



Cultivating Justice,
Nonviolence & Well-being

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A nonprofit organization

Store Hours

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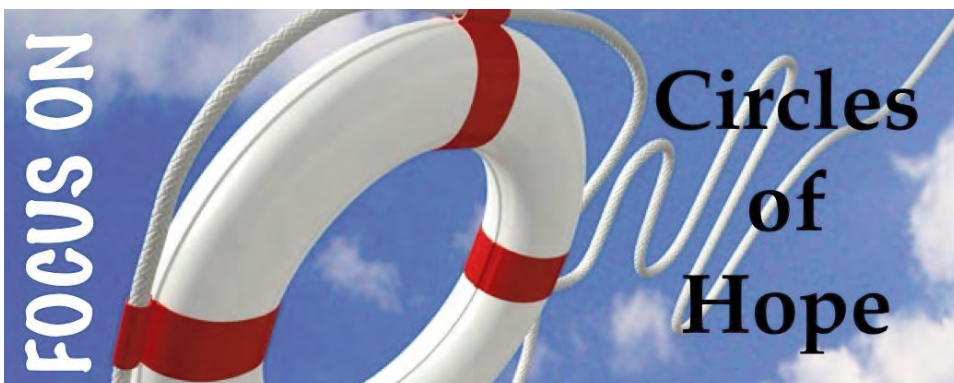
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April-May-June 2014

PEACE CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER



One family's life preserver

More than 90% of homeless women with children report having been victims of domestic violence. Can you imagine being forced to leave almost everything behind in exchange for safety? The choices are terrifying, which may be why domestic violence is one of the most underreported crimes.

The Harvey County Safe House gave one woman and her daughters a temporary harbor in their sea of troubles and Circles of Hope later offered a lifeline enabling this traumatized family to navigate the overwhelming process of starting over.

The routine of coming to weekly meetings was comforting. "I was amazed by how welcomed and accepted we felt the very first night," says Deanna. The meals helped stretch the family's food budget. The childcare gave her a break and offered her 5 and 6 year old daughters stimulating activities and attention. Each week they returned to see increasingly-familiar faces, kind people who cared enough to remember their names.

In the Circle Leader training class, she discovered she was not alone, and felt safe to look realistically at her situation and make a plan for stabilizing her topsy-turvy life. Perhaps even more important to her self-esteem, Deanna's natural optimism and leadership skills emerged in the class as gifts that made a difference.

This is reflected in the statement she prepared to help her Allies know more about her as they embarked on their journey together: "I am so determined to change my life. And excited. I've wanted to change for so long, but have not had the opportunity to learn how. I want to pay it forward by helping others."

When Deanna graduated from the training class in August of 2012, her mother and her daughters were on hand to celebrate. Her mother has since become an Ally to another Circle Leader last July and volunteers in the Circles of Hope office. These three generations of one family are now the friendly, welcoming faces that make other newcomers feel at home.

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Deanna and her Matched Circle have gradually forged strong relationships, and although they will be reaching the end of their formal 18-month commitment in April, they have elected to keep working together a while longer. She acknowledges that her Allies had to be patient with her. "I'd like them to be around long enough to celebrate more of what they helped create," said Deanna.

What are the biggest differences Circles of Hope has made in this family? Deanna found a job she loves. The family has safe housing. They have a plan for reducing debt. And she feels more hopeful. Perhaps most life-preserving are the new relationships Deanna has cultivated. And her daughters, now 7 and 8, are surrounded by safe and dependable adults.



A recent Harvard-sponsored study has proposed that the more healthy relationships a child has with adults, the greater their likelihood of thriving against odds like poverty and trauma. That, as Deanna's life illustrates, may be one of Circles of Hopes' greatest gifts to the community.

WANTED: Summer Food Volunteers

For the ninth year, Peace Connections is coordinating with USD 373 to feed thousands of meals to local kids ages 1-18 this summer. Part of what makes this program possible is the volunteers who share their time and their hearts with the local kids who come to Sunset Elementary to eat Monday-Friday during June and July.

If you are interested in helping, please call the Peace Connections office at 284-0000 to let us know. Your schedule can be very flexible! You will need to attend a half hour mandatory training session before you volunteer. Your three options are Monday, **May 5** OR Thursday, **May 15** OR Tuesday, **May 20**. All sessions are **5:30 – 6 pm** at Peace Connections, 612 N. Main in Newton.



