lasting contribution to our mission through estate gifts.

This report is a celebration of legacy: a tribute to 90 years of opening our doors to millions of hostellers seeking a deeper understanding of the world and its diverse cultures through travel. We are excited about what lies ahead and look forward to your continued support as we work together to strengthen and enhance our mission for future generations.

With gratitude,

**Charles Hokanson**  
HI USA Board Chair

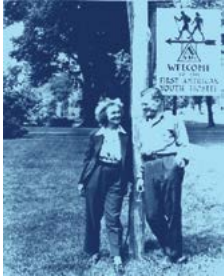
**Russ Hedge**  
HI USA President & CEO

# 90 Years of Opening Doors: A Hostelling Legacy

## 1930-1950s

### Founding of Hostelling in the U.S. & American Youth Hostels (AYH)

While in Germany leading a student tour of Europe, Isabel and Monroe Smith meet the founder of hostelling, **Richard Schirrmann**.



The Smiths at the site of the first AYH hostel

Inspired by Schirrmann's vision, the Smiths bring hostelling to the U.S.

**1934:** The Smiths open the first American Youth Hostel in Northfield, MA.

**1937:** First interracial youth camp in the U.S. established at Hidden Villa Hostel, Los Altos, CA.

**1955:** American Youth Hostels is incorporated.

Hostelling expands across the country through homes and farmhouses, with "House Parents" overseeing operations.

**1955:** HI Martha's Vineyard opens

**"We were simply fascinated by hostels and hostelling in Europe. The more unfriendliness there was being built up (in the world) at that time, we felt, the greater the need there was to create friendship instead."**

- Isabel Smith, HI USA Co-Founder.



Isabel Smith, early 1930s

"Hostelling? I was brought up on this sort of thing, and I realize the need for it. From the time I was nine until my 18th birthday I spent most of my holidays bicycling in Europe. It is the best education I ever had. **The more you circulate on your travels, the better citizen you become, not only of your own country, but of the whole world."**

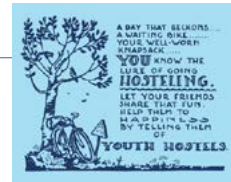
- **Franklin D. Roosevelt** – During a meeting with Isabel & Monroe Smith. President Roosevelt and Mrs. Roosevelt became honorary presidents of AYH.

## 1960s-1970s

### Recreation/Social Clubs & AYH Trips Program

The hostelling movement grows across the country through recreation and social clubs. AYH leads young people to Europe through the hugely popular "Trips Program."

Volunteer clubs expand across the country with biking, camping, and boat trips, while building hostelling awareness through newsletters and programs on travel and environmental issues. These clubs lead to the establishment of Councils chartered through AYH to grow hostelling.



AYH bike trip

**1964:** President Lyndon B. Johnson recognizes "National Youth Hostels Week" on the 30th Anniversary of hostelling:

**"I salute the members of American Youth Hostels for providing our youth with opportunities for self-understanding and development."**

- Lyndon B. Johnson

**1967:** HI Truro opens

**"AYH changed my life. It was through AYH that I discovered bike touring and through bike touring that I discovered myself."**

- Marilyn Sumlyan, former Golden Gate Council of AYH Board Member.

"Who knew that thousands of youths would turn into homegrown international diplomats as they cycled around the world? Hostel travel programs provided inexpensive, self-propelled small group trips that challenged participants physically and helped them grow as team members.

**Meeting other young people in hostels helped trippers learn to appreciate other travelers' points of view and expand their own.** Watching my trippers grow into responsible, caring, sensitive young adults on the 15 hostelling trips I led was like watching stars twinkle on a clear night! Pure joy!"

- **Dave Kalter**, former HI USA staff member, Potomac Area Council of AYH Board member & Trips Leader.



## 1980s-'90s

### Urban Hostel Openings & Partnerships

Partners provide key opportunities for hostel openings.

**1980 & 1984:** HI Point Montara & HI Pigeon Point hostels open in partnership with California State Parks.

**1981:** First urban hostel in partnership with the National Park Service (NPS), HI San Francisco Fisherman's Wharf, opens its doors in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

**1989:** Another urban hostel, HI Los Angeles Santa Monica, opens through partnership and funding from the California Coastal Commission and donors.

**1990:** HI New York City, the largest urban hostel in North America, opens on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

**1991-1997:** HI San Francisco Downtown (1991), HI Sacramento (1995), and HI San Diego Downtown (1997) hostels open.

## 2000s

### 9/11 Changes the Face of Travel Forever; and HI USA responds

Occupancy across hostels in the U.S. hits record highs in the summer of 2001, and then the unthinkable happens. HI USA responds by deepening a commitment to the goals of peace and understanding through programming.

