



*Cultivating Justice,
Nonviolence & Well-being*

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Newton, KS 67114

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A nonprofit organization

Store Hours

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

closed Fridays

Saturday 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

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April-May-June 2012

PEACE CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

The power of story

In a sense, Peace Connections is composed of hundreds of richly-textured stories. So are families, churches, neighborhoods and communities. Poet and activist Muriel Rukeyser speculated that “the universe is made of stories, not of atoms.”

Stories connect people as little else can. Facts and figures allow humans to wrap their heads around issues; stories enable us to wrap our hearts around one another.



Stories arise spontaneously over the Tuesday evening meal at Circles of Hope. Sitting in a circle at meals emphasizes equality.

The courage to tell a personal story and the grace to listen compassionately are qualities capable of healing breaches and minimizing differences in class, race, beliefs or politics. In human communion at this deeper level, we discover our common threads and patterns.

Peace Connections, especially in the Circles of Hope initiative, has been celebrating the power of story in some exciting ways:

- Circle Leaders and their Allies from Circles of Hope have been visiting churches, business groups and other venues, offering lively accounts that educate and inspire. Please let us know if your church or group would like to schedule a program.

When Circles of Hope received an invitation to the Kansas House of Representatives' Appropriations Committee in February, the group was encouraged to focus on statistics. Representative Jo Ann Pottorff's curiosity unexpectedly opened a door and Circle Leader Michelle Bosworth bravely stepped through to engage lawmakers at a rare level of openness and emotional intimacy.

■ Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

- Local writer Laurie Oswald Robinson, who started a part-time position as Coordinator of Fund Development for Peace Connections last fall, is harvesting personal accounts from members of the Circles of Hope community. That growing collection, Snapshots of Hope, is being used to inspire support from donors and volunteers. The current edition is available on our website at www.peaceconnections.org/Circles_Stories.pdf
- A dozen Circles of Hope participants courageously stepped forward in February. They agreed to share with the group about the negative impacts of drug or alcohol abuse on their lives from the perspective of a recovering addict/alcoholic and/or as a child or spouse of a substance abuser. Their stories were raw, honest, moving and – most of all – inspiring and hope-giving.

Among the many benefits of storytelling at Circles of Hope is that people whose paths might never have otherwise crossed learn to trust each other, to perhaps drop some inaccurate assumptions, and to see themselves in a more compassionate light because they feel heard, often for the first time.

All of us are made up of the stories that we listen to, the ones we disagree with and the ones that we agree with.

-Stanley Crouch

Summer Food & Activity program enters 7th year of caring for kids



Seven years ago, Peace Connections asked a challenging question: **Where do Newton school kids who qualify for free and reduced lunches eat during the summer?**

The answer to this unmet need became the **Kids Summer Food & Activities Program**, a community-supported partnership between Peace Connections and USD 373, funded in part by USDA. This investment is leveraged by volunteers and community members, churches and area businesses that have kept this program running every summer since 2006.

The percentage of **children in need has increased to 59%**. In addition, there are other kids who lack adequate nurturing and nutrition during the summer, which is why **free breakfasts and lunches are offered to all Newton children ages 1-18** during 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.

Last summer, Kids Summer Food & Activities provided over 10,000 meals. We want to partner with you to help meet the needs of Newton's children and families through:

- **Financial gifts** – individual gifts, special offerings from churches, donations from community groups and businesses,
- **Volunteer** – Share your time throughout the summer. The schedule is very flexible – sign up for what dates/times suit you best. (Training will be offered and is required for volunteers-see calendar on Page 6.)
- **Publicity** – help us spread the word that summer meals are available in our community. Email us or drop by Peace Connections for informational fliers to share. Encourage others to volunteer and share their time this summer!

Circles update

Inspiring systemic change. For the second year in a row, ambassadors from Circles of Hope were offered the chance to call lawmakers' attention to how the Circles® model offers a way to reduce state spending. They had appearances in front of both the House Appropriations Committee and the Social Services Budget Committee in Topeka on January 25.

"Circle Leader Michelle B. put a 'face' on what it's like to live in low resources," wrote Circles Coach Wanda Pumphrey in a Facebook post, "and to be able to have hope when Allies come alongside you. There was interest from both Republicans and Democrats. Circles brings people from across class, race, political and religious 'lines' to the table, together!"

