



Cultivating Justice,
Nonviolence & Well-being

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A nonprofit organization

Store Hours

Monday-Thursday
10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Closed Fridays

Saturday (call first)
10 a.m.-2 p.m.

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April-May-June 2013

PEACE CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

Spotlight on Circles of Hope

Life-giving transformation

by Circle Leader Michelle

For generations in my family, children have suffered under the dictatorship of pervasive poverty. Parental alcoholism, abuse in every evil form, and abandonment by parents have left the door wide open for the wolves and vultures of the world to perpetuate even greater damage on our minds, hearts, bodies, and souls.

Despite everything, I've managed to hang on and survive in this world for half a century now. My sister was not so lucky. She was an alcoholic and died young. If childhood poverty's wounded and dead were as visible as the children of Columbine or Newtown, who would stand up and say, "Enough is enough?"



Michelle, Cathy, Marian and Sherilyn discussing relaxation techniques after a recent Circles of Hope community meeting (also see "Our amazing, self-healing brains" on page 3).

Like my family, I've failed to escape the iron grip of poverty and abuse. And like my parents, I've raised children who suffered from lack of physical necessities. My feelings of relentless failure threatened to strangle any hope that I have for their future or mine. We have struggled every day to make sense of life. I had always asked, "Where is the Life in Life?"

My son says, "Poverty makes everything 100% harder." My daughter notices that we are always stressed and constantly living in "Survival Mode." The plague of anxiety, depression, physical illness, nightmares and lack of restful sleep heightened my sense that I would never escape this torture chamber.

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But, this is where my story changes for the better. Unlike my family, I have made choices to escape the clutches of poverty and abuse. I began counseling 11 years ago, yet I felt I needed even more support. So I applied for and was accepted into Circles of Hope.

Circles of Hope held the vital key that I found missing in my life: positive, encouraging, supportive relationships. In the training class I was totally amazed to experience leadership that was not critical, judgmental, demanding or demeaning. I felt loved, encouraged, and totally accepted. Wow!

Ever so slowly, trust began to grow in my heart, which continued when I was matched with my Allies. I finally found a family that is solid and steadfast. From that firm foundation, I have been able to implement changes in my life that have had profound positive effects. My self esteem and attitude have improved dramatically.

My most ardent critics—my kids—have commented that I've changed for the better. Peace and mutual understanding have entered my home. It is a whole new way of life that really gives life.

Also, when I feel like a huge failure and I share my misery with the people in Circles, I am met with encouragement and hugs. All of a sudden, the load is lifted. I am no longer alone. I feel empowered and worthy of acceptance, respect and love, which I, in turn, share with my family. Now I have an answer to my question, "Where is the Life in Life?"



Reciprocity's double blessing

Sarah was walking down Main Street in Newton last autumn when she noticed "Circles of Hope" on the sign in front of First United Methodist Church. As a recovering addict who'd left behind a marriage, a home and many of her possessions after repeated, failed efforts to break destructive patterns, the word "hope" caught her attention.



"I guess you could say it was my intuition or curiosity," says Sarah. "I turned around and walked into the church office and asked about Circles of Hope."

The first step was to apply for the Circle Leader training class. Unfortunately, the next class was not scheduled to start for several months. A week later Sarah came back to Peace Connections and asked about opportunities to be of service. Part of her rental agreement at Midtown Towers included at least 13 hours a month of volunteering while she looked for employment.

Even though she's since gotten a job, Sarah continues volunteering at Peace Connections. "I consider it a privilege," she says. "People have helped me, so it's a way to give back." Sarah also adds that helping around the store and office keep her from isolating and getting depressed. "Volunteering keeps me feeling connected."

In July, Sarah will celebrate three years of being clean and sober, something she attributes in part to encouragement from family, friends, her counselor at Health Ministries and her church, but also to the opportunity for a fresh start and healthier relationships. "It has been very good for me to move someplace new and to weed out and replace most everything from my old life," Sarah explains. "Peace Connections has been part of that."



Expanding the Circles Campaign in Kansas

As you may have read recently in *The Kansan*, in February Kansas achieved the distinction of having more locations addressing poverty "one family at a time" than all but one state in the Circles® National Campaign. There are now 74 Circles® sites across 24 U.S. states. With initiatives in eight counties, Kansas is host to nearly 11% of the national total.

