



Cultivating Justice,
Nonviolence & Well-being

612 N. Main
Newton, KS 67114

316-284-0000
info@peaceconnections.org
www.peaceconnections.org

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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July-August-September 2013

PEACE CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

8th year for free summer programs

Thanks to donations from Kids FUNd, local businesses, churches and individuals, 42 lucky Newton kids get to go on safari for 7 weeks this summer!

No, they're not embarking for an exotic destination, but thanks to the vision and ingenuity of Summer Activity program director, Sue Elder, they can use their imaginations to travel far beyond the borders of Sunset Elementary School this summer.



A visit from Callie Unruh's mobile dairy is one of the highlights of the Kids Summer Activity Program, second in popularity only to The Bug Lady.

This year the slots for this space-limited program have been in greater demand than ever before, with parents and school social workers anxious to get kids registered fast enough to secure a slot. After 7 years of success, the activity program, which provides educational and recreational opportunities for children ages 6-11 during the period between the free breakfasts and lunches at Sunset, elicits more than twice as many applications as can be accepted.

"Everybody benefits," said Deanna, a single mom. "My two girls love the crafts and activities. They come home with something they're excited about every day. I get a break and their grandma does too. But the most important thing for us is the food. I'm not sure how we'd have gotten by this month without it."

When asked what her favorite thing is about the summer activity program, Deanna's 7-year-old daughter, Megan, replied enthusiastically, "Everything!" Megan's 6-year-old sister Myia was more specific. "I love the Cha-Cha Slide." She is referring, explained volunteer coordinator Angela Altum, to a morning fitness routine disguised as a vigorous line dance set to catchy music.

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In addition to Sue Elder, Angela Altum and Cathy Willis, whose summer salaries are paid by donations to Peace Connections, the Summer Activity program depends on volunteers like Esther Kroeker, a widow who has been involved through the Foster Grandparent initiative for five years. "I'm here because I just love being around the kids," says Miss Esther.

At the other end of the age spectrum is an inspiring example of service. Jayden Walton, who attended the activity program for 3 years when she was younger, returned as a teen to volunteer because she likes working with kids so much. "My mom is a teacher," says Jayden, "so I guess that must have rubbed off on me."

Volunteers are even more essential to the Kids Summer Food program, which serves free breakfast and lunch to any child ages 1-18, Monday through Friday, thanks to a partnership among USD 373, Peace Connections, USDA and local volunteers.

During the first two weeks of the program, USD 373 food service staff and volunteers coordinated over 3,200 meals, with an average of over a hundred kids for breakfast and twice that many for lunch each day. The record number of lunches served in a single day so far is 273.

Norm Lichti, a volunteer every year since the program started here in 2006, claims his reason for volunteering is entirely selfish. "If I can start my day with a bunch of kids, the rest of the day goes great."

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The cafeteria at Sunset Elementary school serves double-duty as the home for both the food and activity programs.

Guest insight

How I see Peace Connections

By Jake Goering



If someone new to this community were to ask me to give him or her a summary of how I see "Peace Connections" and how it operates in the Newton, Kansas area, what would I say? The following is what comes to mind at this time. As time passes and with further reflection, it is possible I would want to add to or modify this statement somewhat. As of now, I'll go with what follows.

Following our move from Maryland to Kansas in 1996, my wife Beth and I needed to slowly adapt to our new community and meet many new friends. In time we became aware of Peace Connections, and also met Myrna Krehbiel. We were favorably impressed with both, but Beth was especially drawn to what Peace Connections was doing, and also strongly identified personally with Myrna. This led to our membership and regular substantial financial contributions by Beth for the rest of her lifetime.

So what is it about Peace Connections and its programs through the years that is so attractive? It seems to me that Peace Connections is predicated on a positive view of humanity; that every human being is valuable, deserves to be understood and helped to work toward achieving his/her positive potential. Peace Connections does not engage in violence or punishment in any form for human failure. Instead, Peace Connections offers any individual help in finding activities that can prove redemptive and helps to work toward human fulfillment rather than further death and destruction. The various activities sponsored by Peace Connections fall into that category.

