



*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 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

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October-November-December 2012

PEACE CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

Building stronger buckets

Poverty is typically defined as a lack of money and possessions. The web of contributing factors, however, is more complex than that definition implies, especially when the problem passes from one generation to the next, often accompanied by a chronic sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

In Circles of Hope, participants are introduced to a new term: low resources. This isn't a euphemism designed to soften the impact of being in poverty or living in a country where 46 million Americans (15%) are counted as poor. Instead, it's a more holistic approach to defining the challenge in order to craft a solution with greater integrity. So far, the Circles® model seems to be doing just that in Harvey County.

Anyone can benefit from assessing the state of their resources, as each family does soon after starting the Circle Leader training class. That assessment opens the door to a new kind of thinking, a more integrated basis for goal-setting. In short, money alone does not resolve poverty.

Focus on
HOPE



The visual metaphor used to bring this concept alive in the training class is an old-fashioned bucket with wooden staves. Each staff represents one of the key resources – mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, financial, formal language skills, role models, support systems, understanding the hidden rules of class, motivation & persistence, and integrity & trust – and the bucket can only hold as much as the most damaged staff permits.

According to the Circles® model, choosing priorities to create a better future starts with repairing the weakest staves first so that resilience and the overall quality of life can begin to increase. To do otherwise is to pour resources into a bucket that is guaranteed to keep leaking.

The decision to join the Circles of Hope community is the first step in the bucket-building process. The opportunity to foster trust

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across class, race, economic, political and religious lines in Circles begins strengthening many resource staves immediately. Others are repaired when participants stop feeling overwhelmed and begin to experience the empowerment that comes of taking charge of their lives.

A sure sign of success is when formerly-leaky buckets get full enough to enable sharing with the community. This newsletter issue contains some encouraging statistics and inspiring vignettes that illustrate the impact of building stronger buckets.

And thanks to your donations of prayer, time and money to make Circles of Hope possible, these positive outcomes are offered as a way to refill your buckets too!

A quick look at measurable outcomes

Since its launching in 2009, Circles of Hope has conducted six Circle Leader training classes in Harvey County with a total of 63 participants. There are currently 19 active Matched Circles (composed of one Circle Leader and two to four volunteer Allies) with an additional six or more groups slated to begin with new graduates this fall.

Some of the longer-term impacts of the model are becoming evident as eight Circle Leaders have completed their 18 month commitment in a Matched Circle. Measurable impacts such as increased income and assets, as well as reduced debt and less dependence on public assistance, are encouraging.

Keeping the blessings flowing

Qualitative changes in the lives of people who've experienced a sense of supportive community, some for the first time in their lives, are harder to measure, but easy to see!

Participants talk about what a difference it makes to come out of isolation and exponentially increase support networks and access to resources. Some of the most shy and reluctant participants have turned into leaders whose contributions are shining examples of reciprocity.

Notes of hope. When Sherie Klassen first came to Circles, no one probably imagined (least of all her) that two years later she'd be spearheading and performing in a concert to benefit Circles of Hope at her home church, Alexanderwohl Mennonite. Sherie, who plays flute and piano, also recruited another Circle Leader, Toni Thompson, to sing, and one of her Allies, Stan Bohn, to speak (see "New creation fund-raising" on Page 3). That event on August 12 raised over \$1,000 to benefit the Circles initiative.

Reciprocity. The Circles® National Campaign model specifies "middle and upper income Allies" to befriend and lend support to Circle Leaders, but that template was spontaneously redesigned in Harvey County when several Circle Leaders who had completed their 18-month commitment decided they wanted to give back to the community by becoming Allies. This unique twist on the model offers the value of Allies who understand economic and social class issues from an inside view point and can serve as credible and inspiring examples of success to their peers.

Coming full circle. Jerica Hinshaw entered the first Circle Leader training class in 2009 as a single mom working two minimum-wage fast-food jobs and barely eking by. Today she is on a different trajectory altogether as she nears completion of a degree in education from Bethel College. This year she began co-facilitating (with Denise Rhoades) the introductory class that guides Circles participants in assessing their resources and setting goals for a more hope-filled future.



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Denise Rhoades (back row, far left) and Jerica Hinshaw (back row, far right) with the sixth class of Circle Leader trainees.

The hope goes on. The most recent class to graduate under Denise and Jerica's leadership is the sixth since 2009. The celebration on August 28 honored the nine graduates with food, fellowship, music and a keynote address by the new United Way director Tina Payne. Graduation is always a heartwarming event, with the chance to hear how lives are changing.