**2000:** HI Chicago, The J. Ira and Nikki Harris Family Hostel opens.

**2001:** The tragic events of 9/11 result in the senseless loss of lives and an extreme downturn in all tourism-related businesses, including hostelling.

**2003:** Recognizing that hostels are for everyone – regardless of age – AYH changes its name to **Hostelling International USA**.

**2003:** HI USA launches the "Opening Doors, Opening Minds" initiative aimed at countering stereotypes and encouraging global citizenry through Travel Scholarships, Cultural Kitchen, and Community Walls (cuisine-and art-based exchange programs).

**2006:** IOU Respect, a two-week cultural exchange program for young people, launches in response to the rising anti-Muslimism rhetoric post 9/11 in partnership with hostelling associations in Germany, France, Tunisia, Egypt, and Lebanon.

"IOU Respect gave me the ability to visit a part of the world (North Africa) that I wouldn't have had the confidence to visit as a young novice traveler. **Spending two weeks having tough conversations with people from a variety of countries, religions, and backgrounds taught me how to show up and work with people who don't look or think like me.** Those skills and tools prepared me for a career that has taken me to a variety of places around the country and abroad."

- Leah Moschella, past IOU Participant & current HI USA Board Member.

"The opening of Hostelling International New York was a memorable day. We were celebrating the restoration of an important New York City historic building, as well as the opportunity to introduce our neighborhood to hundreds of young travelers, most of whom were visiting the city for the first time."

- Pam Tice, Executive Director, HI New York City hostel, 1990-2010.

"This program is taking the message and means of responsible travel to young people in communities across the country.

**The initiative builds on the founding principles of the hostelling movement – using travel and intercultural exchange to create a new generation of enlightened global citizens."**

- Gail Hesse, HI USA Board Chair, 2000-2005, on the new "Opening Doors, Opening Minds" initiative.



IOU Respect participants, 2010

HI New York City Hostel

# 90 Years of Opening Doors: A Hostelling Legacy

## 2010s

### Unification & a New Trips Program

By 2010, Councils operating across the country are facing challenges to their financial sustainability. HI USA establishes a volunteer and staff task force to recommend the best way forward to sustain and grow hostelling in the future – resulting in “Unification.” Programming also evolves, using the foundation of success from Trips past.

**2010: Great Hostel Give Back** launches, giving free overnights to groups volunteering in local communities.

**2011:** Volunteer Representatives from 27 Councils vote to approve unification, consolidating the Councils and HI USA Central Office into one new nationwide hostelling organization.

**2014:** The process of unification is officially completed, and a new Board is seated.

**2014:** Drawing from the success of AYH’s Trips Program, **Explore America and Explore the World Travel Scholarships** are developed for young novice travelers who lack the means or opportunity to explore the U.S. and the world.



Explore the World recipient, 2021



**2011-2019:**  
**HI Hyannis (2011),**  
**HI Boston (2012)**  
**and HI New Orleans (2019)**  
open

An early artist's rendering  
of HI New Orleans

**“I am inspired by our collective effort to create a deeply talented and well-resourced organization that will expand the impact of hostelling, increase intercultural understanding, and indeed, help create a better world for the next generation. Our work is exciting, and our potential is limitless.”**

- **Mark Skender,**  
HI USA Board Chair, 2009-2014,  
from April 2011 remarks given  
to volunteer leaders.

**“I had no idea travel would change me like this. People always say you learn from travel, but I never understood why. Now I see my life going in a very different direction than it was before.”**

- **Explore the World Recipient**

## 2020-Today

COVID changes the world, and again the face of travel. Heartbreaking decisions are made resulting in the loss of hostels, valuable staff, and volunteers. Despite a complete halt to social interaction, hostelling persists and re-emerges to provide the life-changing exchange experiences first introduced by Isabel and Monroe Smith.

**2020-2022:** 13 beloved hostels are closed permanently due to the impacts of COVID.

**2020:** HI USA Virtual Programs are established, providing meaningful opportunities for exchange and learning regardless of location.

**2023: Explore the World Travel Scholarship: First Passport Edition** is introduced, connecting young novice travelers with their first U.S. passports, a financial award, and a travel mentor to help break down barriers to international travel.

**2024:** HI USA is named **Best Hostel Chain in North America** at the Hostelworld Hoscars Awards.

**2024:** HI USA replaces its historic affiliate structure with a Hostel Referral program, promoting high-quality independent hostels across the U.S. to grow the hostelling movement.

**“For 90 years, HI USA has been more than a place to stay—it’s been a place to connect, while on a weekend getaway or an epic adventure.”**

**While the world has changed, our mission hasn’t: to create spaces where friendship thrives and division fades. And we’re just getting started!”**

- **Russ Hedge,**  
HI USA President & CEO.





