

Ashland's global outreach for peace

By J. Frederick Arment for the Tidings

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I can assure the citizens of Ashland that when we announced your city had been proclaimed as an International City of Peace, the response from members, volunteers and our leadership around the world was one of excitement and hope. From the first Culture of Peace Commission to the live stream of the grand opening, the innovation in Ashland has quickly become inspiring to our global network.

The work for peace being done by Cities of Peace on six continents is extraordinary in its scope and impact. There are schools being built in Nepal and D.R. Congo. Legal support for the poor is being offered by City of Peace lawyers in Nigeria. Reconciliation efforts are making a difference after five decades of war in Colombia. On Peace Day the Roerich peace flag flies atop government buildings in 21 cities in Argentina.

Indeed, the work of peace is happening “in situ” by leaders within communities. Who better to understand what is needed? Who better to find solutions? Yet many communities are in need of mentoring. Our Global Family Program is a “sister cities” approach to peace building. Amsterdam is helping Islamabad. Dayton is helping Bujumbura. Zihuatanejo is helping San Miguel.

Now Ashland, Oregon is stepping up to the challenge. Most recently, the citizens of Ashland have helped a peace leader in Nateete, Uganda, who is working with police officials to find new ways to increase safety. Ali Tebandeke, the leader of Nateete: City of Peace, has been asked by the police chief in the capital Kampala to recommend innovative ways for a community policing program.

Ashland Police Chief Tighe O'Meara has volunteered to provide mentoring and expertise with Ali Tebandeke to support his effort to bring new ideas and technologies to Ugandan cities. This partnership has great potential not only to increase Ashland's impact on the world but also to effect positive change in Uganda in terms of safety and security.

Ali Tebandeke is one of the rising leaders in Africa. “We shall fight poverty through sustainable gardening,” he said, “and say no to violence by enhancing community education and public safety.”

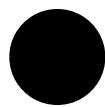
He has proposed restorative circles and innovative ways to increase participation in neighborhood watch programs. He values his relationship with Tighe O’Meara, which will give him extra credibility in his work for peace.

It is so important for the cities of the United States to become an active part of global peace building. The very act of Ashland proclaiming as a City of Peace gives hope to leaders around the world that America still shines for the cause of democracy, human rights and freedom.

As Sister Chăn Khöng, author and colleague of Buddhist peace icon Thich Nhat Hanh, wrote, “If we just worry about the big picture, we are powerless. So my secret is to start right away doing whatever little work I can do. I try to give joy to one person in the morning, and remove the suffering of one person in the afternoon. If you and your friends do not despise the small work, a million people will remove a lot of suffering. That is the secret. Start right now.”

Such is the commitment of the people of Ashland — within the Ashland community and now out into the world. I commend your cooperative spirit as you endeavor to become an even better community in light of your commitment to make our world a safer and more embracing home for all.

— *J. Frederick Arment is executive director of International Cities of Peace. He is author of two novels and two nonfiction books on peace, including “The Elements of Peace: How Nonviolence Works” and “The Economics of Peace: Freedom, the Golden Rule and the Broadening of Prosperity.” Arment is also a founder of the Dayton International Peace Museum.*



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