The best way to invest in peace is to not buy into fear.

-Peace Connections sign

New creation fund-raising

Condensed from a talk given by Stan Bohn at Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church

How does Circles of Hope encourage people to donate time, money and food for an initiative aimed at transforming the lives of individuals and families in poverty?

The Apostle Paul had a strange way of helping people share with people they didn't know. (See II Corinthians 8 and 9). He didn't do what we do: use guilt, offer rewards, make emotional appeals or devise fear tactics to make people give. So, how did he motivate people to be more caring?

Paul had the nerve to say that since Jesus was killed and lives again, everything has changed. We are now parts of one interdependent body, each doing our part for the health of the whole. Instead of trying to change others, we are transformed. We don't see other people as threats or competitors or someone to use for our own progress. We don't have to wait until people become more caring. We are empowered to build each other up now. This may seem revolutionary in a capitalist society that encourages everybody to get ahead without worrying about or depending on others.



The audience enjoys the concert given by Sherie Klassen and Toni Thompson at Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church

Circles of Hope shares similar underpinnings. In Circles we also believe the world has changed. We see others differently. We don't classify people according to whether they're givers or in need. We call each other Circle Leaders and Allies. Reciprocity means working together on our goals.

Granted, it can take time to adjust to this kind of partnership. You may well wonder if what Paul said is practical here and now in Kansas. Is Circles of Hope a realistic model?

During the four years, Circles has pulled us out of our routine circles into the wider community: minimum wage, food stamps, job loss, costs of child care, jobs without health coverage. As Allies in the Circles initiative, we don't try to solve problems with money. We don't give advice or set goals other people should

reach. We relate. We listen and learn, and as we do, we see that our easy solutions don't work. People in poverty have problems much more complex than we realized.

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FALL CALENDAR

All events are held at Peace Connections unless otherwise noted

OCTOBER

Be the Peace Monthly Meditation on Monday, **October 1**, 12:10–12:50 pm. A time of meditative/prayerful silence in which to hold an intention for the peace and well-being of our community.

Circles community meetings are 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. Anyone is welcome to attend the first & fourth weekly meetings. (The second Tuesday is reserved for Ally and Circle Leader meetings and the third Tuesday is reserved for the Guiding Coalition meeting.)

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

26th Annual Taste of Newton, Thursday, **October 11**, 6:00–9:00 pm. Drop by Peace Connections to shop, visit or sit down and take a little break from the festivities.

The **Peace Connections store will be closed** on Saturday, **October 13** so our employees and volunteers can attend Bethel College Fall Fest.

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is **October 17**. This is a day designated by the United Nations to “promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries, particularly in developing countries.” It has taken place every year since 1993 to commemorate 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 18th annual downtown **Halloween Walk** on Saturday, **October 27**, 4:30–6:30 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.

NOVEMBER

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

Be the Peace Monthly Meditation on Monday, **November 5** 12:10–12:50 pm.

Experience the **Taste of Christmas** in downtown Newton **November 8–10**. Stop by Peace Connections to see our Christmas specials and sample our refreshments.

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

Peace Connections store will be open **November 23**, 10:00 am–5:00 pm (store is usually closed on Fridays) for Thanksgiving weekend shopping.

DECEMBER

Be the Peace Monthly Meditation on Monday, **December 3**, 12:10–12:50 pm.

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

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

We hope to have the Peace Connections **Gift Shop open late until 8 pm on Thursdays** throughout December (need to line up volunteers to do so). Stop by on **December 6, 13, 20** to find gifts that reflect peace for those on your list!



The gift-giving season is fast approaching. We carry unique gifts that express peace and support Peace Connections. We have gifts for...

- Babies & Children: *stocking stuffers, picture books*
- Teens: *T-shirts and sweatshirts, bumper stickers, buttons*
- Women: *jewelry, figurines, candles, books, music*
- Men: *windmills, sweatshirts, coffee mugs*
- Anyone: *therapeutic pillows, wind chimes, prayer flags, peace lamps*

Can't decide? Give a **gift certificate** in the amount of your choice from Peace Connections.

Also see our selection of **Christmas cards** and **picture books** – many wonderful messages of peace!

BOOK & GIFT SHOP

2013 Calendars Coming Soon!

Peace Calendar: Occupy the Future. "Provocative.