Visit from Circles® National Campaign leaders. National Circles® CEO, Karin Van Zant, and National Director of Circles®, John White, a former Ohio State Representative, spent February 21-23 in Kansas.

Their visit included a meeting with staff at Peace Connections on Tuesday afternoon; joining the Circles of Hope community in Newton at their regular Tuesday evening meeting for a lively and inspiring question and answer session; a day in McPherson for visioning and planning with representatives from Kansas and Oklahoma Circles® initiatives; and a bipartisan gathering with lobbyists, legislators and Corrections staff in Topeka, sponsored by Rep. Marc Rhoades.

"It has been an amazing week in Kansas," wrote Karin at the end of her trip. "[Kansas legislators] are interested in learning more about Circles and seeing how a public-private venture can address poverty in this state."



National Circles CEO, Karin Van Zant, visits with Jim Schwarzenberger, Newton Area Chamber Executive Director, at Circles of Hope meeting



Graduates: (front row) Nicholas Magruder, Marcia Moody, Rachel Bennett, Karen Dickson, Theresa Wooley (back row) Courtney Jackson, Debbie Thrush, James Adair, Cathy Smith, Candace Smith

Circle Leader training graduation. The fifth group to complete a three-month curriculum in which participants assess current resources and set goals to increase self-sufficiency drew over a hundred supporters to celebrate their accomplishments on February 28.

This class of ten now enters the exciting phase of applying for Circle Leader status and getting to meet the Allies who will accompany them on the next phase of their journey toward a different future.

District Court Judge Richard Walker inspired the class with his theme of interconnectedness, paraphrasing John Donne's famous poem to emphasize that "every individual is a part of their community" and that isolation of anyone from the whole is a loss to all.

United Way support continues. On March 1, Harvey County United Way announced approval of Circles of Hope grant application. This is the second year of partnership with United Way.

Circles® on the agenda for United Methodist Church General Conference. The relationship between Circles of Hope and First United Methodist Church in Newton will be one of several such strategic partnerships highlighted at the United Methodist General Conference this spring in Tampa, Florida. In 2009, the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries established the Circles® Campaign as the denomination's pilot ministry to low-income families in the U.S.

Kansas selected to host National Circles® Campaign Hands-on-Training. A Hands-on-Training for personnel of sites that have signed a contract with the National Circles® Campaign will be offered in early July at Crosswinds Conference Center in Kansas.



The Circles of Hope community gathered on the steps of First United Methodist Church for a photograph that will be shared at the UMC General Conference

Board Notes

Honoring a Legacy: Norma Wiens

"Norma was there at the beginning of the peace center," wrote Gordon Houser of founding director Norma Wiens in the Peace Connections 25th Anniversary brochure. "She always seemed to be there – faithful, steady, committed, offering her many gifts." Norma died on January 10, 2012 and we honor her legacy of organizational stewardship.

Introducing New Board Member: Elizabeth "Lizzie" Bernhart

The Peace Connections Board is pleased to welcome its newest member. Lizzie is an attorney for Cornerstone Law in Newton and a graduate of the Washburn University School of Law.

I've always been an advocate for and a participant in works for social justice. I participate in numerous activities through my church and through Big Brothers Big Sisters. I am new to Newton, Kansas and started practicing law back in October. I learned about Peace Connections through a bar luncheon and am excited about becoming involved in the organization, both on the Board and as an Ally in Circles of Hope. I hope that through my involvement in Peace Connections and Circles of Hope, I can make an impact on my new community.



Lizzie Bernhart

Introducing New Volunteer Accountant: Christy Brenneman



Board member Mel Voht discusses accounting procedures with Christy Brenneman

The Board is grateful to Christy for volunteering her expertise to fill an important operational need. She is currently a homemaker with a background in accounting and banking. She and her husband and two school-age children live in Hesston.

My life's path has exposed me to the important work of Peace Connections and Circles of Hope a number of times in the last few years. I was previously employed as a part-time Accountant by the Central Kansas Community Foundation, where I learned about Circles of Hope as well as the Kids Summer Food Program. Also, as a leader of the Wednesday Night Children's Ministry in my home church, I have brought children to Peace Connections for lessons and activities about non-violence and being peacemakers.

