



Cultivating Justice,
Nonviolence & Well-being

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A nonprofit organization

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10 a.m.-2 p.m.

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October-November-December 2013

PEACE CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

Carrying peace into the future

by Marva Weigelt

What is the essence of Peace Connections? What is the legacy? What are the threads of continuity woven through the last three decades? What are the emerging directions?

If these questions sound familiar, it's because they are from the first paragraph of the first newsletter of this year, which marks the 30th anniversary of Peace Connections. The title of that article was "Bringing peace home" and it traced the history of this organization as a gradual movement from a global focus on peace and social justice to a recognition that "peace on earth" begins in our own living rooms, neighborhoods and community.

I have been blessed this year with a front-row seat on a creative and committed process for answering the question about emerging directions.

"Reimagining Peace Connections" has been a six-month inquiry engaging Myrna Krehbiel and me as primary administrative staff in a series of deep conversations with each other in the presence of caring and thoughtful listeners (Bruce Woods, Dr. Sue Maes, Rev. Eric Massanari, and Amy Schmidt) who reflected back to us and asked challenging questions.

Circles of Hope staff, Wanda Pumphrey and Glenda Reynolds, joined us for a conversation focused exclusively on that initiative, which increasingly predominates the organization's focus and resources (session facilitated by Rev. Susie Wickiser).

Finally, past board presidents Arnita Haury, Steve Richards and Leann Toews and volunteer Roger Ratzlaff convened with us for the culmination of the process. This intense and detailed exercise led by Roger resulted in distillation of critical short-term objectives for which the Board of Directors will craft an action plan. In a special meeting on September 30, the board began that task.

Of the many impressions that linger for me from the reimagining process, the strongest is of the deep current of caring that runs like an underground river beneath this 30-year-old organization. Peace Connections has survived several changes in course over the last three decades, but the quality of love and compassion still runs clear and true.

As we come full circle at the end of this anniversary year, it seems timely as well to repeat the request Myrna Krehbiel made in her "Director's anniversary reflections" at the first of the year:

"Please join me in imagining and praying for grace, momentum, resources and wisdom for all who are involved in guiding Peace Connections into the future."





News Roundup

Circles of Hope represented at 2013 Kansas Conference on Poverty

Seven members of the Circles of Hope community in Harvey County were among the 300 attendees of this annual conference in Topeka July 17-19 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.”

Topics included homelessness, job creation, food security, healthy food access, job security and human trafficking. Following the conference, Carolann Adair, Mackala Blair, Karen Dickson, and Deb Zeiner shared at the Tuesday evening Circles meeting some of the highlights of their experiences and reactions (see inset).

Feedback from all conference attendees underscored the value of the conference: 96% have an increased understanding of poverty issues; 97% will do their job better because of what they learned; and 99% are inspired to do more to address poverty.

“I learned so much,” said 17-year-old Mackala, daughter of a Circle Leader. “I realized that if I can get out of poverty, I will stop this from being multi-generational in my family.”

Hopefest 2013

As usual, Circles of Hope had a booth at the annual Hopefest event held July 27 at the Newton Recreation Center. Sponsored by the Missional Church Network, Hopefest is a one stop community assistance fair highlighting area agencies focused on emergency assistance, family and personal health and building bridges out of poverty.

Shaking it up for summer Circles meetings

A little variety spiced up meetings in August as Circle Leaders, Allies and other volunteers were invited to choose a track for a three-session mini-course.

Don Swender, an Ally and Peace Connections Board member who is also a speech instructor and pastor, convened Public Speaking 101, designed to help Circle Leaders and Allies effectively and confidently tell their Circles stories.

Dawn Marie Booher, who did her social work practicum with Circles of Hope last year, provided an educational series on Natural Health, Beauty and Wellness.

Barb Thiesen, Co-Director of Libraries, Liberal Education Advisor and adjunct professor of Yoga at Bethel College, led three restorative chair-based yoga sessions focused on breathing and stretching. Barb also teaches a yoga class most Sunday afternoons at Shalom Mennonite, 4 pm, for a suggested \$5 donation. All are welcome. Confirm schedule by email at thiesenjb@sbcglobal.net.

First Kansas Circles Community of Practice, Sept 11 in Newton

Since Harvey County planted the first seed in Kansas in 2009, seven other counties have begun cultivating the Circles® initiative.

