



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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January-February-March 2012

PEACE CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

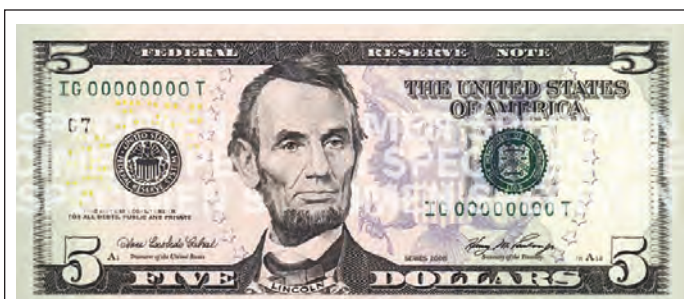
Inspirational Giving

The strongest leadership is by inspiration. We have witnessed this principle in action at Peace Connections this year and we hope to inspire you by sharing some noteworthy examples.

REDEFINING ABUNDANCE

This fall a relative newcomer to our Circles of Hope initiative walked into Peace Connections with dried grass clinging to his boots and jeans. "I got a lawn-mowing job today and I want to donate part of what I made to help others," Jonnie told staff. "Circles has really helped me and I want to keep that going."

That sweaty five-dollar bill may not seem like much to throw into the maw of poverty, but this was no ordinary contribution. Jonnie's circumstances beg a closer look at the significance of his offering. He had no steady income and no savings. He was living out of a camper at a county park, hoping for a turn of luck. Nevertheless, his heart urged him to give and he made a powerful choice to come from faith in abundance rather than fear of scarcity.



People lead by example and...the smallest act of courage can ripple through and create inspiration in ways we never dreamed.

—John Marshall Roberts

Another person who came to Circles of Hope in search of help with changing her situation reinvested in the initiative this year by telling her story at several presentations. In mid-October she spoke at Hesston Mennonite Church. Following a last-minute intuition, Sharon felt led to share about continuing to tithe even when she wasn't sure how she was going to pay her bills. "One of the things that God has showed me is that there are generational blessings when you tithe," she said. "I think Circles might be the hand of God helping me break generational poverty." Sharon's testimony ended up in a video on the Internet, posted by the church.

About a month later an anonymous donation to Circles of Hope arrived at Peace Connections. The envelope contained \$2,000 in cash and a simple note of thanks to Sharon "for reminding me of the importance of tithing. If she can tithe when times are hard, I can do no less."

■ Continued on page 2

Inspiration

■ Continued from page 1

In mid-December another Circle Leader came in with a generous donation. She mentioned being inspired by all the caring people who give of their time and love to help individuals like her. Later in December, a significant donation arrived from the sibling of another Circle Leader who had been inspired by his brother's stories about Circles of Hope. The contribution was made in memory of Elmo's father, a simple man who "cared for those around him and was a blessing to many people." Those who know Elmo will recognize him in this description of his father.

GIVING CREATIVELY

Cay Seibert is a Peace Connections volunteer whose gift of time and information also started a chain reaction. You may already have read in *The Newton Kansan* about how Cay was volunteering at our store when North Newton resident and artist Ron Winters stopped by one day to rest a minute and catch his breath.

Ron knew nothing about the organization when he walked in the door, but thanks to Cay's compelling overview of our mission and programs, he was back within a few days carrying armloads of his original art. Every few days he arrived with more paintings, generously offering to donate 50% of every sale to Peace Connections.*

The first person who bought one of Ron's paintings remarked that both the art and the story inspired her. She will hang the piece in her home office as a reminder of how generosity is self-perpetuating. Indeed, this chain of inspiration continues to grow in length and strength. Another person who read the article in the paper didn't need any art, but was nevertheless prompted to give. The donation was accompanied by a note thanking Cay for her effectiveness as an ambassador for Peace Connections.

ONGOING LEGACY

Another person was inspired by the Peace Connections story to give of her creativity. She knitted and donated three dozen prayer shawls to be used as gifts or sold in the store, to provide comfort, blessings and support for our mission.

The stage for the last story was set seven years ago when Cookie Wiebe caught on fire about Bridges Out of Poverty. Raised in low resources, Cookie became passionate about helping others in Harvey County. Her early investment of herself in the program laid the foundation for what is today our Circles of Hope initiative. On October 31, Cookie died of cancer and her husband Dave designated Circles as the focus of memorial donations. In death as in life, Cookie continues to inspire support.

The literal meaning of inspire is to breathe life into. We give thanks for everyone who has done that with such love and grace in 2011. The life of Peace Connections depends upon this quality of giving.

