

Culture of Peace: Which wolf will we feed?

By David Wick Ashland Culture of Peace Commission

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As I returned to the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission (ACPC) office in the early afternoon on Friday, July 28, I was jolted into thinking of a parable I heard long ago about two wolves that live within each of us. This came to mind because of two experiences I had, back to back, that are very important and in great contrast.

The first experience was the morning celebration organized by ACPC in our parking lot on First Street, which brought together people from our community at large and representatives from the Ashland Chamber of Commerce, City Council and Oregon Shakespeare Festival. This was a public ribbon-tying ceremony acknowledging Ashland joining the International Cities of Peace on May 16 by way of a City Council proclamation. In part the proclamation says, "Official recognition of Ashland as an International City of Peace will provide inspiration for all citizens to create an emerging, evolving, living model for thriving together as fellow humans."

We were the 163rd city around the world to take this step. The ceremony was particularly special as it was being video live-streamed online to cities internationally. Eugene, Oregon, was the second city to sign on in 2009, right behind Dayton, Ohio. Currently there are 165 Cities of Peace in 46 countries on six continents.

The mission of the International Cities of Peace is, "To network, encourage, document, and provide resources and information for leaders and organizations working to make peace a consensus value through the global Cities of Peace movement." Fred Arment, the ICP executive director, recently told me, "The fundamental reason was to provide a sustainable platform for citizens to bring every person in the community into the process of working toward a culture of peace." Arment further said, "This association of cities of peace provides an easy, practical, collaborative environment for building the worldwide peace

community while respecting the individuality of communities.” That certainly rings a bell for me, ACPC, and a growing number of people in our community as evidenced by the city’s proclamation.

It is important to be very clear that neither Ashland nor any other city is 100 percent a city of peace. But this sets an intention, a direction in which we all endeavor to “become.” International Cities of Peace gives individuals and groups, as well as civil governments, a chance to focus on creating a community-wide culture of peace.

I see joining the network of the International Cities of Peace as an opportunity for mutual sharing and learning about challenging issues such as working with homelessness, affordable housing, community health and safety, peace education practices for children and co-creating a Culture of Peace. This also helps to raise our profile as a City of Peace as Ashland is already seen as a model in many ways. This legitimate addition to Ashland’s reputation is of real economic value as tourists are attracted to visit and experience our unique consensus values.

The second experience I had, two hours after the first, was hearing the news on my car radio. North Korea has launched a new ballistic missile. The questions discussed were, which cities on the West Coast can the missile hit, and what type of warheads can it carry?!

The parable that immediately came to mind goes, “One evening, an elderly Cherokee brave told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, ‘My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all.

’One is evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

’The other wolf is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.’

“The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked, ‘Grandpa, which wolf wins?’

“The old Cherokee simply replied, ‘The one that you feed.’”

We feed our own wolves daily. As a community and as a society, we collectively make choices as to which wolf we feed. ACPC and the city of Ashland have made a choice.

David Wick is executive director of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission. The ACPC website is www.ashlandcpc.org; like the commission on Facebook at www.facebook.com/AshlandCultureofPeaceCommission; follow twitter.com/AshlandPeace on Twitter. All are welcome to join the ACPC's Talking Circle at 11 a.m. each Tuesday and Community Meeting at 4 p.m. each Wednesday, both at the ACPC office, 33 First St., Suite 1, diagonally across Lithia Way from the Ashland Post Office.



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