Circles of Hope in Harvey County was the first Kansas site, launched by Peace Connections in January of 2009. The Harvey County site also serves as the Kansas Training Center to provide regional coaching support.

"Kansas has been exceptional in their ability to catch the vision," says Karin Van Zant, CEO of the Circles® National Campaign. "Working with the Kansas Training Center has allowed the message to spread across the state. They have recruited communities, hosted national training and presented at state-wide conferences. We are honored to work with the staff and all of the communities in Kansas."

Our amazing, self-healing brains

Did you know that the anxiety disorder known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is common among persons raised in poverty? Parental drug addiction and alcoholism, childhood sexual abuse, and exposure to other forms of violence actually alter brain structure and can interfere with the ability to function in adulthood. Symptoms may include flashbacks or nightmares, intense fear, difficulty falling or staying asleep, anger and hypervigilance.

The good news, according to Prairie View's Dr. Mary Carman, is that it's never too late for healing. Our brains are more resilient than most of us realize.

At the Circles of Hope meeting on February 5, Dr. Carman mentioned three types of tools for changing the brain and explained that they all achieve a similar outcome:

- Lifestyle/attitude changes
- Therapy
- Medication

The biggest difference between the three is that lifestyle/attitude practices to heal the brain are things we can do easily for ourselves and they usually have a more lasting impact. These include things like:

- Relaxation, breathing and visualization techniques
- Positive thinking and affirmative self-talk
- Physical exercise


In March, the Circles community got to experience very "hands-on" examples of some of these techniques from Everett Bradley, Recreation Adventure Counselor at Prairie View, and Cathy Anderson, a yoga instructor at Newton Recreation Center.

Everett arrived with a wide array of drums and other rhythm instruments so that all of the fifty or so participants could experience the power of rhythm to affect the brain. Sitting in the customary community circle, the group engaged in a variety of activities that demonstrated how playful relaxation relieves stress and elicits smiles and laughter.



Cathy followed up with a brief overview of how conscious presence, breath and movement can raise awareness of the connection between body, mind and spirit and create a balance that contributes to health and peace of mind. She led the group in several simple techniques for releasing stress and balancing the brain.

OPEN MINDS



OPEN HEARTS **OPEN ARMS**

Circles of Hope Ally Training
 "Change the world one Tuesday at a time!"

Can you listen?
 Concerned about poverty in our community?
 Like the idea of building relationships?
 Want to do that in a safe, structured setting?
 Want free training and support?

Saturday, April 20th and/or May 11
 Call 316-284-0000 to register

Tidbits from Circles of Hope

- Circles of Hope staff members, Wanda Pumphrey and Glenda Reynolds attended the **National Circles Conference** in Pensacola, Florida on February 19-21. Wanda presented at one of the breakout sessions on “Trauma and Circle Leader’s Future Stories: Challenges and Opportunities.”
- Six people from Circles of Hope in Harvey County traveled to Topeka on March 4 to share the Circles model with the **Governor’s Task Force on Reducing Childhood Poverty**. Our group was joined by Circles folks from McPherson, Hutchinson, Salina and Iola. The Task Force is charged with gathering information and reporting to Governor Brownback.
- The seventh Circle Leader Training Class started on March 12 and will meet every Tuesday for the next 12 weeks. This group is working from the newest curriculum developed by the national campaign.
- In early March, **Harvey County United Way** announced that they are awarding funding to Circles of Hope for the third year in a row. This support has been essential to building the capacity of the initiative to meet local demand.
- Over a hundred students turned out to take part in a **poverty simulation** facilitated by Circles of Hope staff and volunteers at **Hesston College** on March 20, thanks to an invitation from Tami Keim, an Early Childhood Education professor.

30th anniversary highlighted at annual meeting

The Cornerstone Law conference room in the historic post office provided a welcoming locale for the Peace Connections’ Annual Meeting on March 14. Attendees were on hand to hear Gordon Houser, Arnita Haury and Steve Richards share inspiring personal perspectives on the history and future of Peace Connections in honor of the 30th Anniversary.

Thanks to Board president Jeanette Stucky, tables were decorated with interesting trivia from 1983, providing a cultural context for the period when the Newton Area Peace Center was born.

Gordon’s remarks highlighted the organization’s historical roots as a local, ecumenical response to nuclear armament. He reminisced about prayer vigils for the infamous White Train as it passed through Newton carrying nuclear weapons and parts. Gordon was involved at the inception of the Newton Area Peace Center and is now an Ally in Circles of Hope.