Finally I believe that Peace Connections beautifully demonstrates what is known as the "Golden Rule" and is found in various religions and creeds around the world including the New Testament:

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" and "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

*30th Anniversary Special Feature***Earliest beginnings rooted in grace**

by Ruth Cooper

Many years ago, during the uncertainty of the missile crises, a few Newton people with a different perspective gathered as a prayer group to pray for peace every Tuesday evening up the narrow dark stairs at Druber's Donuts to a small upper room: Gordon Houser, from New Creations, Paul and Mary McKay, fresh from the conflict in Nicaragua, myself, who grew up in war-torn China, and two or three others. Gathered at one end of a long brown wood table, we quietly read Scripture, reflected – simple grace. We were so small and simple, known only as “The Peace Prayer Group.”



Efforts gradually became more well-organized and visible as the Newton Area Peace Center grew. In this picture, Christie McKay and Sonja Weaver help hold up the peace ribbon during one of several 1988 Faith & Resistance demonstrations at McConnell Air Force Base.

The Prayer Group gradually enlarged with conscious people willing to become more active – with “sit-ins” at various military installations. I laugh to remember a small “sit-in” at Beech Aircraft where about 10 of us sat silently on the sidewalk with our homemade peace signs outside Olive Ann Beech's private dining room where I, as an active member of the Wichita Art Association, had had lunch the day before! People ignored us and walked around us. The group enlarged with more active “New Age” people.

Some gray-robed Zen monks joined us for a “stand-in” at an underground missile site on the east First Street highway. We were warned away from the gates, so stood silently along the side of the road with our simple homemade signs. Cars drove by, ignoring us – not even honking. We were apparently so new and small we were not noticed.

About this time, Prairie View, with chaplain Bob Carlson and others, were offering classes in Mediation, Conflict Management, Pastoral Care, Counseling, etc. I remember Dr. George Dyck saying that we should empty the Harvey County Jail and put all the prisoners in the center of Main & Broadway Streets where people could talk to them, listen, learn to know them, and bring them back into the community again. Class participants, and Terry White with his participants from Salina, joined us – and the activity grew.

Peace marches and silent gatherings at the Harvey County Courthouse began. There was joyous exuberance about making a difference. As the activity grew, local opposition began on the courthouse lawn. The Peace Group remained silent.

Consciousness seemed to rise on every level during this period. I went on with my life in a more quiet direction, working with the street people in Wichita, and then as a volunteer with St. Matthews' Payee Representative Program. I watched the Peace Center's shifts and changes over the years from a distance – the Origami Crane Peace Symbol, the changing names and various leaders.

I recall a New Creations' party several years ago, where I saw a few people quietly diagramming circles on a large newsprint easel, and heard their soft suggestions as they wondered about the feasibility of their new project. I marveled at the incarnational love and grace they were willing to extend to various people in need – the “Circles of Hope.”

Recently, Myrna Krehbiel asked me to share some of my thoughts at a dinner. I walked into Peace Connections and was totally amazed to see many healthy, expansive love offerings this group is giving to so many people. I had no idea of its scope and size – its growth!

I think of the Mark 4 parable: a man sows seed and goes to bed. Whether he sleeps or rises, the seeds sprout and grow – he knows not how.

This is the marvel – “we know not how” – but the harvest is eventually ripe. Bless you.

Circles Update

Graduation. On Tuesday, June 25, the 7th Circle Leader training class graduated. Due to a series of almost unbelievable personal mishaps during the first few weeks, this class of a dozen participants was rapidly reduced to five.

Despite these challenges to continuity and efficiency, lead instructor Denise Rhoades, with support from Social Work intern Dawn Marie Booher and former Circle Leader Toni Thompson in her new role as a volunteer Circle Leader liaison, decided to forge ahead with the class in order to honor the commitment of the five women who remained. For the first time ever, a mother and daughter took the class together. Congratulations to the Circle Leader Class of June 2013 and best wishes as they move toward meeting their goals.



Ally Training in Wichita. Circles of Hope staff, Circle Leaders, Allies and other volunteers from Harvey County all pitched in on June 1 to help the newly-formed Wichita Circles Network with their first Ally training workshop, which included a poverty simulation. Wichita is the eighth Kansas community to start a Circles initiative. Harvey County led the way in 2009 and is the Regional Training Center.

Trauma and the Brain. At a National Circles Conference in Pensacola, Florida in February, Wanda Pumphrey's breakout session presentation was so popular that she was asked to present it again on June 4 as part of a national Circles Summer Training Series. Thanks to the magic of the Internet, Wanda was able to present her "Trauma and Your Circle: Challenges and Opportunities" as a live "webinar" from Newton and have it available to participants all over the country.