A close friend of mine is a graduate of the Getting Ahead class, and my Sunday School Class has studied What Every Church Member Should Know

About Poverty. I am excited to be able to volunteer a few hours per week to help out with accounting tasks. Through my service here, I look forward to learning even more about the outreach of Peace Connections and the Circles Program in our community.

Time to get growing!

The 11th season of the Giving Garden, a community garden project overseen by Harvey County Master Gardeners, kicked off with getting potatoes and onions in the ground on March 27 after the wonderful rainfall.

If you are looking for some good exercise, the garden can always benefit from volunteers! Other needs include new irrigation tubes, stakes or fertilizer, if you'd like to support the garden in this way.

To volunteer or make a donation, contact Scott Eckert, Harvey County Extension Agent at 284-6930.



BOOK & GIFT SHOP

Sunflower Houses: A Book for Children and Their

Grown-Ups - Remember making clover chains, hollyhock dolls, and firefly lanterns? These simple pleasures, and hundreds more, are gathered here in a magical book of inspiration from the garden. Ages 6 and up. **\$13.95**



Show your support for sustainable transportation and the Cookie Wiebe Memorial Bike Ride!

Think Globally—Bike Locally - Watercolor postcards, whimsical painting with words of encouragement for us all, 4" X 6". **\$1.00**
Button or small sticker. **\$2.00**



I eat local because I can - Show your support for local food and traditional preservation methods with this lightweight unisex shirt, organic cotton, sweatshop free. **\$22.00**



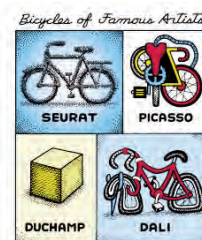
Way to Go - Show your support for local food and traditional preservation methods with this lightweight unisex shirt, organic cotton, sweatshop free. **\$22.00**
Button or small sticker. **\$2.00**

Many special events are coming up... stop by Peace Connections for a unique gift!

- ◆ **Graduations:** "Advice from" t-shirts, mugs
- ◆ **Mother's Day:** therapeutic pillows, jewelry, candles
- ◆ **Father's Day:** windmills, CDs, books
- ◆ **Weddings & Anniversaries:** oil lamps, wind chimes, gift of a tree card

We also give a **gift certificate** in the amount of your choice from Peace Connections!

Bicycles of Famous Artists - Heavyweight American-made t-shirt, unisex, 100% cotton, preshrunk. **\$2.00**



We are grateful to:

- ◆ Cathy Anderson, Stan Bohn, Vernon Lohrentz, Ruby Moore, Kathy Randall, Gloria Rediger, Marlene Smucker, Jeanette Stucky and Leann Toews for help in the store and office in January, February and March.
- ◆ Kathryn Reichenberger and Nora and Ralph Werts for assisting with newsletter mailing.
- ◆ Harvey County Democratic Women's Club for donating the storage cupboard and shelf unit to Circles of Hope to store their food service supplies at the church.
- ◆ Gloria Rediger for her cheerful assistance with accounts payable and bank deposits.
- ◆ Mel Voth's scrupulous work on the year-end financial reconciliation.
- ◆ Christy Brenneman for generously volunteering to provide accounting services.
- ◆ Board members and spouses, Peace Connections and Circles of Hope staff, Roy Pumphrey, Elmo Newman, Michelle Bosworth, Florence Schloneger, Gloria Rediger, Sylvia Bartel, Eunice Kerbs and everyone else who helped make the Annual Meeting tasty, fun and inspiring!
- ◆ Leroy Hershberger/Storyteller, Prairie Harvest Market & Deli, Bicycle Pedaler, Everence, Midland National Bank, Newton Medical Center and Sylvia Bartel with JP Weigand for their sponsorship of the Cookie Wiebe Memorial Ride.
- ◆ All who have provided food for the Tuesday evening Circles of Hope meetings: Cathy Woodward; Circle Leader Sherie Klassen and her Allies; Sherri Buss Rawlings and her book club; First United Methodist Church Youth Group; Jeanette Stucky's Bethel College Mennonite Church Circle; Chisholm Middle School Activity Council; GFWC Delta Hypatia.

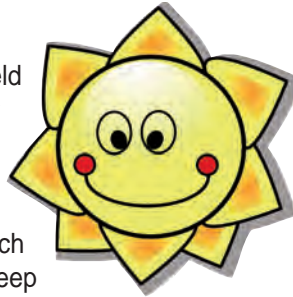


SPRING CALENDAR

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 right here 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 9**, 7 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

Cookie Wiebe Memorial Bike Ride, Saturday, April 21. See details below.

