

## **HEIDI KUHN BIO**

### **CEO AND FOUNDER – ROOTS OF PEACE**

Heidi Kuhn is Founder and CEO of Roots of Peace, a humanitarian-nonprofit organization founded in September 1997 with a vision to transform MINES TO VINES--replacing the scourge of landmines with sustainable agricultural farmland. Her pioneering work empowers families living in war-torn regions with hope leading to the economics of peace through export and trade

The California spirit is deeply rooted in Heidi, who was raised with the values of respecting the earth and its people, ideals established by her family who were early pioneers in the 1800's. A fifth-generation California, she attended the University of California Berkeley majoring in Political Economics, where those core beliefs were strengthened during the peace movement of the 1970's, setting forth a lifelong commitment to pioneering the footsteps of peace.

During the early 1990's, Heidi owned her own television news organization, *NewsLink International*, reporting for CNN and other news organizations in Alaska on the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the melting of the "ice curtain" between the United States and the Soviet Union. Raising her children in Juneau, Alaska, she earned a reputation for bridging borders for peace—reporting for ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, Nippon Television and other major media organizations.

After overcoming a cancer diagnosis, Heidi further embraced the core values she was raised with when she saw an opportunity to eradicate another form of cancer – that of landmines, which she viewed as a cancer to the Earth. From the basement of her home, she garnered the support of famed Napa Valley vintners including Robert Mondavi, Mike Grgich and Diane Disney Miller to support her vision of turning "Mines to Vines" – replacing the remnants of war with bountiful vineyards and orchards of peace around the world.

Over the past 23 years, Heidi has grown Roots of Peace across the world with the support of the United States Government, the United Nations, World Bank, international governments, Rotary Clubs and the private sector. She has been recognized by numerous world leaders including UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, His Holiness Pope Francis, the Dalai Lama, the Grand Mufti of the Dome of Jerusalem and many heads of state and government.

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To date, Roots of Peace has impacted over 1 million farmers and families, spanning eight countries – Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, Iraq, Israel, Palestine and Vietnam. Heidi’s work has led the successful USAID program to increase the agricultural exports in Afghanistan from \$250 million in 2014 to over \$1.4 billion in 2020. Roots of Peace has facilitated the removal of over 100,000 landmines and unexploded bombs, restoring the land for agricultural bounty.

Heidi and Roots of Peace have been the recipient of numerous awards including the 2006 Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship, the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Award/National Jefferson Award for Public Service, the Rotary International “Service Above Self” Award. In 2018, she received the inaugural Earth Ethics Award from Marcus Nobel, nephew of Alfred Nobel presented to her at the United Nations in New York. And, in 2019, Heidi received the Gandhi Global Family Award in New Delhi, the first American to receive this prestigious award on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.

Her book *Breaking Ground* was published in April 2020. It is both a memoir and a call to action, a gripping account of Heidi’s quest to eradicate landmines from the face of the earth and firmly plant the roots of peace.