

Hiroshima-Nagasaki Observance starts Sunday

By Local report

Posted Aug 4, 2017 at 5:49 PM

Updated Aug 4, 2017 at 6:10 PM

The upcoming opportunity for nations to sign on to a United Nations treaty completely banning the possession and use of nuclear weapons will be a focus of the 43rd annual Hiroshima-Nagasaki Observance in this area.

The events begin Sunday morning, Aug. 6, and conclude the evening of Wednesday, Aug. 9, with ceremonies in Ashland.

Area congregations and peace groups, this year under the leadership of South Mountain Friends Meeting (Quakers), will lead the observance of the anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and offer a chance to support a treaty recently adopted by the UN General Assembly that will be open for signatures by the world's nations starting Sept. 20.

The nine countries that possess nuclear weapons have boycotted the treaty process, observance organizers said in a release, but they hope that once the majority of other nations have signed it, its existence will create pressure on the "nuclear haves" in the same way treaties banning biological and chemical weapons have done.

The local observance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki began in 1975 with a small vigil in front of the Federal Building in Medford organized by the Quakers. The intention is not to consider whether nuclear weapons should have been used against Japan, organizers say, but rather to remember the destruction so that nuclear weapons will never again be used.

The opening ceremony starts at 8 a.m. Sunday at the entrance to Lithia Park in Ashland. The Rev. Norma Nakai Burton of Unity in Ashland will officiate as a memorial flame is lit, a gong sounds at 8:15 to mark the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima and bombing survivor Hideko Tamura Snider of Medford shares reflections.

There be activities on the Ashland Plaza from 3 to 7 p.m. Monday, Aug. 7, with peace crane folding. Dan Wahpepah of Red Earth Descendants will offer Native American perspectives from 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.

A vigil at the Medford Library is set for 3 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 8. Middle East Program Director for Friends Committee on National Legislation Kate Gould will give a talk at 3 p.m.; “The Nuclear Requiem” film starts at 4 p.m.; video talks by William J. Perry, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, on North Korea, and Dr. Ira Helfand, Co-President of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, start at 5 p.m.; a finger-food and chat break is set for 6 to 7 p.m.; a talk by SOU Professor of International Studies Dr. Michael Niemann on “Banning Nukes – The First Step to Abolition?” starts at 7 p.m.; and Allen Hallmark of Veterans for Peace gives a slide presentation on the renovation of the Golden Rule, the sailing vessel that challenged U.S. nuclear testing in the Pacific, starting at 8 p.m.

The closing ceremony will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 9, in the Japanese Garden in Lithia Park.

In addition to the Quaker Meeting, sponsors of the 2017 observance include Ashland Culture of Peace Commission, Ashland First Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC), Citizens for Peace & Justice, Healthcare for All Oregon–Rogue Valley Chapter, Japanese Association of Southern Oregon, Medford Congregational UCC Justice and Peace Team, Occupy Medford, One Sunny Day Initiative, Patchamama Alliance, Peace House, Red Earth Descendants, Rogue Valley Peace Choir, Rogue Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Social Justice & Action Committee, Southern Oregon United Nations Alliance, United Nations Association at Southern Oregon University, Unity Church in Ashland, and Veterans for Peace Rogue Valley Chapter 156.

All events are free and open to the public.



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