Staff, Circle Leaders and Allies from each of those locations, plus persons from six other areas interested in exploring the model, gathered at the first Kansas Circles Community of Practice conference to build stronger connections and share best practices, energy, encouragement and personal stories.

Highlights from Kansas Conference on Poverty

Karen Dickson

- Harvey County spends \$450,000 per month on food stamps.
- If the minimum wage kept up with the cost of living, wages would be over \$10/hour.
- Each year 198,000 Kansans turn to pantries, soup kitchens or shelters for food.
- Many households have to choose between food or paying bills.

Carolann Adair

The movie, “American Winter,” about food insecurity brought up a lot of pain to me...the pain of my own scars and wounds.

You can't imagine what it is like to be homeless, living and eating in your car. I always made sure my son had food, if that meant I did without.

The only way to overcome a nightmare is to face it. I have always been a fighter and a warrior who doesn't want for herself but to help others overcome...and not give up on themselves.

■ Continued from page 2

In all, 88 individuals convened at Trinity Heights United Methodist Church on September 11 for the day-long meeting that included peer groups, breakout sessions, an update from Circles USA, and a keynote address by Ed O'Malley, president and CEO of the Kansas Leadership Center.

The conference, which was coordinated by Circles of Hope in Newton, received high marks, with an overall evaluation of 4.5 out of 5. The highest rated presentations were on Conflict Resolution and Trauma & the Brain.

Self-Assessment survey and site visit from Circles USA

A visit from Circles® National Training Center Coach, Heather Cunningham, in September was timed to serve the dual purpose of having her on hand for the Community of Practice event as well as to conduct an evaluation of Circles Hope. We are still awaiting a summary of outcomes.



Ways to become involved

If these stories inspire you, perhaps you'd be interested to know that we are especially in need of assistance with:

- Child care during Tuesday evening meetings, 6:15-8:15 pm
- Providing a meal for about 60 people on any Tuesday night

Kids Summer Food & Activity highlights

How important is Kids Summer Food to Harvey County children? For the 31 days the initiative operated this season, four boys from North Newton rode their bicycles a total of eight miles daily going back and forth for the free breakfasts and lunches at Sunset Elementary School. Staff from USD 373, aided by 20 community volunteers, served over 8,600 meals this summer, including as many as 384 meals on a single day.



Kids Summer Activity complements the food program and offers structure and nurture through fun learning modules like this one with the Bug Lady

that there were about 50 kids on the waiting list this year to get into the space-limited program. Visitors included a mobile dairy, The Bug Lady, Caring Hands, Extension nutritionists, a senior lifeguard, and Fire Department staff. The kids also enjoyed cooking and craft projects, a water-fun day and a movie day with popcorn.

The reality of hunger in the heart of the Wheat State is a need this community cannot afford to ignore. Over half of all Harvey County school-age children come from households in economic distress. The reverberations are felt in the classroom – where poor and inadequate nutrition results in poor attention and performance – and in the mounting burden of cost for the health issues that are also directly attributable to unmet nutrition needs.

A complement to this cooperative effort with USD 373 and USDA is the associated Activity Program during the period between breakfast and lunch. Sue Elder, Angela Altum and Cathy Willis, aided by Foster Grandparent Esther Kroeker and youth volunteer Jayden Walton, gave 28 families and 45 children many opportunities to learn, create and grow.

Given the range of special activities, it is little wonder

The blessing of fresh energy and perspective



Leah was a big help with the recent Community of Practice conference

and support for the fund development committee.

"Both of these young women are an inspiration to me," says Myrna Krehbiel. "I am grateful not only for the service they provide, but also for their wise, generous and compassionate spirits."



Jennifer is already a familiar face at Circles of Hope from her time as a volunteer in child care

Peace Connections is delighted to welcome three wonderfully unanticipated blessings this season. Two are Bethel College students – Leah Mueller and Peyton Wright – who are here doing service work as part of their educational experience. The third, a recent Bethel College graduate who is now studying master's level social work at Newman University – Jennifer Rose – is meeting her field placement requirements with Circles of Hope.

Leah is a junior social work major from Halstead whose career goal is to work in an orphanage in South America. At Peace Connections she is planning activities for children during the Circles community meetings on Tuesday evenings that will encourage positive thinking, self-esteem and a better understanding of feelings. Leah is also interested in efforts that support planning meals that are both nutritious and inexpensive and can be made quickly.