Sharon's video: <http://vimeo.com/31155457>

Kansan story about Cay Seibert and Ron Winters: <http://www.thekansan.com/features/x1270567803/Artful-recycling>

Cookie Wiebe's story: <http://charitableliving.net/2011/11/12/>

*Ron's paintings will be at Peace Connections through the end of January.

Loaves and Fishes: Calling All Miracle-Workers!

Every Tuesday evening the Circles of Hope program offers a hot meal to Getting Ahead class members, Circle Leaders, Allies, staff, children and visitors. Granted, we aren't feeding five thousand, but our efforts to serve a nutritious meal to the growing number of participants sometimes bears more than a passing resemblance to the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Thanks to coordination efforts by Lea Ann Reber and the contributions of volunteers like Joyce Flickinger, Elmo Newman and Cynthia Wyss on a weekly basis and other volunteers and staff who pitch in as needed, no one has ever gone hungry!

Please give some thought and prayer to the idea of pitching in this year to help us. Your family, Sunday School class, prayer circle, service organization, book club or other group could really make a difference by providing and serving a Tuesday evening meal in the coming year.



Student Council members and advisers from Chisholm Middle School pitched in to make and serve a meal for Circles of Hope this fall.

Circles Update

Program Highlights

The Circles of Hope initiative continues to expand at a rapid rate! We are simultaneously gratified and challenged by the response to this non-traditional approach to ending poverty by fostering supportive relationships.

Meeting highlights from this fall include:

- On October 4, we enjoyed an educational presentation by staff from Central National Bank. Nina Carr shared information about New Opportunity Checking for individuals who've had past challenges managing a bank account. Harry Wolfe, who is also on the board of Habitat for Humanity and the Community Foundation, shared an overview of the Habitat for Humanity program in Harvey County.
- On October 25, the Big View Team presented the results from the September 28 survey of Issues Affecting Quality of Life in Newton. Presenters included Toni Thompson, Steve Richards, Roy Pumphrey, Jay Anderson and Stan Bohn. The priority issues for exploration in Big View meetings during the coming months are, in order of preference: (1) job opportunities, (2) transportation, (3) health care, (4) courts/judicial, and (5) financial predators.
- On November 1, Wanda Pumphrey offered an interactive session on understanding, interpreting and making different choices about our emotional reactions.
- At the November 22 Big View meeting, Laurie Oswald-Robinson and Toni Thompson organized an activity around the board game, Life, and then connected the game to the agenda of the Big View team for the next several months, which will focus on jobs.
- On November 29, we enjoyed a Relationship-Building Potluck with a special opportunity to share how Circles of Hope has made a difference in participant's lives. We also dispersed into small support groups—Allies, Circle Leaders and visitors—to share victories, concerns and questions.
- At the December 6 educational session Glenda Reynolds gave a presentation about how the Bridges Out of Poverty model is being used in the judicial system in Ohio.

Circle Leader and Ally Recruitment

A significant number of new recruits who want to begin addressing their resource issues are coming to us because they are seeing the difference Circles is making in a friend's life! Seven new Matched Circles began their supportive journeys together in November and 11 new applicants started Circle Leader training in December.

As a result, we have a fabulous opportunity for you to help us recruit new Allies to keep pace with this growth! The next Ally training sessions begin in January. If you or anyone you know might be interested in taking this training, please share this information with them. One of our biggest challenges is finding enough volunteers to invest in Circles of Hope by becoming Allies to Circle Leaders.

Check out Circles of Hope!

- *What is Circles?*
- *What is Bridges Out of Poverty?*
- *What does it mean to be an Ally?*

1-Session Option: Jan. 14, 8:30 – 4 pm (lunch included)

3-Session Option: Jan. 17th, 24th & 31st, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

First United Methodist Church – 801 N. Main, Newton

Attending 1 Saturday session or 3 consecutive Tuesdays meets the basic requirements to become a Circles Ally.

To register, contact us at 316-284-0000 or email us at info@peaceconnections.org

BOARD NOTES

Aloha—in addition to having the well-known multiple meanings of *hello* and *goodbye*—implies *being a part of all, and all being a part of me*. Bearing all of these layers of meaning in mind, we gratefully bid *aloha* to the following individuals.

After ten years on the Peace Connections Board of Directors, Stan Bohn is retiring from active board duties. Thankfully he will be continuing to volunteer on Saturdays to keep the doors open and to orchestrate the annual Phonathon. In his resignation he offered “thanks to Peace Connections and its good leadership, paid and volunteer, for enriching my life.”



Cathy Anderson, who served in an administrative capacity at Peace Connections seven years ago, and who joined the board of directors in 2011, respectfully resigned her position this fall in order to offer her fullest attention to her position as Executive Director of Trinity Heights Respite Care. She expresses her admiration of “the great work Peace Connections has done and will continue to do.”