Recent Grant Support. Peace Connections is grateful to Newton Et Cetera, the Walmart Local Giving Fund and the Fidelia E. Plett Charitable Foundation for recent grant awards. All three grants help to cover the cost of providing coaching support to Circle Leaders and their Allies.

Kansas Conference on Poverty. Staff, Circle Leaders and Allies from a number of the Kansas Circles sites will be participating in the 2013 Kansas Conference on Poverty on July 17-19 in Topeka. This annual event is designed to engage advocates, policy makers, social service agencies, volunteers, government employees, persons who have experienced poverty and those currently living in poverty in intensive learning, training and planning around poverty issues. This is a great opportunity to network at the state level.

Best Practices Conference. Circles of Hope, as the Kansas Training Center for Circles USA, will coordinate and host the first Kansas Circles Community of Practice event September 11, 2013 at Trinity Heights United Methodist Church. The eight Circles communities in Kansas will gather to share best practices and encourage each other. Heather Cunningham, Circles USA National Training Center Coordinator, will also attend.



Giving Garden

County Extension Agent Scott Eckert reports that the Giving Garden at 6th and Pine is growing well! Master Gardeners will soon be harvesting squash and potatoes. If you'd like to learn more about the garden project or be of service, Scott is usually there on Thursday mornings at 8:30 a.m. Please call to let him know you are coming, or if you have questions: 316-284-6930.

The produce grown in the garden is donated to Salvation Army for distribution to individuals and families in need.

BOOK & GIFT SHOP



Starting in August, we will be experimenting with our store hours. As mentioned in previous issues, there have been challenges with finding enough volunteers to have the store open every Saturday. There has also been discussion of the possibility of not opening the store until noon, or perhaps closing earlier on some days. The only way to find out what works is to experiment!

In order to avoid being disappointed, please call 284-0000 before you plan a visit.

We are grateful to the following people for their gifts of time and talent during April, May and June:

- ◆ Margaret Goering, Rosi Reimer, Marlene Smucker and Jeanette Stucky for helping at Peace Connections with the April 25 Art & Music in the Heart of Newton event.
- ◆ Lizzie Bernhart, Eunice Kerbs, Gloria Rediger, Marlene Smucker, Jeanette Stucky, Don Swender and Leann Toews for helping during the Main Street Mainia Sidewalk Sale.
- ◆ Newton Ukulele Tunes Society (The NUTS) for providing music at Peace Connections during Art & Music in the Heart of Newton and Main Street Mainia.
- ◆ Stan Bohn, George Dyck, Arnita Haury, Ruby Moore, Kathy Randall, Gloria Rediger, Marlene Smucker and Leann Toews for help in the store and office.
- ◆ Roger Ahrens, Evelyn Hume, Roger Ratzlaff, Don Swender and Bruce Woods for serving on the short-term Transition Task Force.
- ◆ Christy Brenneman for her ongoing volunteer accounting work. This is a labor of love and a tremendous asset to our organization.
- ◆ Roger Ratzlaff for his support and guidance in so many different areas: fund development, organizational planning and space planning.



SUMMER CALENDAR

All events are held at Peace Connections unless otherwise noted

JULY

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 **July 11**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

July 17-19, 2013 Kansas Conference on Poverty, Topeka.

July 26, last day of **Kids Summer Food**.



AUGUST

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

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

SEPTEMBER

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

Kansas Circles Community of Practice conference, **September 11**, Newton.

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

Board Notes

Starting with the SWOT analysis last fall (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), Peace Connections board and staff have been making concerted efforts to improve overall sustainability for the organization by addressing the weaknesses and threats while maximizing the strengths and opportunities identified in the analysis. Efforts in this direction include the following:

- In recent months the board of directors completed a performance review of the director, Myrna Krehbiel, and a self-evaluation of their effectiveness as a board. The board will discuss the outcome and implications of their self-evaluation at the July board meeting.
- The Fund Development team has been meeting every two weeks to discuss and make plans that respond to the critical issue of financial sustainability. One of the outcomes of those meetings is that team members are making strategic fund solicitation calls on local business and civic leaders.
- Recognizing that responsible succession planning is critical to a smooth leadership transition, a short-term Transition Task Force, which included Roger Ahrens, Evelyn Hume, Roger Ratzlaff, Don Swender and Bruce Woods, conducted a series of meetings with Myrna Krehbiel to talk about the future of Peace Connections in light of Myrna's eventual retirement. She is in her fourteenth year as director and looking ahead to an eventual transition.
- Based on the recommendations of the Transition Task Force and approval by the board of directors, Myrna Krehbiel and administrative associate, Marva Weigelt, are conducting a series of five "Reimagining Peace Connections" conversations with diverse stakeholders this summer. They will report back to the board with outcomes and recommendations in September.

