



2024 Annual Report

What a year it has been for Open Arms. Throughout the year our volunteers and wonderful partners have created so many fun and beautiful learning experiences for the kids. From the classroom they have travelled the world, been creative and sporty, given back to community, laughed and so much more.

It is amazing to see how Open Arms grows and slowly starts to spread its wings. We opened a new program, and more kids have joined the existing ones. It is such a privilege to follow the kids as they grow of age and confidence.

This year was also a year of transition between Executive Directors. We always knew Inger would only have a transitional role in Open Arms focusing on scaffolding the organization and creating a foundation from which it could grow. At the AGM in April, Inger passed the reigns to Yolekha who is the perfect person to help open Arms to continue to grow. The two of us have been working closely together throughout the past 6 months ensuring a smooth transition.

We look forward to starting our first teenage cohort in the Fall, engaging with our wider community to raise awareness and funds, build on partnerships, and provide our children with specialized programs and experiences.

A special day to remember was April 5th where our new mascot HaNeul met the world for the first time! Creating our taekwondo kicking, noodle eating little blue whale together with the kids and Disney creator Jim Kim has been magical. Thanks to the Seodaemun Museum of Natural History we were able to create a very special event to reveal our new mascot to the kids with everything that entails. Now we cannot wait for HaNeul to continue the journey of learning with us, through our programs and through the many well-wishers who have taken a bit of HaNeul with them into the world.

Special gratitude to our donors and partners who provide us with opportunities and the means to keep planning and providing them to our children. To the welfare centers we work with, thank you for trusting us with your children and always welcoming us to do more. To our volunteers, who show up in a myriad ways, thank you for your dedication to our mission and our children. You are truly the magic that makes Open Arms what it is. And to the heart and soul of Open Arms – our kids. We are humbled that you trust us and choose to come back to our programs. Learning and growing with you is a privilege that only underlines our values of never breaking a promise we make to you.

Inger Winther Johannsen, outgoing Executive Director
and Yolekha Mallier, Executive Director

What's Inside

Who We Are



What We Achieved



OA by numbers



What We Envision



Contact Us



Who We Are

Open Arms provides regular play-based English programs in a caring learning environment at partner welfare homes in Seoul. In addition to the curriculum and games, the children experience positive interactions with our teachers and volunteers who make them feel valued. Our continuous and long-term program began with Toddlers and has expanded to serve Early Years, Primary and Young Teens as the children grow. We are a volunteer-run organization that welcomes the support of like-minded individuals who wish to improve the future of children living in South Korean welfare homes.

Our Mission

Our Vision

Guided by the belief that all children have equal value, Open Arms provides English education to children in South Korean welfare homes.

Our strong community of support empowers them to realize their self-worth and reach their potential socially, emotionally and academically. In addition to providing a personalized learning program throughout their childhood, our dedicated team of diverse volunteers also connects the children to a more global world view.

Our vision is a community where children are accepted, valued and unconditionally loved so they can grow into adults who will contribute positively to our society.