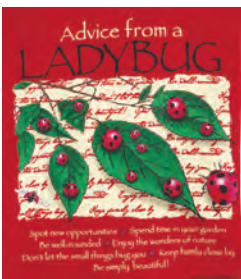
Progressive. Visionary. Essential." As always, the Peace Calendar is an invitation to celebrate the many hands and hearts working to change the status quo and to honor those who have paved the way. Full color, 14" x 22"

on your wall. Over 200 people's history annotations. Holidays for many faiths. Lunar cycles, 13 native moons. **\$14.95**

Women Artists Date Book. A stimulating collection of art and poetry by more than 30 women artists. The date book is a warmly tactile way to connect with a community of women. Spiral-bound. Uncoated stock for notations. Lunar cycles, 13 native moons. Weekly quotes by women. 5" X 7". **\$15.95**



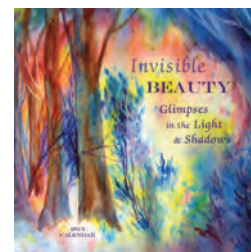
Advice from...Sweatshirts and T-Shirts. This line of clothes is designed to appeal to nature lovers. The designs are rich and colorful, with thoughtful and fun "advice" from the plant or animal depicted. T-shirts are heavyweight 100% cotton and sweatshirts are heavyweight 50/50 cotton/poly blend. **\$16.95/\$25.00**



Walk the Walk: Cat Lovers Against the Bomb. For the cat lover in your life who is also committed to peace, this is the perfect calendar. With great photos, tidbits of world history, and great quotes about peace and social justice, this calendar is the purrrrrfect way to support peace. Black and white. Printed on recycled paper. 8-1/2" x 11". **\$8.95**



Invisible Beauty: Ministry of the Arts. The ancients say that Beauty is already everywhere and in everything, and it is our job to find the Beauty, to seek it out. In that spirit we invite you into a deeper awareness of beauty throughout the year as you catch glimpses of her each month in your life and in others. Calendar opens to 11" x 22". **\$12.95**



Featured Children's Book...My Favorite Tree. This fun and useful book about the native trees of North America combines a children's story with the most interesting facts about 27 major trees and their relatives, such as their vital statistics, dependent wildlife, record-holding trees, and the role they played in the lives of the Native Americans and the Colonists. Ages 5 and up. **\$9.95**



2012 Giving Garden yields abundance despite drought

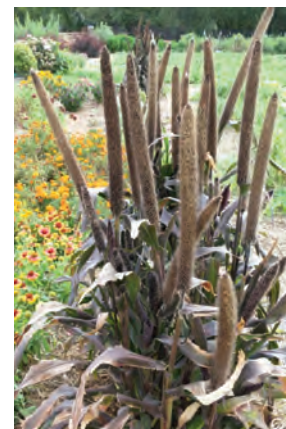
For the last dozen years, Harvey County master gardeners, with guidance from County Extension agent Scott Eckert, have been stewards of the Giving Garden at 6th and Pine. The program originated as a joint venture of Peace Connections and the Harvey County Extension Service.

Peace Connections' current contribution is to pay the monthly water bill, which reached record highs this summer!

The Giving Garden is truly a labor of love, especially during hot, dry summers like the last two. The produce is donated to the Salvation Army for distribution to families in need.

As of the first week of September, the garden had yielded 3,000 pounds of produce, with more to come when the sweet potato and watermelon crops are harvested. The annual average yield is around 3,200 pounds and the all-time record was 4,300 pounds.

In addition to providing produce, the garden gives satisfaction to the gardeners and beauty to visitors. You are invited to drop by sometime to see what might be blooming in the Peace Prairie Garden.



Peace Prairie Garden

■ New creation fund-raising continued from page 3

But Paul says that is the way God works in this changed world: through changed people like you and me. We contribute because we are now part of a sharing group, a family that cares for brothers and sisters. We remember the One who provides what we need to live as the people we were meant to be – part of a family of cheerful and a little bit crazy givers and sharers. We are not waiting for the world to change. That has happened already.

So what and how much should we do? Depending on what God has given us, we reach out to others. Which means we risk being changed into part of the new creation. And we discover life is much richer and fuller than being focused solely on our own survival.

Many buckets

In his long-running newspaper column, "Thanks a Million," self-made multi-millionaire and philanthropist Percy Ross once wrote, "Many drops make a bucket, many buckets make a pond, many ponds make a lake, and many lakes make an ocean."

Every drop makes a difference. In August, two of our Circle Leaders volunteered to visit local businesses and request small gifts of congratulation for the most recent Circles training graduates. In response to the passion and earnestness of Rachel Bennett and Teresa Froese as ambassadors who've benefitted from Circles, there was considerable generosity from the business community.