# OPENING DOORS in 2024

**14 HOSTELS** IN 5 STATES  
WITH 4 IN CITY, STATE OR  
NATIONAL PARKS

**620,711** GUEST OVERNIGHTS

**38,589** GUEST PARTICIPATIONS  
IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING  
PROGRAMS

**66% OF GUESTS** ARE IN THE  
18-34 AGE GROUP

**64% OF GUESTS** ARE FROM  
COUNTRIES OUTSIDE THE U.S.

**97% OF GUESTS** POLLED SAY,  
**"THE HOSTEL FELT WELCOMING  
AND INCLUSIVE."**

**97% OF GUESTS** POLLED  
SAY, **"THE HOSTEL STAFF AND  
BUILDING HELPED ME FEEL  
SAFE."**

**85% OF GUESTS** POLLED  
SAY THEY **"HAD AN  
OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN A  
BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF  
A DIFFERENT CULTURE."**

**422 VOLUNTEERS**  
**CONTRIBUTE** 11,639 HOURS  
OF SERVICE TO HI USA

**55** HI USA TRAVEL  
SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

**254** PARTICIPANTS IN  
GREAT HOSTEL GIVE BACK  
CONTRIBUTE 673 HOURS OF  
COMMUNITY SERVICE

AWARDED HOSTELWORLD  
HOSCARS **BEST HOSTEL CHAIN  
IN NORTH AMERICA**



## Notes for FY24 Financial Results

The financial results for FY24 (April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024) and the comparative totals for FY23 (April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023) show moderate growth in overnights, after a sharp increase from pandemic lows in FY22. Strongest growth has been on the East Coast. West Coast hostels continue to struggle with weak demand.

Guest overnight stays increased to 647,421, up 6% from FY23, but still below the pre-pandemic high mark of 683,017 overnights.

Total operating revenue increased to \$48.7 million or 11% higher than FY23, with hostel operation revenues making up 90% of that total. Donations grew by 64% from the previous year, driven by a large bequest of over \$2 million and a 60% increase in investment interest income. Total operating expenses rose 20% with inflationary pressures, re-staffing to guest service expectations, and fully re-introducing hostel and signature programs.

Our surplus for the year (Change in New Assets) was \$2.5 million, increasing our net worth (Total Net Assets) in FY24 from \$53.9 million to \$56.4 million. The additional financial cushion will be important as we deal with an increasingly uncertain travel climate.

## HI USA Finances

### SUMMARY OF OPERATING REVENUES AND EXPENSES

FY23: April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024 (With Comparative Totals for March 31, 2023)

OPERATING REVENUES	FY24	FY23
Hostel Operations	\$43,844,237	\$41,013,584
Donations and Grants	2,452,347	875,635
Membership Dues	107,129	284,795
Investment Income (Loss)	1,852,693	(568,233)
Gain on PPP Grant Forgiveness		2,000,000
Other	478,025	210,575
<b>TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES</b>	<b>\$48,734,431</b>	<b>\$43,816,356</b>

OPERATING EXPENSES	FY24	FY23
Program Services (Hostels, Education, Membership)	\$40,730,252	\$33,601,605
General and Administrative	5,062,645	4,333,261
Resource Development	266,272	756,960
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$46,059,169</b>	<b>\$38,691,826</b>

NET OPERATING INCOME/LOSS	FY24	FY23
Loss on Interest Rate Swap Valuation	-218,064	503,261
Gain on Disposal of Assets	17,889	(20,169)
<b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$2,475,087</b>	<b>\$5,607,622</b>

### SUMMARY STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

March 31, 2024 (With Comparative Totals for March 31, 2023)

CURRENT ASSETS	FY24	FY23
Cash	\$6,352,616	\$6,705,516
Current Portion of Investments	10,660,664	9,094,595
Accounts and Contributions Receivable, Net	944,720	2,228,071
Other	723,971	500,266
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>\$18,681,971</b>	<b>\$18,528,448</b>

NONCURRENT ASSETS	FY24	FY23
Investments, Net of Current Portion	\$16,591,868	\$14,252,837
Property and Equipment, Net	67,815,144	69,034,904
Operating Lease Right of Use Assets, Net	14,691,733	12,244,029
Other	229,862	437,178
<b>TOTAL NONCURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>\$99,328,607</b>	<b>\$95,968,948</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$118,010,578</b>	<b>\$114,497,396</b>

CURRENT LIABILITIES	FY24	FY23
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	3,882,904	3,944,388
Current Portion of Long Term Debt	15,967,202	1,745,738
Deferred Income	3,930,375	3,959,589
Current Portion of Operating Lease Liabilities	1,120,554	1,605,270
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$24,901,035</b>	<b>\$11,254,985</b>

Long Term Portion of Debt & Unamortized Debt Costs	22,447,016	38,301,203
Operating Lease Liabilities, Net of Current Portion	14,208,580	10,962,348
Other	68,842	68,842