Our management team



Barbara Bai
Founder



Alicia Chung
Representative
Director



Inger W. Johannsen
Executive Director



Yolekha
Incoming Executive
Director



Katy Freeman
Educational Director



Erika Lee
Finance Director



Justin Im
Fundraising



Amethyst Etessam
Volunteer Director



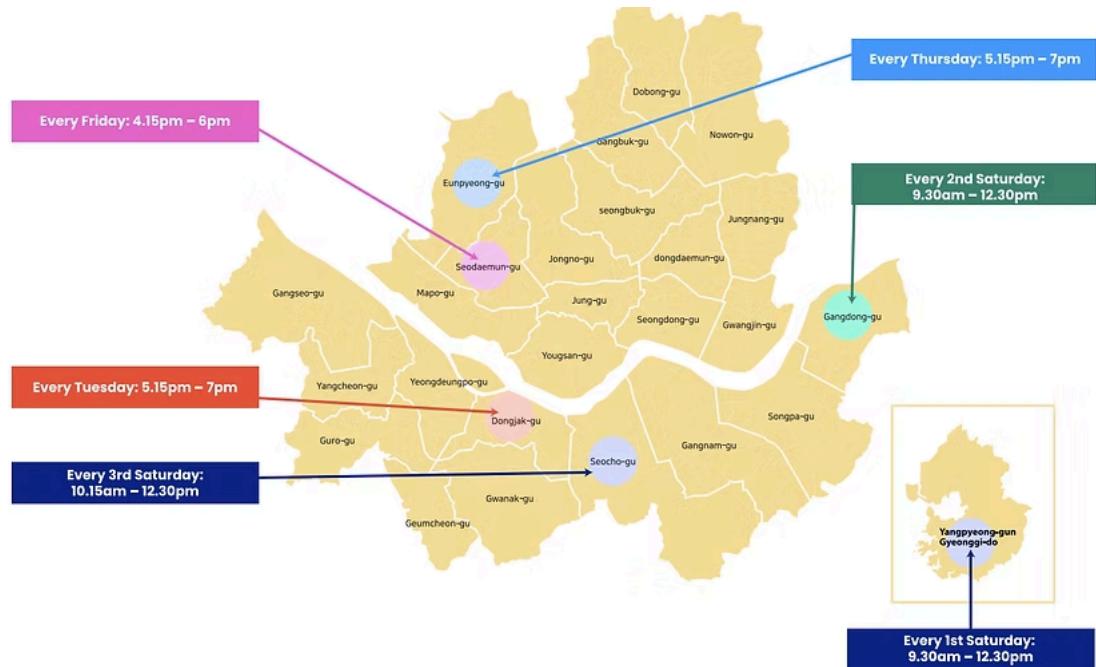
Kathrine Nielsen
Welfare Home Liaison

What We Achieved

Our Programs

We meet the children as toddlers because we know early childhood education gives children the best start in life. We grow with the children, through our English-based programs. The ambition is to follow the kids even as they move away from the welfare homes and into young adulthood.

In 2024/2025 we are running 6 programs around Seoul:



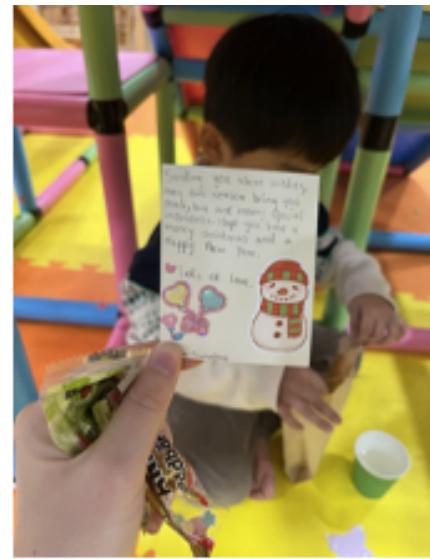
In 2024, we started a new program partnering Sundukwon and Seoul Foreign School. Every Friday afternoon, in the inspiring atmosphere of the SFS learning environment, we plan activities such as treasure hunts in the forest, games and reading time. The children participating in the Open Arms Club are a mix of children from Sundukwon and SFS.



Inspiring partnerships

We work with inspiring partners to create beautiful memories for the children. These partnerships make it possible for the children to:

- Visit, learn and play at the big international schools in Seoul like **Seoul Foreign School, British School and Dulwich College**
- Get personal gifts for birthday and Christmas thanks to **Dulwich** parents and teachers
- Get Easter baskets thanks to **Dwight Student Clubs**
- Meet and interact with our favorite furry teachers from **Fur all Dogs**
- Give back to others with **Korea Legacy**
- Celebrate Children's Day with **SIWA**
- Visit several Ambassador's Residencies thanks to **ASAS**
- Celebrate our new Mascot launch in **Seodaemun Museum of Natural History**



Also, as part of our fundraising efforts, we have organized and received very generous donations from:

- AWC
- Wineworks
- And several generous private donations

A big and heartfelt thank you to all of our partners.

Designed and launched our Mascot, HaNeul!

Our mascot was designed by our kids. They drew out their ideas for our mascot and three suggestions were chosen: a whale, a spider and a magical creature. The kids were asked again how they could see Open Arms reflected in each.

The famous Disney creator Jim Kim designed the final mascot for Open Arms, a blue whale. Finally, our kids wrote a story about the whale, naming it and giving it a personality.

MEET

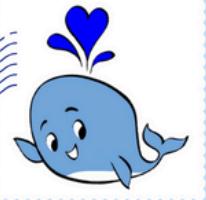
HANEUL

Deep beneath the sparkling waves of the ocean lives a special blue whale named HaNeul. Unlike other whales, HaNeul has a magical gift of speaking every language of the world! From the songs of dolphins to English and Korean speakers, it understood them all.

HaNeul loves two things more than anything: eating delicious seaweed and noodle dishes and practicing taekwondo with his ocean friends.

But when he isn't slapping on the water, HaNeul can always be found with a book, reading stories of faraway and magical places, such as candy land, a world of chocolate rivers and cotton candy clouds. HaNeul loves visiting foreign places and meeting new friends all over the world and sharing sweet adventures.

That's why, at Open Arms, HaNeul shares his love of learning with the children, reading stories together, practicing English, and discovering the world right from the classroom. With every book they open, they set sail on a new adventure, proving that magic isn't just in the ocean, it's in the friendships and knowledge they build together.



OA by numbers

5

welfare homes

We work at Dream Tree, Cheonwoon, Myeongjin, Shinmangwong and Sundukwon

Open Arms children are between 4 and 14 years old

4-14 years

87

kids are currently
enrolled in our programs

87 children get personalized and inspiring English Education through Open Arms. We work with a 1:1 ratio between children and volunteers creating the opportunity for every child to feel seen and cherished.

Open Arms has 70 volunteers that together represent 18 different countries, born between 1952 and 2006. Our longest serving volunteer has been with us from the very beginning - 8 years!

1806

**volunteer hours were spent
with the children**

234

**personalized
christmas presents**

Each present personally chosen and wrapped to give the kids exactly what they wished for.

68

birthday gifts

541,17

kilometers

Our volunteer Eric Seo, along with Justin Im and Richard Park biked from Seoul to Busan to fundraise money for Open Arms. We raised 6600\$!