Unexpectedly, Wendy's offered to do more, an inspiring example of keeping the blessings flowing for the good of the community. The restaurant has offered to donate baked potatoes and toppings one Tuesday per month and salads with dressing on an alternate Tuesday. In addition, they have pledged to help provide cups, napkins and table service.

There are so many creative ways to invest in building a stronger community for all, one bucket or one drop at a time. To participate in community building can be tremendously rewarding. And as Percy Ross is also quoted as saying, perhaps with a mis-

Board Notes

SWOT analysis. On September 10, Peace Connections stakeholders (including staff, volunteers and donors) gathered at Cornerstone Law for an analysis of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Twenty individuals, led by Dorothy Nickel Friesen, solicited much valuable insight that will be used to guide future decisions. A second SWOT analysis specifically for Circles of Hope will take place at the end of the month. You can expect a summary of outcomes in the next newsletter.

Looking ahead to 2013. Steve Richards, Arnita Haury and Leann Toews have been identifying themes for the Peace Connections 30th Anniversary in 2013. Myrna and Marva have been brain-storming ideas for a calendar to appreciate and commemorate the rich and inspiring history of grassroots efforts.

Judy Hawk resigns from Peace Connections Board. Retired social worker Judy Hawk, who joined the board in mid-2011, has resigned after a year of service to Peace Connections. She continues to live in Hutchinson, a challenge to being actively involved in Harvey County, and has been instrumental in launching Circles® in Reno County. Judy is also actively involved with her grandchildren, another factor that makes serving on the board in Newton less practical. Myrna Krehbiel and the rest of the board are grateful for Judy's contributions during the last year.

Do you have a heart for peace and social justice? Judy is one of four board members who have resigned in 2012, leaving the organization in need of new board members. Peace Connections welcomes you to investigate whether your interests and skills might align with the mission. We deeply need willing advocates who have a heart for peace and social justice issues (poverty in particular), and especially anyone with a gift and passion for fund development.



The true nature of abundance

Drops, buckets, flow and resources are recurring themes in this issue. This is the time of year to give thanks for blessings and to share from abundance.

Abundance is frequently interpreted as “more than enough,” but the etymology actually implies only “fullness.” To keep the blessings flowing, there is absolutely no reason to wait until there is more than enough before choosing to give. When we share our resources, we make room for more blessings in our buckets.

As Peace Connections nears the end of the fiscal year in December and approaches a new season of challenges and opportunities, your continued support is essential to making a difference in the lives of those in our community and beyond.



Opportunities for sharing

- ▶ If you've already responded to the **Annual Phonathon**, the Peace Connections board & staff express our gratitude for your giving!
- ▶ **If we missed you, please let us know!** To end with a balanced budget, Peace Connections will continue to need contributions through the end of the year.
- ▶ **You can also make a secure donation on our website** very conveniently through Paypal at <http://www.peaceconnections.org/Donate-or-Volunteer.html>
- ▶ If you prefer, we have **new options available for monthly giving**. This approach to supporting the mission on a regular basis is truly a sustaining grace. Call or drop by the office for details.
- ▶ You are also welcome to **earmark your financial gift** for Peace Connections, Kids Summer Food & Activity or Circles of Hope.
- ▶ If your extended family is looking for an **alternative to commercially-focused Christmas giving**, please consider a donation to Peace Connections or one of its initiatives as a heartfelt gift to the world in the true spirit of Christmas.
- ▶ **Purchases from the gift shop also help Peace Connections** – come by to see what we have for you or for those on your gift lists!
- ▶ If you are not in a position to offer financial support, Peace Connections is always deeply grateful for the **gift of your time as a volunteer** and your **thoughts and prayers** as a supporter of the vision of *thriving communities sustained by peace and social justice.*

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



- ◆ Cathy Anderson, Stan Bohn, Arnita Haury, Ruby Moore, Gloria Rediger, Marlene Smucker and Leann Toews for help in the store and office.
- ◆ Christy Brenneman for volunteering her top-notch accounting skills and Gloria Rediger for cheerfully assisting with store bookkeeping.
- ◆ Theresa Wooley, Sally Logan, Patricia Hall and Craig Jaworski for helping staff to set up and host a Circles booth at Hope Fest.



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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.

Step by step the longest march
can be won, can be won

Many stones can form an arch,
singly none, singly none

And by union what we will
can be accomplished still

Drops of water turn a mill,
singly none, singly none

--John McCutcheon

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.