Be The Flame

By Irene Kai, April 8, 2019 Ashland Culture of Peace Commission

As members of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission, David Wick and I were invited by Sen. Jeff Golden to the Oregon Senate to deliver an invocation on March 26. After Senate President Peter Courtney introduced me, I gave the invocation to 30 senators:

“Seven sacred flames from five continents were flown live to Wales, united and became the World Peace Flame. A chance encounter in Wales, I brought the World Peace Flame to Ashland and it was installed on the Southern Oregon University campus. I am the flame keeper of the Ashland World Peace Flame. I am the flame. I now ignite the sacred flame in your heart to be inspired to lead, guide, educate and care for all Oregonians with compassion, equity, justice and respect. I voted for you to represent me, to give me voice. I trust you to lead and guide my community to cultivate a Culture of Peace by adhering to your moral compass, transcending social and economic class, race and religion, to ensure a safe and sustainable world for the next seven generations.

“You are the flame, a beacon to guide Oregon to lead our nation to cultivate a Culture of Peace.”
Right after the invocation, Golden informed the senators that the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission has had a positive impact on the culture of his city, in terms of the public dialogue about what a community should be, and told them to sit back from the frenzy of the day’s events and remind themselves why they do this in the first place. Courtney thanked me personally and said that he was inspired as were other senators.

As we walked out of the Senate chamber, I looked around and was astounded to realize what I had just done. It all started from a chance encounter with the World Peace Flame in Wales. As I gazed at the flame in Wales, a realization rose deep from my heart: Peace starts with me. I felt the power of the inspiration, the vision of bringing the flame to ignite others’ hearts as it had ignited mine. I knew instantly, I am the flame. I vowed to devote my time to bring the World Peace Flame to Ashland to uplift my community and now in the Oregon State Capital. Each of the 30 senators now has an Ashland World Peace Flame candle, a touchstone for them to come back to, a reminder of their responsibility of caring for all Oregonians.

Back in Ashland, the World Peace Flame was installed in the Thalden Pavilion last year, right across the street from the Ashland Middle School. At the Middle School, Ms. Kristina Healy’s class of seventh- and eighth-graders were inspired to be the Flame Keepers devoted to re-fuel the oil lamp every Friday with recycled biomass oil.

Finley Taylor, one of the Flame Keepers said, “It is important because it shows us that peace isn’t just one day of the year. It is every day. And it is always there in the background and we should focus on making the world a more peaceful place. It feels like I am doing something important that changes the world. It’s just a good feeling.”

As they move on to high school, the next class will take their place as Flame Keepers. The practice of Peace is passed onto the future generation, it is perpetual, as the Ashland World Peace Flame is eternal.

When we are inspired, a shift in our consciousness occurs. It takes us out of the routine of distractions, chaos and self-interests and we can make a choice in our daily encounters with our environment and the people we meet. Sometimes this can be simple things such as saying a few kind words, a smile, finding solutions instead of criticizing others’ actions. Being caring and kind goes a long way.

You are the flame — a beacon to guide your family, to lead our community, our city, our state, our nation, and the world to cultivate a culture of peace. You are creating a safe and sustainable world for the next seven generations and beyond.

Irene Kai is co-founder and director of development with Ashland Culture of Peace Commission; Keeper of the Flame, Ashland World Peace Flame Monument. The video of the invocation - https://youtu.be/9HhOHSi3RMY