34.737.112

KRW

Thanks to our fundraising team and generous donors we raised money to support programs and special activities.



What we envision

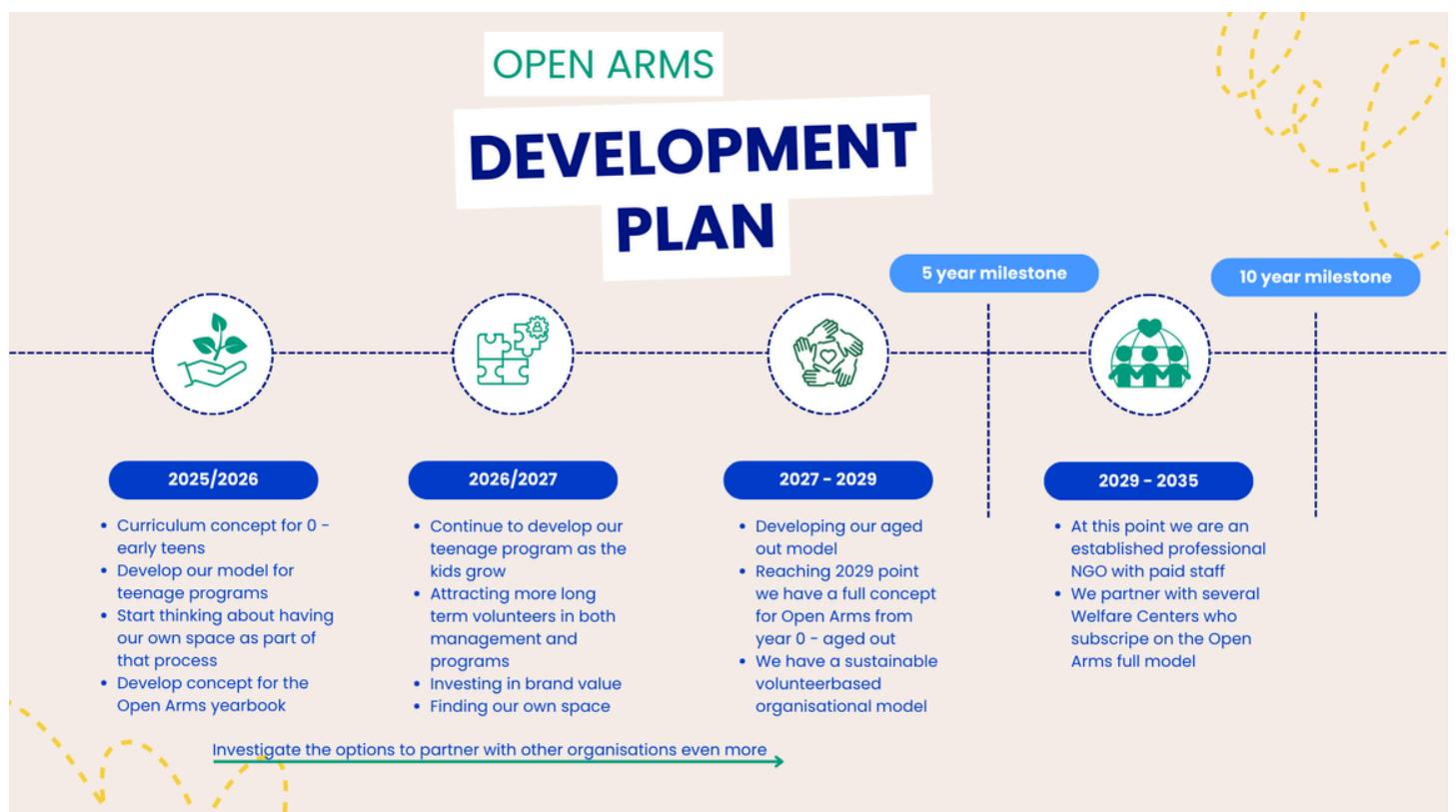
Open Arms is a small organization with an important mission. Our promise to the children is to follow them as they grow and continue to be there with knowledge, support and inspiration.

Therefore, sustainability is a key priority for Open Arms in the coming year. In line with this, our biggest goal is to develop and document our curriculum. As a part of this we are also investing further in learning programs, materials and crafts. We are also developing our teenage program and will launch this for our first cohort of teenagers in the fall.

To help us reach sustainability, 2025 is also the year of fundraising. We will work more actively and strategically to develop ability raise funds that can support our growth and our programs, making it possible to help even more kids. Some key events include community talks, a music festival, and a bikathon.

Our ten year development plan below gives an overview of the milestones we are working towards.

We are looking forward to an inspiring year!





"Open Arms volunteers are sweet, kind, friendly and fun."

Open Arms child

"The best part of last year with Open Arms was getting to know this NGO that will forever stay in my heart."

Open Arms Volunteer

Contact Us

For further information, please reach out to us at info@theopenarms.org.

Website: www.theopenarms.org

Instagram: [@openarms_kr](https://www.instagram.com/@openarms_kr)

LinkedIn: Open Arms Korea