



Setting the stage for the World Day of Peace

BY **JOHN DARLING / FOR THE TIDINGS** September 12, 2018

A troupe of women from the Ashland Goddess Community and the Isadora Duncan dancers led by Paola Blanton Sophia Tuesday blessed and dedicated the Thalden Pavilion in preparation for the Sept. 21 lighting of its new World Peace Flame.

With many a smile and light spirits, the crowd of about 50 people watched the dozen perform sacred dances, then followed Sophia's lead in a dance to honor the ancestors of this land, as well as the World Peace Flame that was brought here through efforts led by Irene Kai and David Wick of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission.

"It took three years for me to get it to its proper, magnificent home here," said Kai, "and it's a lesson, that if you have an inspiration of something inside you that needs to be done, just do it!"

The lamp, recently housed between two massive carved obelisks on the north edge of the pavilion, symbolizes how Ashland has declared itself a City of Peace, which happened because "life is a journey of choices and everything we do is a choice" and that's how it all came together at the pavilion, which itself was a gift and choice, recently dedicated, from Barry and Kathryn Thalden. They joined in the dance.

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As Sophia led the "Prayer-formance" dance, she explained is something that can be created and stockpiled simply by the daily performance of actions with the intent of kindness, compassion, responsibility and engaging in creating beauty.

“We are making peace right now and every time we hold the door for someone,” she said. “We make peace by showing up, by walking our talk, by taking a deep breath before blurting out what we really think.”

While we favor peace, too often, Sophia said, “We turn the responsibility for action to outside forces, the government, our fellow citizens. We abdicate the power to make a better world and get comfortable in the assumption someone else is going to take action. These are the habits we need to push aside to access the higher love, the higher unity, the higher knowledge that can inspire us to stay on the path and keep the faith and know that what we do matters.”

Her ceremony honored the four directions and elements — air, fire, water and earth — as she noted “This ceremony is a portal to higher knowledge and inspiration waiting to come through each of us, to activate the tribal heart and open the group soul ... a connection with Gaia (earth) and the great cosmic flow to form a field of intent to dedicate this temple of peace.”

Performances happen every other day at 6 at the Pavilion. Today, Sept. 13, it will be “Soulful Wisdom and Music” with the Rev. Norma Burton and Adey Bell. On Saturday, a group gets together for sound healing with crystal bowls and various instruments, bringing forth “healing energies.” On Monday, Sept. 17, it’s Wild Honey singing world music of Peia Luzzi, Megan Danforth and Cyrise Schachter. On Wednesday, Sept. 19, it’s local singer-songwriter David Kai.

On dedication day, Sept. 21, the United Nations International Day of Peace, the flame will be lit at noon, with remarks from Wick, Kai, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (read by a staffer), World Peace Flame Foundation Executive Director Savitri MacCuish, Southern Oregon University President Linda Schott and state Rep. Pam Marsh. The Rogue Valley Peace Choir will sing, as will Dan Wahpepah.

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