

World Peace Flame to alit in Ashland

By John Darling / For the Tidings

Posted Apr 22, 2018 at 11:16 AM

Updated Apr 22, 2018 at 11:16 AM

A World Peace Flame is coming to Ashland in September, to be installed at the new Thalden Pavilion and to serve as meeting point, whether for meditation, rallies or conversations about how to build more peace in the community and world.

The World Peace Flame has been burning since 1999, when seven flames, lit by eminent peacemakers on five continents, were flown to the United Kingdom, brought together and united into one flame in Bangor, North Wales, according to the World Peace Flame website.

The first World Peace Flame monument was inaugurated in 2002 in The Hague, Netherlands, where the flame is viewed by 100,000 people a year, according to worldpeaceflame.org. The first World Peace Flame monument in the U.K. was installed at Dru Worldwide in Snowdonia National Park, North Wales, in 2003. There are now 12 World Peace Flame monuments in five countries.

The Ashland flame will be only the second such monument in the United States. The first, at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tenn., was dedicated in 2002.

The flame will burn in a simple lantern, made in The Hague, the same type used around the world and will be installed here in the triangular space at the foot of the carved cedar obelisk at the Pavilion at 155 Walker Avenue, across from Ashland Middle School.

It will be protected by thick vandal-resistant glass and fed by natural oil from local biomass, completely sustainable and nonpolluting — and it will burn in perpetuity, 24/7, says Irene Kai of Ashland Culture of Peace Commission, which is backing the project.

It will be lit in a ceremony on Sept. 21, the International Day of Peace, by officials including Savitri MacCruise, who will come from the World Peace Flame Foundation in the Hague. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown is invited to the event. A local “keeper of the flame” will make sure it has oil and is protected from the elements.

“The whole spirit of world peace is so important now,” says Kai. “It has a history and a presence with us all now and this flame will help teach the children of the future. It’s also a big part of the sustainability mission that the Thalden Pavilion was created for.”

Since the Peace Flame is the only one, at this point, in the entire Western U.S., it should inspire pilgrimages and discussion of such monuments in other cities, says David Wick, Kai’s partner and executive director of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission.

“It will become an icon for future generations, who will share the vision and creative ideas to move forward in peace,” says Wick. “The world is hungry for this and it’s so important in our future. We are honored to be here for this incredible joining together in the service of peace.”

Kai added, “When people know it’s in Ashland, they will look for it and become inspired in its presence, as I was when I saw the one in Wales. It will be the live, beating heart of creative inspiration.”

Kai notes that the tradition of the Peace Flame got its start when the princess of the Netherlands in 1999 was inspired by the reverence of millions for the Olympic flame.

The tagline, “one flame unites the people worldwide,” also will “honor Native Americans who walked this land for thousands of years and also the Chinese 200 years ago, who worked as laborers for the gold miners in Jacksonville and when the gold dried up, they chased the Chinese away.”

The flame also speaks of making peace with nature, she says, “as we teach the next generation and inspire them to be good stewards of the world.”

“It’s a symbol of hope and peace moving forward in inclusivity,” says Wick. “We all carry a flame in our hearts and the Peace Flame is becoming a major icon for it, reaching around the world.”

What the flame is saying, notes Kai, is, “open your hearts to treating everyone as you want to be treated. It’s the old Golden Rule and if we all abide by that, then we do live in a culture of peace and are one human species.”

The monument will require contributions to create and maintain, so the Ashland Culture of Peace is fundraising for it. Detail of the project are at www.ashlandcpc.org and donations may be made there

— John Darling is an Ashland freelance writer. Reach him at jdarling@jeffnet.org.