Alexanderwohl Midweek Kids Can Club at Peace Connections

On February 26, Peace Connections hummed with the energy of about 30 3rd-5th graders from the Alexanderwohl Midweek Kids Can Club. Amy Schmidt, former Peace Connections administrative associate and now a school teacher, returned at Myrna's request to help lead an activity for the visitors.

"The most important thing children need to thrive is to live in an environment of relationships that begins in their family, but also extends out to include adults who are not family members."
(Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University)

Board Notes

Peace Connections Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting & Open House, originally scheduled for Sunday, March 9, met with a chilly challenge from Mother Nature. A blustery winter storm with dangerously-low temperatures made it necessary to quickly reschedule the meeting to the following week.



Aziza Hasan with her Uncle Shafiq

As destiny would have it, the weather on March 16 was balmy and springlike and the meeting attended by about 30. Gary Rediger shared a financial report and the board honored Shafiq Hasan for his 16 years of service to the board. Shafiq shared reminiscences of how he first became involved with the Newton Area Peace Center when it was housed above Druber's Donuts and how the Peace Connections location on Main has come to feel like home and a place of peace for him. Several of his family members were on hand for the event, including his niece Aziza Hasan, a mediator and conflict resolution practitioner who shared an impromptu report on her exciting work as director of a new not-for-profit in Los Angeles called NewGround: A Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change.

The buffet of tasty snacks provided by the board included Shafiq's famous baklava and hummus, two items that will definitely be missed at special occasions. Entertainment was provided by the Newton Ukulele Tunes Society (NUTS), whose members include administrative associate, Marva Weigelt.

Some of the items on display for silent auction or for a donation are still available, including the beautiful wooden Newton Area Peace Center sign, a kite that was part of the One Sky, One World international kite festival started in 1985, and tabletop peace poles that are available for adoption and decoration. Come by the office if you are interested in being the new owner of any of these items.



Silent auction items still available

The Secret of Shafiq's Hummus. Shafiq says the secret of his hummus is to take the time to soak and cook your own garbanzo beans rather than using canned. Soak the dry beans overnight and then boil for about 10 minutes or until soft. Cool and then blend with tahini, lemon, olive oil and any spices you like. Shafiq usually adds some yogurt and thyme. He likes to top the hummus with some pine nuts fried in virgin olive oil.

We are grateful to the following people for their gifts of time and talent during January, February and March:

- ◆ Arnita Haury, Ruby Moore, Sari Pouch, Gloria Rediger, Joe Smucker, Marlene Smucker, Stan Smucker, Leann Toews and Susie Wickiser for help in the store and office.
- ◆ Christy Brenneman for her ongoing volunteer support with managing our financial records.
- ◆ Roy Goering for donating two used laptop computers for office use.
- ◆ Roger Ratlaff for his support on the Fund Development Committee, from which he is discontinuing regular involvement.



Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice.

--Nelson Mandela



News Roundup

100% commitment from January graduating class

All 8 members of the 8th Circle Leader Training class have committed to becoming Circle Leaders and been matched with their new Allies. The class includes 5 women, 2 men and 9 children.

Of the 15 Allies, 11 have past experience in Matched Circles. We are grateful for our newest Allies – Rosie Hake, Marvin Penner, Amanda Rempel and Galen Rudiger – and are always on the lookout for more recruits who are willing to take a leap of faith to build relationships and understanding across class lines.

A vision for making a difference with Circles kids



As this quarter's front page article points out, healthy relationships with adults is one of the most important interventions for young children growing up in poverty. With the recent spurt of growth in the number of kids in Circles of Hope, staff are taking a closer look at the need for curriculum, planning, funding and personnel for Tuesday evening childcare.

We have applied for several grants to inject some fresh intention and attention into this aspect of Circles. Part of the inspiration for this new focus comes from observing the impact of having New Creation Preschool director Kristin Neufeld Epp providing her expertise and creativity on the second Tuesday of each month. We are grateful to Kristin as well as to other childcare helpers like Sheri Klassen, Christian Rodriguez, Jason Mueller and Kaly Leininger.

If you know of any other experienced early childhood educators who might be interested in contributing to these efforts, please send them our way!

Motivational interviewing training with Richard Rutschman

The most straightforward way to describe Motivational Interviewing (MI) is as a method for encouraging change without sounding bossy. On March 8 and 9, twenty-five participants, mostly Circles of Hope Allies and staff, were offered a free hands-on opportunity to learn this technique in a Circles-sponsored workshop led by Rich Rutschman. Dr. Rutschman, of the Northeastern Illinois University's Chicago Teachers' Center, provided a similar training for Circles of Hope in 2010. His willingness to donate his time and expertise is a great gift to the community.