<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$61,625,473</b>	<b>\$60,587,378</b>
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Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	40,190,047	39,935,684
Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	16,195,058	13,974,334

<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$56,385,105</b>	<b>\$53,910,018</b>
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<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$118,010,578</b>	<b>\$114,497,396</b>
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# We are Grateful for Your Support

## Individual Donors

### \$10,000+

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### \$5,000-\$9,999

Lisa Gurwitch Philanthropic Fund

### \$2,500-\$4,999

Aon  
Balgley Family Charitable Foundation  
The Evans Charitable Foundation  
Truist

### \$1,000-\$2,499

Adam S. Robinson Charitable Fund  
Aspire Software  
Hostelworld  
Mariposa Hunters Point Yacht Club  
The Murty S. Polavarapu Charitable Fund  
Peter Frishauf & KC Rice Donor Fund  
Tobey, Julie and Lucy Roland Philanthropic Fund  
Walter P. Knoepfel Donor-Advised Fund  
The William Herbst Family Charitable Fund

### \$500-\$999

Firefly Charitable Fund  
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The SBC Fund

### \$250-\$499

Assured Life Association  
Knoepfel-Cane Family Fund  
The Streeter-Reike Family Fund  
West 102nd & 103rd Streets Block Association

### \$100-\$249

C M Key Charitable Fund  
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Griff Giving Fund  
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Philanthropic Fund  
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Lagunitas Brewing Company  
Table Talk Pies

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AT&T  
Marsh and McLennan

## Gifts in honor of

### In honor of Isabel Cruz

Bertus Tempelhoff

### In honor of Russell Hedge

Charles Robert Hokanson

### In honor of Kim Blanco & Walter P. Knoepfel

Violet M. Apple  
Lisa Gurwitch & Thomas Sharpe  
Erin Hamant  
Charles Robert Hokanson  
Audra A. Jones  
Wangari Kamau  
Leslie & Bruce Marsden  
Leah Moschella & Joel Barciauskas  
Dean Papademetriou  
Joel Yaffe

Nicole M. & Victor Sandoval

### In honor of Joyce Marie Lite

Nicholas Sutton

### In honor of Charlotte Majic

Nicole M. & Victor Sandoval

### In honor of Andrea Prentice

Charles Chesney

### In honor of Terika Tischer

Geraldine & Robert Tischer

## Gifts in Memory of

### In memory of Rose Colby & Susan Hyatt

Jennifer Norris

### In memory of John Estrada

Barbara Wein

### In memory of Peter Ghazal

Stephen McCullough

### In memory of Louise & Clem Motten

Alexander Motten

Betsy C. Motten

### In memory of Ruth & Bill Nelson

Edward V. Casey

David Kalter & Jeanie Osburn

Eric Sanford

### In memory of Richard Norcross

Neil Clark & Nancy Stevenson

### In memory of Tom Norris

Danielle Brumfitt Norris

### In memory of Jerry Preeper, Jr.

Cheryl Preeper

### In memory of Deanna C. Sadler

Colin Sadler

### In memory of Peggy Stevens

Ruth Stevens

Robin T. Yuschak

\*Deceased



# Hostelling Legacy Society

HI USA thanks and honors the following members of the Hostelling Legacy Society, who have so generously made estate gifts to HI USA. Their foresight will help open doors to future generations of hostellers.

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\*Deceased

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## LEAVE A LEGACY THAT OPENS DOORS

"My hostel stays after my military service in the '60s represented an important part of my journey of self-discovery, cultural exchange, and personal growth. As a result of these experiences, I decided during a recent estate plan update to include HI USA in my will to support the organization's efforts to offer meaningful and affordable ways to explore the world."

- Frank Souers

By including HI USA in your estate plans, you ensure that HI USA's hostel doors stay open for generations to come. It's easy to make a lasting impact — many supporters add HI USA to their will or trust with just a few sentences.

*Your legacy can be a doorway to the world for future guests.*

To learn more about including HI USA in your estate plans, visit:

[hiousa.org/waystogive](https://hiousa.org/waystogive) or contact us at (240) 650-2104 or [giving@hiousa.org](mailto:giving@hiousa.org)



## 90 Years of Opening Doors to the World — And the Journey Continues

Since 1934, HI USA hostels have been places where travelers connect, cultures come together, and the world feels a little smaller and a lot more hopeful.

The world needs hostelling now more than ever. We need safe, welcoming spaces where people from every background can connect, learn, and belong.

We've kept the spirit of hostelling alive for 90 years. With your support, we'll keep it thriving for generations to come.

**Explore with us. Advocate for us.  
Invest in the future of hostelling.**

*Be part of the journey.*



**HIUSA.org/ar2024**

### HI USA CORE VALUES

COMMUNITY  
INTEGRITY  
RESPECT  
RELATIONSHIPS



**HI USA**