Peyton is a freshman chemistry major from Maize who would like to become an orthodontist, open a stable for therapy for autistic children and write children's books. While at Peace Connections she is beginning her year by assisting with the annual phonathon, data management



Peyton has been working closely with Steve Richards on the annual phonathon

Jennifer has literally circled back to Circles of Hope. While an undergraduate at Bethel she volunteered for about a year to coordinate Tuesday evening child care for the weekly meetings. After 18 months at CommCare in Wichita, where she worked with homeless persons living with mental illness, she is on familiar ground as she returns to Circles of Hope for her one-year social work practicum.

For 20 hours a week, Jennifer is pitching in on grant writing, data collection and analysis, and serving in a support role with the next Circle Leader training class, which starts later this month. From a system perspective, she will be identifying barriers faced by Circle Leaders and how the system needs to be changed in order to address social justice issues, one of her personal passions.

Jennifer lives in Walton with her husband and sons. She will graduate from Newman in May 2014.

"It is a joy to have Jennifer in the office 3 days a week," says Myrna. "We have all benefited from her willingness to do research, ask thoughtful questions and create informative graphs of survey results. Most of all, I appreciate Jennifer for the value she places on making a difference for people who are struggling."

Giving Garden update

by Scott Eckert, Harvey County Horticultural Agent



Well we had rain, rain and more rain! The garden was producing very well until about July 1 or so when we started getting rain. We lost all of the peppers and tomatoes, cucumbers and melons. All that survived was sweet potato, gourds and okra. We will have some fall radish and turnip. The sweet potato harvest may be pretty good and maybe not. Water damage can be quite extensive to vegetable plants.

Of the test tomatoes, the winner at our Tomato Tasting Table from the Harvey County Fair was the "Red Deuce" variety. The test flowers from KSU's Prairie Star Flower trials have done well despite the abundance of moisture!

To date our yield is 2,820 pounds. Volunteers include Lisa Barland, Beth Gray, Gerald Greene, Cy Brown, Bill Auman, Richard and Erna Rempel, Karen DeGrazio, Jaque Spangler, Gloria Rediger, Susie Wickiser and many, many more.

BOOK & GIFT SHOP

Unique Gift Options for Thoughtful Givers



Trace of Copper gifts. Artist Tracy Hett of Marion, Kansas fashions unusual and iconic Kansas gifts out of nails, wire, brass, copper and other metals. **\$6.50 - \$23.00**



Advice From Nature. This thoughtful product line offers beautiful and humorous advice from various natural characters: from a tree to a prairie, from a ladybug to a butterfly, and from a buffalo to a dolphin. We carry

t-shirts, sweatshirts, mugs and bookmarks. **\$2.50 - \$25.00**



Mother Earth pillows. Designed by a nurse and massage therapist, these flax trigger-point 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**



The Peace Connections Gift Shop has many other tasteful gifts and stocking stuffers: bumper stickers, prayer flags, jewelry, Willow Tree figurines, books, CDs, calendars and more.



We are grateful to the following people for their gifts of time and talent during July, August and September:

- ◆ Stan Bohn, George Dyck, Arnita Haury, Ruby Moore, Kathy Randall, Gloria Rediger, Rosi Reimer, Marlene Smucker, and Leann Toews for help in the store and office.
- ◆ Stan Smucker's love and labor to retrofit office furniture to a new use and then carry off the scraps.
- ◆ Lizzie Bernhart, Eunice Kerbs, Gloria Rediger, Marlene Smucker, Jeanette Stucky, Don Swender and Leann Toews for helping during the Main Street Mainia Sidewalk Sale.
- ◆ Bruce Woods, Dr. Sue Maes, Rev. Eric Massanari, Amy Schmidt, Susie Wickiser, Wanda Pumphrey, Glenda Reynolds, Roger Ratzlaff, Steve Richards, Arnita Haury and Leann Toews for their participation in the Reimagining Peace Connections process this summer.
- ◆ Carolann Adair, Rachel Bennett, Elmo Newman, Wanda Pumphrey and Deb Zeiner for their help representing Circles of Hope at HopeFest.
- ◆ Sue Elder and Angela Altum for their passion and dedication to the Kids Summer Food & Activity program.
- ◆ Scott Eckert and the Master Gardener volunteers for getting down and dirty in the Giving Garden.
- ◆ Tom and Lois Harder and their daughters for donating their time and talents to raise funds during the 30th Anniversary concert.
- ◆ Cynthia Wyss, Jim and Susie Wickiser, Margaret Goering, Rachel Bennett, Joyce Whiteman, Lizzie Bernhart, Heidi Regier-Kreider, Elmo Newman, Roger Ratzlaff, Glenda Reynolds, Lorraine Richards and others who helped with the Annual United Way Chili Cookoff.