MI is a form of collaborative conversation to help strengthen a person's own motivation and commitment to change. By openly inquiring, reflecting and affirming beliefs and emotions, MI techniques bolster the individual's motivation for and movement toward a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person's own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion. (For more information: www.motivationalinterviewing.org)

Participants had plenty of chances to move from theory to practice by watching videos, doing one-on-one role playing and taking part in small group reflection exercises. The next step is to put these strategies to work at home, in the workplace and in Matched Circles.

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Hands On Training

Karen Dickson, Margaret Goering, Jennifer Rose and Deb Zeiner attended a two-day Circles USA Hands On Training event at Wichita's Magnificat Center on March 25 and 26. Jennifer, the new Circles of Hope Coordinator, came back with many fresh ideas and lots of excitement about how to continue growing and fine-tuning our initiative in Harvey County.

Circles invaded by Wildcats

On Tuesday, April 1, the K-State Research and Extension's Family & Child Development Program Focus Team came with 16 members to learn more about Circles. Not only did the enthusiastic team provide the evening meal, members also helped in the kitchen and child care, and Dr. Bradford Wiles, a specialist in helping young children's development through reading, provided an interactive presentation on "Reading with your child."

This group from across Kansas is very interested in the effects of poverty on kids, and they have a major focus this next year on figuring out ways to partner with groups like Circles to make a difference for Kansas children.



Poverty simulation

In just a few hours on Saturday, April 12, starting at 1 pm in St. Mary's School gymnasium, participants in a Poverty Simulation will fast-forward through a stressful month in the life of a low-income family. This simulation, sometimes also known as a Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE), provides the opportunity for community members of all backgrounds to witness, feel and participate in the real life, daily struggles of a family living in poverty. The event is free, with funding provided by Circles of Hope, Lion's Club and Harvey County United Way.

Circles National Conference

All three Circles of Hope staff members – Wanda Pumphrey, Glenda Reynolds and Jennifer Rose – will be attending the annual Circles National Conference in Ft. Collins, Colorado the last week in April.

Inspiring and honoring change



At the Tuesday evening Circles meeting on March 4, Susie Wickiser led the community in a ceremony to honor Myrna Krehbiel's contributions to Circles of Hope. The Circles tagline – *Inspiring Change* – offered the perfect theme for both the cake and the ceremony.

Susie talked about the importance of honoring our deep feelings about change and learning how to navigate challenging transitions in life. Myrna shared highlights from a visual timeline of her involvement with bringing Circles to Harvey County – starting as early as 2001 – a context that helps newer Circle Leaders and Allies connect to the initiative's foundational history.

Myrna was presented with a heart-motif pillow signed by current members of the Circles community. If everyone who has been involved with the initiative over the years had been able to sign the pillow, there would not have been nearly enough room to accommodate all the names of the persons whose lives have been touched by Myrna's investment!

The butterflies on Myrna's cake were a subtle reminder that if nothing ever changed, butterflies would not exist. "All changes, even the most longed for," wrote Anatole France, "have their melancholy, for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter into another."

The Board, staff and volunteers at Peace Connections and Circles of Hope continue to move with faith and hope through the process of letting go and embracing the changes that go with Myrna's upcoming retirement on June 30.

An interim phase of transition begins in mid-April, when Myrna will shift from being in the office to serving in a consultant role. This means that current staff will get to "work with a net" as they practice handling operations on their own; Myrna will be available for support upon request.

SPRING CALENDAR

All events are held at Peace Connections unless otherwise noted

APRIL

Circles of Hope community meetings are held on **Tuesdays**, 6:30 – 8 pm at the First United Methodist Church. The first Tuesday of each month features an educational topic, and the fourth Tuesday is the Big View meeting, which explores and works on barriers that keep people in Harvey County from having enough resources. (The second Tuesday is reserved for Ally and Circle Leader meetings and the third Tuesday is reserved for the five Guiding Coalition teams to meet.)

Poverty Simulation, Saturday, April 12, 1 – 4:30 pm, St. Mary's School Gym, 101 E. 9th Street. In just a few hours you will fast-forward through a month in the life of a family living in poverty. Please call 284-0000 to make a reservation.