Arnita, a former Board president, shared that her initial involvement with Peace Connections was motivated by the need for a constructive outlet for frustration in the wake of the attack on the World Trade Center and the invasion of Iraq. She was part of the board when the decision was made to launch Circles of Hope. Arnita remarked on being proud to be part of an organization that makes a difference in the community.

Steve, a former Board president and active volunteer involved with Circles of Hope and the Fund Development Committee, focused on the challenge of developing “changing ways for a changing world” and the importance of evolving a robust organization that can sustain itself as it grows. “We must gather new skills for the work ahead,”

said Steve. “Everyone needs to have the courage to tell the Peace Connections story so that we can attract new donors.”

Board Treasurer Gary Rediger gave the financial report and thanked the Fund Development Committee for its active advocacy in 2012-13. Despite the team’s best efforts, Rediger reported, more financial resources are essential to make up a 17.8% shortfall in 2012. “We still have a modest cash reserve and an interest-bearing endowment,” said Gary, “but the reality is that we need to cultivate more diversified resources.”

BOOK & GIFT SHOP

Graduations • Mother's Day • Father's Day • Weddings & Anniversaries



Leanin' Tree Mugs. From heart-warming to rib-tickling, these large, 12-ounce, ceramic mugs feature fun designs and verses that make them great gifts for co-workers, friends, and students, too. They come in a gift box!

\$8.95

Advice from Nature mugs.

Express your true nature with these premium-sized ceramic mugs. With its large easy-to-grip handle, steady base, and hefty 15 oz. capacity, this mug allows for comfortable sipping and slosh-free use, at home or at the office. Just like the t-shirts and sweatshirts in this nature-focused product line, each features colorful art and thoughtful and playful advice from plants, animals and ecosystems. **\$9.95**



Games from Mindware

We are now carrying two award-winning games from MindWare, a company known for "brainy toys for kids of all ages."



Qwirkle is MindWare's best-selling game of all times and the winner of multiple awards. Qwirkle is as simple as matching colors and shapes, but also requires tactical maneuvers and well-planned strategy. 108 wooden blocks. 2 to 4 players ages 6 and up. **\$24**

Q-bitz is another award-winning game that is perfect for multiple playing styles. Includes 80 Q-bitz cards, 4 wooden trays and 4 sets of 16 cubes. 2 to 4 players ages 8 and up. **\$24**

T-Shirts • Jewelry • Candles • Books • Music • Toys • Greeting Cards

Update on Saturday store hours

In the last newsletter we announced an experimental closing of the store on Saturdays and requested your comments.

Although we did not hear back from newsletter readers, we did hear from a few prospective shoppers who were sorry the store was not open when they visited.

Starting in April, we will have the store open on Saturdays whenever we can find volunteers. If you plan to visit on Saturdays (10 am – 2 pm), please call 316-284-0000 first to make sure the store is open.

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

- ◆ Virginia Foster, Arnita Haury, Gloria Rediger, Marlene Smucker, Jeanette Stucky, Leann Toews and Sarah Wallace for help in the store and office.
- ◆ Phil Mason for sharing his time and expertise with the Executive Director and Board.
- ◆ Sue Elder and Angela Altum for their planning and passion for the Kids Summer Food & Activity program.
- ◆ Dawn Marie Booher, Myrna Krehbiel, Wanda Pumphrey, Glenda Reynolds, Steve Richards, Marva Weigelt and representatives from other Kansas Circles sites for traveling to Topeka for the presentation to the Governor's Task Force for Addressing Childhood Poverty.
- ◆ Kathy Randall and Roger Voth for their help with the newsletter.



SPRING CALENDAR

All events are held at Peace Connections unless otherwise noted

APRIL

Circles 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.)

Peace Connections Board meeting will be **April 8**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

Circles of Hope Ally Training, Saturday, **April 20**, 8:15 am – 4 pm. Please call to sign up.

Art & Music in the Heart of Newton, Thursday, **April 25**, 6:00 - 8:00 pm, downtown Newton. Come by Peace Connections and sing or play along on some old favorites



with the Newton Ukulele Tunes Society (NUTS). All ages and skill levels welcome. This is one of the premier events of the year for the downtown shopping district.

MAY

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



Circles of Hope Ally Training, Saturday, **May 11**, 8:15 am – 4 pm. Please call to sign up.