Summer Food Program Volunteer Training - Monday, April 30, 5:30-6:00 pm. Training also held in May. Attendance at only one session is required for volunteers.

Art & Music in the Heart of Newton, April 26, 6:00-8:00 pm, downtown Newton. Come by Peace Connections to enjoy light snacks and listen to Eunice and Emily Kerbs on mountain dulcimer and penny whistle as you decide which paintings, prints and photographs you want to purchase from local artists who are generously donating a percentage to

support the mission of Peace Connections. This is the kick-off for the season during which downtown businesses are encouraged to focus on art and/or music every 4th Thursday evening.

MAY

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

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

Summer Food Program Volunteer Training - Wednesday, May 2 or Monday, May 7, 5:30-6:00 pm. Attendance at only one session is required for volunteers.

JUNE

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

Kids Summer Food & Activity Program begins on June 4 and runs through July 27. Contact us for information on how you can help!

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

Bike ride to benefit Circles of Hope, April 21

The Cookie Wiebe Memorial Bike Ride begins and ends at First Mennonite Church in Newton on Saturday, April 21. Registered riders will enjoy a homemade Amish lunch of soups and assorted breads and pies, as well as inspirational highlights of Cookie's legacy, in the church's fellowship hall.

The event, open to the first 100 registrants, offers 30- and 60-mile routes into the Flint Hills or a 10-mile route in the Newton vicinity. Drop by Peace Connections or visit www.cookiesride.org for a registration form. Fees are \$10 (10 mile), \$30 (30 mile) and \$40 (60 mile).



Think of bicycles as rideable art that can just about save the world.

--Grant Peterson

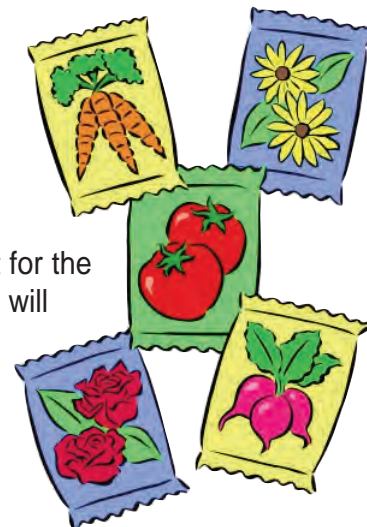
Planting Seeds, Growing a Garden

The community's need for what Peace Connections has to offer is growing in 2012, and spring is the time to prepare the garden of possibilities and plant according to demand.

As you nurture your own plots this spring, you are invited to sow new seeds to cultivate justice, non-violence and well-being through Peace Connections.

Now is the perfect time to sow seeds through a one-time or ongoing financial gift for the initiatives described here. Your generous one-time gift or an ongoing monthly gift will make a real and lasting difference!

Peace Connections thanks you for all the seeds you have sown in the past and will sow yet this year. With you, we look forward to a wonderful harvest!



Kids Summer Food & Activity

More than 10,000 meals were served last summer and the need has increased this school year, with 59% of Newton students eligible for free and reduced lunches during the school year.

Circles of Hope

The whole community benefits by cultivating support for individuals and families with low resources. Participants who stay in the program increase income by 63%, decrease use of public benefits by 44%; increase assets by 122%; and decrease debt by 58%.

Knowing your plans for financial support helps us plan and is a gift in itself.

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____ Phone _____

I/We pledge to support the mission of Peace Connections in 2012 with a contribution of \$ _____

to be paid:

- Enclosed now.
- Pledge of \$ _____ monthly
- Annual pledge of \$ _____ by December 31, 2012

Donors may be acknowledged in Peace Connections publications. If you would prefer your donations to be anonymous, please check here _____.

Signature: _____ Date _____

For more information on how you can support the mission, contact Peace Connections at 316-284-0000, or mail your donation to 612 N. Main Street, Newton, KS 67114.



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.



*How would it be
if just for today
we thought less about
contests and rivalries,
profits and politics,
winners and sinners,
and more about
helping and giving,
mending and blending,
reaching out
and pitching in?*

How would it be?

--Anonymous

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.

Banner available in gift shop.