

Panel discussion on news and a ‘culture of peace’ tonight

By Bert Etling Ashland Culture of Peace Commission

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Culture of Peace? What is that?

That was my question when I was first approached about serving on the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission (ACPC). Since then, I’ve been on a path that has its next milestone tonight, April 10, when I hope you can join me, others from the Peace Commission and members of the local media for a panel discussion on “Cultivating a Culture of Peace in an Era of Trump: What’s the Media’s Role?”

Panel members are Jeff Golden, producer and host of Immense Possibilities on select PBS stations, and an ACPC member; myself; Jason Houk, publisher of the Rogue Valley Community Press and news director for KSKQ community radio; and Hannah Jones, editor of The Siskiyou, the Southern Oregon University student-run news website.

David Wick, executive director of the ACPC, will say a few words about the work of the commission. Also joining the conversation via a video link will be Dr. David Adams, the coordinator of the Culture of Peace News Network and former UNESCO director of the International Year for the Culture of Peace, proclaimed for the Year 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly, who will provide an international perspective on the Culture of Peace and the vital role media plays in its evolution.

In thinking about what “a culture of ...” means, I keep coming back to how I’ve seen our culture change over the decades I’ve been blessed to be here.

In the ‘60s, we threw trash out of the windows of cars we were riding in without wearing seatbelts.

Since then, we've come to think of such behavior as random dispersal of trash as abhorrent, and wearing of basic safety devices as automatic. It's been a culture shift.

There also was a time in my memory when, if you saw someone running down the street, you wondered if the bank had been robbed. It soon became commonplace to do something called "jogging." We adopted (more or less) a culture of health and exercise.

What are the attributes of culture of peace? Here are some from the ACPC website (ashlandcpc.org):

- To invite everyone's participation, relaying on the natural gifts of each community member;
- Encourage mutual respect so all residents and visitors feel safe, heard and empowered;
- Establish trust through holding all persons responsible for their actions; and
- Discover solutions through collaborative exploration.

As Wick has put it, a "culture of peace" is "the way we do things around here." Let's see what we can do to further pollinate and propagate that idea.

The free, public discussion, part of Independent Media Week, is set to run from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Area downstairs at the Stevenson Union on the Southern Oregon University Campus. Please join us.

Sure, a "culture of peace" is an "Ashlandish" idea. So, where better to practice it than here? We can be a Bee City. We can be a Tree City. Is there any reason we can't be a city with a thriving "culture of peace"?

Bert Etling is editor of the Ashland Daily Tidings and a member of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission. Email comments and questions to ashlandcpc@gmail.com, or drop by the commission office at 33 1st St., Suite 1. The ACPC website is www.ashlandcpc.org; like the commission on Facebook at www.facebook.com/AshlandCultureofPeaceCommission; follow twitter.com/AshlandPeace on Twitter.



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