

Culture of Peace: Peace — A wise investment

By Jack Gibbs For the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission

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As a business person, I've often wondered, "How can I engender more peace in the world?" For me, wishing each other peaceful holidays at the end of each year wasn't enough.

I knew that ongoing actions speak louder than intermittent words. I searched for ways to make peace more of a verb in my life.

Over the past year, I've witnessed the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission (ACPC) grow into a living, breathing entity whose influence has been remarkable for a fledgling, citizen-based, volunteer movement. I have to remind myself that the ACPC, whose inception was endorsed by Peace House and the city of Ashland, has roots in the United Nations dating back to the 1980s.

A movement dedicated to fostering harmonious relationships through transforming attitudes, behaviors and institutions piqued my curiosity. I've become involved as both a volunteer and an investor, and I'd like you to know why.

Engaging in peace-building activities has changed my view of the world. A culture of peace is a lens that has impacted my decisions, my beliefs and my investments of time and money. I feel awakened to an elevated level of commitment to make peace more mainstream in our society.

The recent national election highlighted a cry for change and the need for grassroot efforts to foster collaboration among disparate sectors in our community. I devote time to the ACPC to help leverage the many existing organizations in our community seeking justice and responsible stewardship for all living systems.

Investing in peace no longer seems lofty to me; it feels necessary, and where better to inaugurate this shift but in our own community? I'd like you to join me in this vital mission.

Collaboration across community sectors can be reaching out inter-generationally or reaching over lines of race, economics, gender and religion. The ACPC's Peace Ambassadors have engaged with locals and visitors, individually and in groups, in inquiry, seeking out each person's sense of the values that underlie peace.

One ambassador, stepping out of her comfort zone to attend a community meal, was transformed by hearing unanticipated wise counsel on how to address societal woes, articulated by a young man with neither home nor formal education. Shift happens when we follow the golden rule and respond in kindness instead of in kind.

Peace ambassadors, "armed" with compassionate listening intentions, have gone door to door, talking to neighbors and promoting neighborliness, and have sat with city staff and elected officials discussing ways to diminish our community's disparities.

The ACPC has emerged locally but carries global potential. The world's first community-wide Culture of Peace Commission is right here in Ashland. It's humbling to know that we are designing the template for what can become a national and global contributor to a more peaceful world.

Through music and tales, the ACPC has brought worldly performers to Ashland: Cecelia St. King, Inner-Peace Troubadour; Marcine Quenzer, keeper of Native American stories of the missing (peaceful) parts of democracy; and Karl Anthony, who celebrates heartfelt humanity through stories and song.

The holiday season is a time for counting our blessings and sharing our bounty. We give in the hope of making a change. May this change be one which results in greater respect and compassion in our city and the world.

What is peace to you? What cultural transformations do you deem necessary? How might you contribute to a culture of peace?

Some find themselves drawn into the core of the movement, joining a team, learning or using skills to organize, listen, write, film or be in peace. Others participate in talking circles, vigils or forums.

Some community members simply read our articles and silently ponder their own transition toward peace-based living. Still others help construct and maintain the container of peace through tax-deductible donations.

Having completed a year establishing ourselves, with amazing community support for which we feel grateful, we enter our second year with intentions to branch out into the various sectors of our community. To build upon our early achievements and sustain our momentum, we welcome your financial and emotional support.

Let us write the next chapter of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission together. Thank you for joining me in considering a tax-deductible donation before year's end — an investment with unlimited potential rewards!

Jack Gibbs is treasurer for 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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