We mourn the death of former board member John McGee, while remembering his many contributions to Peace Connections. John died January 1, at age 72, of metastatic malignant melanoma.

New Board Member: Rosemary “Rosi” Reimer



Rosemary “Rosi” Reimer

In Romans 14:19 God gives these instructions - "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace, and build up the common life." There are many different ways to do this, and serving on the board of Peace Connections is one I have recently accepted. While attending Bethel College (1974-1978) I began to participate in actions to witness for justice and nonviolent solutions. It was at Bethel that I met my husband Steve Goertzen. We live on a farm near Goessel, and have 2 sons, Laird and Heath.

Service to others was modeled by my parents, and my mother, Gladys Reimer, has also served on the board of Peace Connections. I first served on the board in the early 1990s, when we were called the Newton Area Peace Center and had a small office above Drubers Do-nuts. One focus at that time was concern for the environment, and eventually resulted in a recycling program for this area. Other issues were Central America and work with refugees. It is exciting to see Peace Connections expand to address poverty as a justice

issue, and I look forward to finding new ways to spread peace in our community, nation, and world.

Coordinator of Fund Development: Laurie Oswald Robinson

I came to my first Circles of Hope meeting a year ago, December 2011, as a reporter to capture a story for *Mennonite Weekly Review*. In the process, my own heart was captured as I partook of my first experience with sitting in the big circle during a Tuesday night gathering.

As each person around the circle shared their "new and good" for the week, my eyes filled with tears, partly due to the fact that my husband Al and I were marking the first anniversary of a major loss of a small foster child.

Just prior to my first Circles experience, I had learned that many foster children end up in the welfare rosters when they become adults. So as I sat in the circle that evening, I suddenly had renewed hope that I could help redeem some of our loss by getting involved with the mission of Circles. By helping low-resource families to build sustainable lives, I could help other struggling families from losing their children to the system. And that would mean that there would be fewer little girls like our foster daughter that would undergo the pain and suffering that she experienced.

Though my heart was captured immediately, it wasn't until late spring that I began to volunteer as the co-chair of the Big View team. And this late fall, I became the coordinator of fund development for Peace Connections. It is now my daily vocation and prayer to help build sustainability for the mission of building a more just and sustainable future for our community, one family, one heart, at a time.



Laurie Oswald Robinson

BOOK & GIFT SHOP

New Book

In Our Mother's House by Patricia Polacco.

Marmee, Meema and the kids are just like any other family on the block. In their beautiful house, they cook dinner together, they laugh together, and they dance together. But some of the other families don't accept them. They say they are different. How can a family have two moms and no dad? But Marmee and Meema's house is full of love. And they teach their children that different doesn't mean wrong. And no matter how many moms or dads they have, they are everything a family is meant to be. Age 6 and up. **\$17.99**



Simple Gestures Metal Sculptures



Great Valentine's Day gift idea. These sculptures made of recycled cast iron – engraved with "I love you" – are unique and artful expressions of kindness and appreciation! **\$9.00**

Willow Tree Angels



Susan Lordi creates these figurative sculptures that speak in quiet ways of deep emotion and inspiration. Several in the line would make excellent choices for a thoughtful Valentine's gift. **\$12 and up.**

Peace Lamps by Mark Goertzen

These one-of-a-kind pottery lamps are made on the potter's wheel and decorated and glazed by hand. **\$22.50.**

*Each time we light a lamp
we have the opportunity
to begin anew with hope*

To share light with another is

To bless and be blessed

To forgive and be forgiven

To love and be loved

To make peace and to share peace.

May we all light our lamps each day.

-Dick Lehman

We are grateful to the following people for their gift of time during October, November & December 2011:

- ◆ Stan Bohn, George Dyck, Ruby Moore, Kathy Randall, Cay Siebert, Marlene Smucker, Jeanette Stucky, Leann Toews, Marva Weigelt and Elizabeth Winterbone for helping in the store on Saturdays and at other times when staff was out of the office.
- ◆ Great big thank you to all of the volunteers who helped organize, made chili, decorated, served, greeted, laughed and cleaned up for the Circles of Hope booth at the Harvey County United Way Chili Cook-Off on October 1.
- ◆ Gratitude to Marlene Smucker, Stan Smucker, Karen Dickson and Randy Krehbiel for help with the Peace Connections booth at the Bethel College Fall Festival on October 8.



Volunteers cheerfully backing Circles of Hope in the Harvey County United Way Chili Cookoff

We are also perpetually thankful for churches and individuals who support the vision of Peace Connections with their donations and for organizations that offer grant opportunities. In those areas of support we note:



- ◆ As mentioned in our cover story, we are so appreciative of the Cookie Wiebe memorial contributions.
- ◆ We were awarded a grant from The Showalter Foundation for expanding our Circles of Hope initiative.
- ◆ After a successful grant application to Harvey County United Way last year, we are hopeful for continued funding. We defended our submission in early December and hope to hear about the outcome by early February.