Participants to date have included Bruce Woods, Transition Task Force member; Dr. Sue Maes, Dean of Continuing Education at Kansas State University; and Rev. Eric Massanari of Shalom Mennonite Church. Upcoming conversations will be with former administrative associate Amy Schmidt in July; Circles of Hope volunteer, Rev. Susie Wickiser and Circles staff members Wanda Pumphrey and Glenda Reynolds in early August; and finally, a conversation with former board members and/or key volunteers Arnita Haury, Roger Ratzlaff, Steve Richards, and Leann Toews in mid-August.

■ Kids Summer Food and Activity, continued from page 2

If Norm gets an award for longevity, Linda Gaertner deserves one for ingenuity and reciprocity. Three years ago, she saw the food program as an opportunity to get her oldest daughter Evelyn comfortable with cafeteria routines before starting kindergarten in the fall. Linda felt led to offer her services as a volunteer, citing a deeply-held value of "sharing what you have, whether time or monetary resources."

This year Linda helps with breakfast at least once a week and with lunch every day. Evelyn now attends the activity program as well, while younger sister Hannah comes for meals and then gets time alone with mom during the morning.

If this cause calls to your heart, you are welcome to earmark contributions specifically for Kids Summer Food & Activity. The opportunity to touch the lives of children is hard to resist for some. Sue Elder reports a dinner guest at her home who recently handed over an unsolicited check for \$100 specifically for books for the activity program, saying simply, "I feel so strongly about this."

Gratitude to donors: Book ReViews, Central Kansas Community Foundation (Kids FUNd), Citizens State Bank, Community National Bank & Trust, First Bank of Newton, First Presbyterian Church, Vern Jantz, Carol Kirchmer, Midland National Bank, Redbird Circle of Salem United Methodist Church, Diana Torline, Women's Mission Society of First Mennonite/Halstead.

Real stories of donations in action

One of the current Circle Leaders in Circles of Hope applied for the training class in the wake of a financially and physically devastating challenge from cancer. When she began the class, she was on medical disability. Thanks to her own resourcefulness, which has increased since her involvement in Circles of Hope, she just started a full-time job that is a great fit with her skills.



Would you like to be part of a success story like this?

\$30/month pays for one year OR \$360 pays for one person to complete the Circle Leader training class and set goals for a better future story.



Two little girls whose single mom is a Circle Leader are also enrolled in the Kids Summer Food & Activity program. The extra time the sisters get with caring adults during Tuesday evening child care at Circles of Hope and at the June and July activity program at Sunset Elementary assists immeasurably with their recovery from early exposure to domestic violence and also helps build self-esteem and resilience so that they have a better chance to break the cycle of abuse and poverty.

If you have a heart for kids, consider that \$60/month for one year OR \$720 allows 9 local children to participate in the Kids Summer Activity program, and \$120/month for one year OR \$1440 covers the cost of providing child care at Circles of Hope.

Phonathon



During the month of September, Peace Connections' Board members and other volunteers will be calling persons on our mailing list. We want to hear what you appreciate about Peace Connections and how you'd like to support the mission in the coming months. Your donation will help us continue this life-changing work on your behalf, building "thriving communities sustained by social justice and compassion."

Please give some thought to whether you might like to earmark your donation for a specific initiative, like Circles of Hope or Kids Summer Food & Activity. For your convenience, an automatic monthly withdrawal option is now available.



612 N. Main
Newton, Kansas 67114-2230

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

If you wish to discontinue receiving this newsletter,
check here () and place in return mail.

Vision: Thriving communities sustained by social justice and compassion.

There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they grow up in peace.

--Kofi Annan

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.

Contributors to this issue: Ruth Cooper, Jacob Goering and Marva Weigelt.

Peace Connections Director: Myrna Krehbiel.

Administrative Associate & Newsletter Editor: Marva Weigelt.

Newsletter Design and Layout: Kathy Randall.

Board Members: Elizabeth Bernhart, Margaret Goering, Shafiq Hasan, Gary Rediger, Rosi Reimer, Jeanette Stucky and Don Swender.

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