Peace Connections Board meeting will be **April 14**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

MAY

Circles of Hope community meetings are held on **Tuesdays**, 6:30 – 8 pm at the First United Methodist Church. See details under April.

Summer Food Program Volunteer Training – Pick the most convenient session for your schedule. This half-hour training is mandatory! Monday, **May 5** OR Thursday, **May 15** OR Tuesday **May 20**. All sessions are **5:30 – 6 pm** at Peace Connections, 612 N. Main in Newton.

Peace Connections Board meeting will be **May 12**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

JUNE

Circles of Hope community meetings are held on **Tuesdays**, 6:30 – 8 pm at the First United Methodist Church. See details under April.

Retirement Celebration for Myrna Krehbiel, Sunday, **June 8, 2 – 4 pm**, Carriage Factory Art Gallery, 128 E. 6th Street, Newton. Come and go, with a program at 3 pm. This is your opportunity to honor and thank Myrna for her 14 years of service to Peace Connections and wish her well for the future.

Kids Summer Food & Activity Program begins June 9 and runs through July 25. Contact us for information on how you can help!

Peace Connections Board meeting will be **June 9**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

COMING SOON: 2014 Kansas Conference on Poverty will be **July 16-18** in Topeka. If you are interested in information about registration. Call the office at 284-0000.



Circles volunteers contribute about **350 hours a month** to keep the grassroots initiative moving, and we are grateful.

More is still needed. Are you willing to help?

The greatest ongoing need is
Tuesday evening meals for 60-65 people.

This is a great project for book clubs, Sunday School classes or service clubs. Call us to find out how you can help with donating ingredients, food prep and/or serving and cleanup.

Call **283-0000** for more info.

Special Note to Newsletter Readers

To conserve resources, we are in the process of updating our list of newsletter subscribers. If you haven't given in the last 3 years and are currently receiving a hard copy, this will be your last issue unless you call (316-284-0000) or email (info@peaceconnections.org) to let us know you wish to continue receiving a hard copy in the mail or are willing to switch to receiving the newsletter by email, which is the more affordable option for Peace Connections. Thank you!

PEACE CONNECTIONS GIFT SHOP

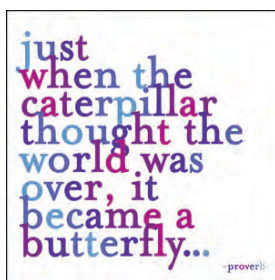
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Quotable magnets. How about an inspiring gift to slip into a graduation or birthday card? These thought-provoking quotable magnet allow you to share your wisdom with a loved one, and it will probably end up on their refrigerator to remind them of you every day. **\$4.95**



Mother Earth pillows. Designed by a nurse and massage therapist, these flax triggerpoint neck pillows come in a variety of sizes and fabrics and are available in herbal scent or unscented. We also carry eye pillows and Little Heartbeat pillows to comfort kids. All can be used either warmed in the microwave or cooled in the freezer. **\$18.00 - \$46.00**



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Planting Seeds, Growing a Garden



The community's need for what Peace Connections has to offer is growing in 2014, and spring is the time to prepare the garden of possibilities and plant according to demand.

A Circle Leader of modest means from multi-generational poverty began in 2011 to cultivate a garden of gratitude for how Circles changed her life. Quietly, patiently, faithfully, the seeds of her own monthly giving blossomed into an impressive harvest: she has contributed enough to send almost three new recruits through the Circle Leader training that helped her write a new future story.

If you have already given to Peace Connections, thank you! If you have missed this opportunity or would like to do more, please remember these options:

- ◆ In addition to our mailing address, you can make secure donations on our website.
- ◆ We can help you arrange regular monthly giving. A small effort assures a sustaining grace!
- ◆ It may be to your advantage to make a gift of stock, bonds, farm commodities or other assets.
- ◆ There may be other creative ideas best suited for you. Please call and we can assist your generosity!



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Vision: Thriving communities sustained by social justice and compassion.

The only way to
make sense out of
change is to
plunge into it,
move with it, and
join the dance.

Alan Watts

Peace Connections partners with others to:

- ▶ **build resources within families and communities**
- ▶ **teach and practice nonviolence**
- ▶ **nurture personal and spiritual well-being**

This newsletter is published four times per year by Peace Connections, an ecumenical non-profit.

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The Board of Directors meets monthly at 612 N. Main, Newton, KS. Meetings are open to the public.