

Culture of Peace Commission: Compiling Ashland's 'Community Peacebuilders' network

By Will Sears / Ashland Culture of Peace Commission

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What would it feel like if you could actually help to save the world?

It may seem like an impossible task to transform the prevailing culture of a city, a nation or a planet from our ancient outmoded one of separation, competition and conflict to a vibrant new one of inclusion, cooperation and peace. How could it be done? Where would we even start?

Once we have realized that the strong foundations for such a momentous endeavor are already firmly in place, we can start at the local grassroots of one small city nestled in the mountains of Southern Oregon.

Every city and village on earth has individuals and organizations that work at the local level to promote the social order, health and sustainability of their communities. The Rogue Valley is especially blessed with a huge number of such individuals, businesses and organizations that, each in their own way and throughout all sectors of our local society, are already contributing to some aspect of transforming our current culture into one of justice, interconnectedness and peace. That richness, relative to our small population, makes Ashland the perfect place to begin to consciously create a model for a local Culture of Peace that just might spread throughout the world.

Global organizations related to the United Nations and the International Cities of Peace are watching us with interest and encouragement as we endeavor to become the first city on earth to consciously and systematically create an overarching local culture of peace. We are being seen as a valuable case study as we deliberately create templates for use in other cities.

Toward this end and among several other programs, the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission (ACPC) has created the Community Peacebuilders Network. This is an as-yet small but constantly growing listing of all of those local groups and individuals, from all sectors of our community, that have already decided to join us, and each other, in this adventure. Each has described in their own words how the work they do contributes to an overall culture of peace in our local area. They are each listed under one of the broad cultural categories of “Business,” “Education,” “Food /Habitat,” “Arts/Culture,” Religion /Spirituality,” “Health /Science,” Legal /Social,” “Environment” or “Multi-sector.” We also have a category for “Individuals” who are working toward peace in some way.

This listing serves to acknowledge the important and often unnoticed work that is being done in our community that moves us toward a better world. It invites and encourages collaboration. It further serves to inspire us all as we realize that we are not alone, that our work is part of a much larger movement sharing an overall common purpose that could potentially change the world.

Another purpose of this listing is to help us to see how we are all contributing to a culture of peace in some way. Farmers and restaurants that foster environmental stewardship, businesses that treat their employees and customers fairly and respectfully, churches that work to promote unity and eliminate bias are all contributing to the peaceful, cooperative health of our society.

As we move forward the ACPC will begin to host periodic conferences aimed at inspiring communication about elements in our community that can be improved and encouraging collaborative solutions as we work toward our goal of creating an interconnected web of peace, justice, sustainability and inclusion in our local area.

The Community Peacebuilders Network is currently viewable on our ACPC website (ashlandcpc.org). You, your business, or your organization are invited and encouraged to be included in this list by filling out a form which you will also find on our website under “join the movement.”

Please do join us as we work together to stitch a seamless new culture of peace that works for us all. Help us to build a model of a single city and its surroundings working together to make a better world from the grassroots up. Help us to create a replicable example for the rest of the world to follow.

At long last, we and the people of the world seem ready!

Will Sears is the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission commissioner representing the environment. 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.



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