About the Monument

Sculptor and psychotherapist, Michael C. Irving, Ph.D., has created with participation of child abuse survivors a bronze monument to acknowledge and validate childhood abuse victims. The monument honours the spirit and courage of participating survivors and empowers survivors to speak out. It has an extraordinary transformative impact on those who come in contact with it.

More than twenty years ago, as a psychotherapist, Dr. Irving was listening to stories of tragedies inflicted on small children. Beyond the role of being a good clinician these stories called out to the artist in him to take action using the power of art to bring about understanding and change. At the Viet Nam Wall in the fall of 1990 he hand an epiphany about how much that work of art helped America to heal from wounds that shared many traits common to child abuse – post traumatic stress disorder, vicarious trauma, distancing and denial.

Dr. Irving's epic "Reaching Out" monument incorporates the artistic contribution of 276 survivors of child abuse and their supporters through sculpted quilts. Measuring 11 feet tall by 30 feet wide, the bronze sculpture is a vignette of two figures with arms spread out and upward in victory and presence.

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It is the first major Child Abuse Monument in the world and while it offers peace, solace and closure to some it also has great educational and awareness qualities to help prevent further abuse.

Dr. Irving worked long hours from 1996 to the present at this work. Repeatedly referred to as a masterpiece, it was made in collaboration with non-professional artists speaking from their heart and soul to heart and soul of others.

Participants collaborating with Dr. Irving have stated:

> *"When I imagine my sculpture up on the Monument I feel a great burden lift from my soul...I want the monument to enhance the ability of society to acknowledge the serious nature of abuse in a way that is transforming."* Participating Survivor/Artist
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> *"When I had an image of the Monument, I had a transformation wash over me. A shame left that I had never been able to get rid of. I felt empowered. The change has been permanent."* J.R.

"I would like to see the Monument stand for a thousand years to let future generations know that the people of our time had a caring side. That we were aware of the suffering and tried to do something about it." Statement by Alice, age 11, to her mother after contributing a hand for the "Give Kids a Hand" Visualization.

"Working in the Monument workshops reaffirmed the power of every survivor in the forms of courage, creativity, compassion and friendship found in our quilt squares. The Monument and all it stands for is a healing place. It is a place to rework personal trauma into a totally hopeful outcome." Participating Survivor/Artist

"The Monument is a symbol of blessing for my life. It is a benediction that my life is worthwhile." Barbara

"The sense of 'belonging' within the 'Project' is enormous. I have never felt so accepted and true to myself." Participating Survivor/Artist

"I can imagine the millions of people who will experience the Monument and leave touched in a very personal way. Directly and indirectly humanity will benefit from the powerful messages the Monument is expressing. We are reaching out to our world." Tracy

Words alone cannot express what is embodied in this project. According to Stephen a monument quilt square participant:

"Dr. Irving's self-sacrifice, undying perseverance and complete dedication at great financial, emotional and physical expense for over 12 years to this project has made him a hero in my, and others, eyes. Not only did he give up a successful career to pursue this vision he also suffered a heart attack last summer due to the stress. I will be forever grateful to him for his work.

For me personally, as well as many others I know, this project and Dr. Irving has given me great strength and a sense of closure to my own childhood abuse."