FALL CALENDAR

All events are held at Peace Connections unless otherwise noted

OCTOBER

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

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 **October 21**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is **October 17**. This commemoration has taken place every year since 1993 to honor the day in 1987 that over a hundred thousand people in Paris gathered to honor victims of violence, poverty, and hunger at the site where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948. This would be a **great day to make a donation to our Circles of Hope program**, which is working to end poverty one family at a time in Harvey County.

Come & get your hand tattooed with a colorful rubber stamp at Peace Connections during the 20th annual downtown **Halloween Walk** on Saturday, **October 26**, 5:00–6:30 pm. You're also invited to assist with stamping, which is a great way to connect with local kids! Give us a call if you're interested.

30th Anniversary Fundraiser

Easy to love “Five Times Harder”



The musical reputation of the Harder family – performing as Five Times Harder – drew over 300 to the Peace Connections' 30th Anniversary event on Sunday, August 18.

The sanctuary at Trinity Heights United Methodist Church was filled to capacity, including the choir loft and extra chairs in the back.

As promised, the family's entertaining mixture of musical styles, instruments and selections were lively, engaging and inspiring.

The Harders generously donated the entirety of the free will offering – about \$3,000 – to support the work of Peace Connections.

NOVEMBER

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

Peace Connections Board meeting will be **November 11**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

Celebrity Server Fundraiser for Circles of Hope at Island Blue, Tuesday, November 5, 5:00–8:00. Local celebrities will serve as wait staff at Island Blue, 513 N. Main, Newton and **all tips will be donated to Circles of Hope.** Island Blue serves a variety of Caribbean style food, some American favorites with a island twist, some unique items and original creations.

This depends
on you!
Please join us!



DECEMBER

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 **September 12**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

Holiday Hours: The store and office will be closed on **Dec. 24-26 and Dec. 31-Jan. 1.**

Of Community and Gratitude

Seasons of gratitude and celebration are upon us. Whether by birth, choice or discovery, we can be surrounded by blessings of community and family. **We are very grateful that you choose to share** in the work of Circles of Hope, as well as Kids Summer Food & Activities and the Giving Garden.

Whether by money, material or talent, your continuing gifts are important! It is your sense of generosity that helps to smooth the way for neighbors whose journeys we share. Together, personal wholeness grows as each of us becomes part of a healthier community.

Viewing the end of the year, you may be planning your charitable gifts. 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**. You may even make a donation **from your IRA** if you are age 70 ½ or over.
- There may be other creative ideas best suited for you. **Please call and we can assist** your generosity!

Whether or not a financial gift is right for you, Peace Connections is always deeply grateful for your investment of time as a volunteer and your thoughts, prayers and advocacy for our shared vision of *thriving communities sustained by peace and social justice*. **Thank you!**



We are grateful to **Harvey County United Way** for its ongoing support of Circles of Hope since 2011. **Circles of Hope** is one of four organizations selected for highlighting in the 2013 United Way campaign video, along with Hesston Intergenerational Childcare Center, Meals on Wheels and Heart 2 Heart Child Advocacy Center.

You can watch that video on the Circles of Hope page at www.peaceconnections.org. You might also enjoy our new public service announcement on the home page, which was a gift from Wichita State University student Trevor Macy.

Peace Connections' **Kids Summer Food & Activity** program was featured in the Powerpoint presentation given at the **Leave a Legacy** luncheon on October 4.

One kind word can warm three winter months.

--Japanese proverb

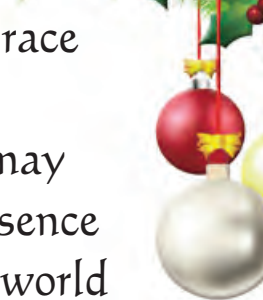


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Vision: Thriving communities sustained by social justice and compassion.



May love embrace
you this holy
season – and may
you be the Presence
of Love in our world
throughout the coming year.

--Ministry of Arts

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.