Peace Connections Board meeting will be **May 13**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

Summer Food Program Volunteer Training – To be announced.

JUNE

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

Kids Summer Food & Activity Program begins. Contact us for information on how you can help!

Peace Connections Board meeting will be **June 10**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.



**Will you help extend the
Peace Connections legacy
into the future?**



\$30/month (\$360) pays for one individual from low resources to complete the Circle Leader training class and set goals for a better future story.

\$60/month (\$720) allows 9 local children to participate in the Kids Summer Activity program during June and July.

\$90/month (\$1,080) provides coaching support for 3 Matched Circles each year as they work together to achieve goals set in the training class.

\$120/month (\$1,440) covers the cost of providing child care so parents can participate in Circles of Hope.

Promoting food justice in Harvey County

When you think of justice, do you think of food? Advocates of the Food Justice movement are attempting to grapple with an ambitious range of issues, including the environment, justice, race and class.



The core principals of food justice are that: (1) healthy food is a human right; and (2) what is lacking is not food, but the political will to fairly distribute food regardless of the recipient's ability to pay." The movement is responding in part to the high rate of health problems among low-income families for whom it is much easier and less expensive to find fast food than fresh food.

Peace Connections plays a role in three local initiatives that are each promoting food justice in our community in unique and creative ways. What they have in common is that they are aimed not only at feeding bodies, but at nourishing minds and spirits.

1. Kids Summer Food & Activity

For the eighth year in a row, Peace Connections is making plans with USD 373 to feed thousands of breakfasts and lunches to local kids ages 1-18 this summer. Over half of all school-age children in Harvey County—well over 6,000—qualify for free or reduced lunches during the school year and might otherwise go without these critical resources in the summer.

It takes about \$7,500 and many volunteer hours to make Kids Summer Food & Activity a success. If you have a heart for children, please consider joining this unique community partnership through:

- Financial gifts – individual gifts, special offerings from churches, donations from community groups and businesses.
- Volunteering – share your time through the summer. The schedule is very flexible – sign up for what dates and times suit you best.
- Publicity – help us spread the word that summer meals are available at Sunset Elementary School in June and July

The program also provides learning activities for school-age children, scholarships for adult caregivers (often single moms), and summer jobs for cooks and coordinators. The initiative is funded in part through the USDA Summer Food Service Program.

2. Giving Garden

Spring has sprung, at least according to the calendar, and the community Giving Garden at 6th and Pine is about to come alive for the twelfth year. Each growing season, Harvey County Extension Agent, Scott Eckert, supervises Master Gardeners and other volunteers who raise vegetables for donation to the Salvation Army for families in need.

Despite last year's heat and drought, the garden next to the railroad tracks in Newton produced about 7,000 pounds of fresh vegetables grown with joy by caring volunteers.

If you enjoy gardening or have gardening supplies to donate, contact Scott Eckert at 284-6930 to find out the current needs and work schedule. If you would like to donate money to help cover the cost of water, which reached a record high in 2012, you can write a check to Peace Connections and include "Giving Garden" on the memo line.

3. Café Peace

In 2007, Erica Shinya planted the seed of an idea at Peace Connections: Café Peace. Her particular interest was in mindful preparation of simple, healthy food. In the spirit of an experiment, Erica offered creative meals for special events at Peace Connections, but the time was not yet ripe for the idea to expand.

Five years later, Virginia Foster arrived at Peace Connections and noticed the Café Peace sign over the kitchen. She loved to cook, and wondered if there was any way to revive the idea. Myrna Krehbiel invited her to explore the possibilities and submit a proposal.

The model that captivated Virginia's attention is the volunteer-run, pay-what-you-want café that serves simple soup and salad options and invites patrons to decide how much they'd like to donate for the meal. Bartering labor is also an option for low-resource individuals.

After a successful experimental run during the first three weeks of March, Café Peace will begin in late April to serve regularly on Mondays and Thursdays from 11:30 am-1:00 pm. "I love the diversity of people who show up," said one satisfied patron. "I like eating in a place that is welcoming and affordable to most anyone."





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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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check here () and place in return mail.

Vision: Thriving communities sustained by social justice and compassion.

Understandably, no peace can be sustained when people continue to suffer from hunger, lack of jobs, lack of basic public services—and most of all—lack of opportunity or hope.

--Mikhail Saakashvili
(President of Georgia)

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.