WINTER CALENDAR

JANUARY

Circles of Hope community meetings are being held on **Tuesdays**, 6:30 – 8:00 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 Guiding Coalition meeting.)

Peace Connections Board meeting will be **Jan. 5**, 7:00 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

Circles of Hope Ally Training (see page 3 for details)

1-Session Option: January 14, 8:30 am – 4 pm (lunch included)

3-Session Option: January 17th, 24th & 31st, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

FEBRUARY

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

Peace Connections Board meeting will be **February 13**, 7:00 pm. Meetings are open to the public.

Be the Peace Monthly Meditation on Monday, **February 6**. Join Marva Weigelt from 12:10 – 12:50 pm.

Make your Valentine cards at Peace Connections! Valentine stamps and materials will be out & available **Monday, Feb. 6 – Tuesday, Feb. 14**. (closed Friday).

MARCH

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

Be the Peace Monthly Meditation on Monday, **March 5**. Join Marva Weigelt from 12:10-12:50.

Peace Connections Annual Celebration will be Thursday, March 8, 6:00 – 8:00 pm at First United Methodist Church. Please join us for a soup dinner, dessert and a musical treat. Our program focus will be Circles of Hope, which will include storytelling by Circle Leaders and Allies in the program.

A SEASON FOR
NONVIOLENCE



carry the vision

The Season for Nonviolence begins January 30 and runs through April 4. This is a national 64-day grassroots campaign “dedicated to demonstrating that nonviolence is a powerful way to heal, transform, and empower our lives and our communities.” Inspired by memorial anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., this international event honors their vision for an empowered, nonviolent world. We invite you to think about how you could use this in your home, school, workplace, etc. Stop by Peace Connections for materials (practice guides, posters, t-shirts) that you can use and watch the Kansan for daily suggestions of how to practice nonviolence or visit www.64-days.org for daily practices.

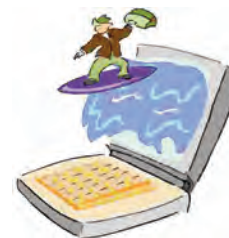
Looking Ahead

Save the date for the **1st Annual Cookie Wiebe Memorial Bike Ride**, slated for **Saturday, April 21**. Peace Connections and Circles of Hope is sponsoring this bike ride as a fundraiser to honor the legacy of Cookie, who died October 31 from ovarian cancer. Dave Wiebe, Cookie's spouse, will be mapping three routes of approximately 10, 30 and 60 miles each. Elena Entz will co-chair the planning committee. For more information or to volunteer, contact Laurie Oswald Robinson, coordinator of Fund Development for Peace Connections. You may call her at 316-284-0223 or e-mail at lauriepcandcircles@gmail.com.



Dave & Cookie Wiebe

Surf on over to Peace Connections without leaving home



In case you haven't heard about or seen our newly retooled website, we invite you to surf on over to www.peaceconnections.org the next time you're on the Internet. Marva Weigelt has been working with Peace Connections staff and board to redesign the website. We hope you'll notice and appreciate the difference in the amount of information available, especially about our Circles of Hope initiative.

Potential Allies and Circle Leaders can now easily download and print their own application forms and other useful documents directly from the website. Very soon we hope to have a new online store open for business, as well as a convenient way to donate to Peace Connections by credit card. *We will also need a volunteer to come in weekly for an hour or two to prepare orders for shipping.*

WANTED: Peace Connections is seeking a part time bookkeeper for an average of 2-5 hours per week. Must have accounting and QuickBooks experience. Contact: Myrna Krehbiel, 316-284-0000.

Fresh Start in the New Year

We are updating our mailing list and would like for you to help us communicate more effectively. Please fill out and return this form to:

Peace Connections
612 N. Main
Newton, KS 67114

or email: info@peaceconnections.org
or telephone: 316-284-0000

_____ We wish to continue receiving the Peace Connections newsletter at the current address

Address change: _____

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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.

"It may be that when we no longer know what to do, we have come to our real work; and when we no longer know which way to go, we have begun our real journey."

--Wendell Berry

Mission:

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: Marva Weigelt, Laurie Oswald Robinson and Rosi Reimer.

Peace Connections Director: Myrna Krehbiel.
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Newsletter Design and Layout: Kathy Randall.

Board Members: Margaret Goering, Shafiq Hasan, Judy Hawk, Gary Rediger, Rosi Reimer, Jeanette Stucky, Justin Thaw, Mel Voth and Mary Sue Voth.

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