

Culture of Peace: A powerful image meant to inspire Ashland

By David Wick / Ashland Culture of Peace Commission

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“Images tell stories. Images have no power. We give power to images because we need them as a means of communication.”

—Sebastian Guerrini, anthropologic designer

The Peace Wheel which underlies the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission (ACPC) is an image that communicates inspiration and provides a pathway to peace. This image has been, and is, an uplifting and powerful organizing tool with an amazing background and a strong impact.

Pathways To Peace, a United Nations Peace Messenger non-governmental organization (NGO), created The Peace Wheel when organizing the first large-scale celebration in San Francisco for the 1984 International Day of Peace. It was in San Francisco in 1945 where 50 countries gathered to bring the United Nations into existence.

Pathways to Peace’s vision for a global 1984 International Day of Peace celebration inspired citizens from more than 70 countries to join in the effort. They created the global Culture of Peace Initiative (CPI). The purpose of the CPI is to unite the strengths of organizations and individuals working worldwide to make peace a practical reality.

The Peace Wheel became the organizing force and symbol for these efforts. At its center is the Pathways To Peace logo, a globe with multiple rays symbolizing the idea that everyone is a pathway to peace. Interlocking infinity symbols cross the center point, expressing the common purpose: sustainable and dynamic peace. The vertical infinity sign represents our highest ideals and values coming into our everyday lives; the horizontal sign represents the many pathways to possible service.

The rainbow line encircling the globe in The Peace Wheel represents the sacred circle, a symbol found in many traditions. The circle signifies the cycles of time, the successions of evolution, and the spiral of ever-evolving Peacebuilding that benefits all paths and future generations. The eight colorful sectors correspond to the various arenas of society — and of our community — all of which are potential pathways to peace.

The universality of The Peace Wheel's effectiveness is evidenced by its use in peace education in refugee camps, strategic development in corporations, Native American ceremonies for Peace Day, and the international think tanks of Peacebuilding Through Business.

The seeds of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission came from the UN's Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. That and the use of the concepts of The Peace Wheel have made the ACPC unique in the USA and globally. The eight community sectors of Environment, Religion, Law, Habitat, Education, Business, Culture and Science play a vital role for helping to make the commission a true, community-wide effort.

When ACPC was forming in 2015, commission members were chosen to help represent the sectors in the Peace Wheel. Each commissioner brings their sector's unique perspective to the table, while simultaneously carrying the new paradigm inherent to a Culture of Peace back to their part of the community. The diverse voices of the eight sectors of The Peace Wheel will be highlighted in future articles.

In addition to the commissioners, the Ashland Culture of Peace has an active general community group. Interested and concerned community members from all facets and strata of life are welcomed into and involved in the various projects of ACPC. The commissioners and the diverse members of the community group help to reveal the challenges and areas of tension that exist in Ashland which can benefit from compassionate listening, open dialoguing, and the collaborative problem-solving that a culture of peace initiative can bring.

The Peace Wheel continues to be a central image for guiding ACPC forward. Sectors may be added to and reorganized, and new projects adopted in this evolution to conscious interdependence. Connections will be made with the myriad existing groups and individuals who contribute to the wellness and peace

of our community. The core purpose is to change the course of history from the culture of violence and war to a culture of peace — to recognize that we all have a choice to be peace builders walking the pathways of the Peace Wheel.

David Wick is executive director of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission. The ACPC Articles Team and Avon Mattison, founder and president of Pathways To Peace, contributed to this article. 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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