

Newsletter

Alaska Peace Center



Issue 1

Fall 2006

APC beginnings: A short history

By Ann Mallard

The idea of a Peace Center in Fairbanks has been kicking around for a few years. I remember Stacey Fritz saying that we could have a Peace Center at 507 Gaffney. But the immediate catalyst was Chuck Fager, the Director of Quaker House in Fayetteville NC, who ran a Peace Workshop at our local Friends Meeting House. He emphasized an extended plan for Peace instead of the military plan for endless war, and advised against getting caught up in the political struggles of the day. A public lecture, describing the long view and the importance of local efforts drew an audience of hundreds out on a freezing night the weekend of Thanksgiving in 2004.

A month later, on December 19, 2004, a small group met for the first time at the "Stone Soup Community Center" at 507 Gaffney. David Bantz was the natural chairman at that first meeting, and he, along with co-chair Don Ross, has shepherded the Peace Center from Day 1. Anna Godduhn from The Fairbanks Coalition for Peace and Justice was there at the start, I became the secretary, and Stan Read took on the treasurer's job for that first year. We discussed using the building as a Center, a physical place where groups concerned about Peace would be based. Dick Heacock, retired Methodist minister and director of Alaska Impact, joined soon after, and his wisdom and life experience have made him one of our most valued board members.

A month later we had named it The Alaska Peace Center (APC) and written our collective vision for its future. The Peace Center should be a place for meetings, non-partisan and inter-faith and should welcome all who wished to come. It should be a "large umbrella" – especially for those struggling with issues related to peace and justice. The Center should have a good kitchen to provide simple

food, coffee, warmth and community, and should especially be a refuge for people from the Military Base – an outlet off-base, a resource of information about conscientious objection, etc. As well we hoped that the Center could become a resource for community information, a place for exhibits of peace-centered art and poetry readings, and could sponsor workshops on inner peace, and on alternatives to violence. Finally we hoped it could revitalize a neglected part of downtown Fairbanks and foster a feeling of community for all who came.

This was (and is) a vision, but parts of it – especially the kitchen! – have never had sufficient finance to be realized. Our Mission Statement, which you can read on our website (<http://www.alaskapeace.org/mission.html>), is simpler and more general. What is exciting to me, nearly two years later, is that so much of that vision is coming to be.

In March 2005, Bread Line put the building at 507 Gaffney up for sale. In an effort to maintain the building as a center for peace and justice activities, the APC Board, by collecting pledges from the Fairbanks community, was able to raise the necessary \$2000/month required for a one year lease. In fact, the financial support from you, our Community, has been very generous. We thank you. In the fall of 2005, Sandy Deja shepherded us through the arduous application for an IRS ruling on our tax-exempt status, which was accorded to the APC in the summer of 2006. Today the APC is officially a non-profit organization and donations are deductible from US income tax.

During the summer of 2005, Solveig Pedersen became the first Peace Intern, and her enthusiasm was infectious. She instituted open hours every Tuesday and Thursday from 4 - 8 pm, which continued throughout the year thanks to Anna Godduhn, Justin Yonker, Rob Mulford, David Koester, and many other volunteers. Solveig spearheaded the decoration of the place with

posters and peaceful quotations, and that is her lettering on the sign in front, "Alaska Peace Center". Sofas, rugs and bookshelves were donated to make the place more welcoming. The Fairbanks Coalition for Peace and Justice donated a large television with video and DVD player and a library of books, video tapes and DVD's. Our library has been growing ever since. Martin Freed and Ruta Vaskys spearheaded the design of our logo, The Raven holding the olive branch of peace. To spread our message to the Fairbanks community, tables were set up at summer events: Junteenth, Folkfest and Clucking Blossom. We also organized a display of children's books on peace at the public library, which ran for a month. The biggest event of the summer was the Contra dance and Auction which we held at Alaskaland. Barbara Braley, Martin Freed and Ruta Vaskys put together a memorable evening which also raised over \$2000 for the Peace Center, and which has now become our annual fundraiser.



Fall Fundraiser: Ann, Ruta, Anna, Solveig and Barbara. Our annualevent is a fun night of good food, auction treasures and contra dancing with great music. Be thinking of items to save for our auction next August.

During the fall of 2005, Blair and Katy, Peace Interns from UAF, organized movie nights to show free films on peace topics. Paul Adasiak designed our website at www.alaskapeace.org and Barbara Braley put on it a Calendar of Events which she still keeps current. During our first Open House, all the organizations associated with the Peace Center set up tables with pamphlets and other information: Fairbanks Coalition for Peace & Justice, No Nukes North, Positive Opportunities (the group countering military recruitment in schools), and Grandmothers for Peace (Information on these groups can be found at the end of this newsletter). Other organizations that used the building during our first year

were Wilderness Watch and the Sierra Club, Call to Action (a progressive Catholic group), AA, and others.

The GI Rights Hotline began to form during the fall of 2005. An email from Chuck Fager of Quaker House in early 2005 emphasized the growing number of calls from GI's in trouble and our responsibility to "step up to the plate" on this issue. This initiated our interest, and we painted the national number, 1 800 FYI 95GI, on the back of the building facing Airport Way just a block or so from the entrance to Fort Wainwright. I wrote an Op Ed on the GI Rights Hotline and the Peace Center for the News Miner. About this time Alison Carter discovered the Peace Center and began to work with Pete Bowers to bring a Training Session to Fairbanks. Alison traveled to Oakland to take the training at the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCCO) and connected with Steve Morse of CCCC - who finally came and did a three day intensive workshop on GI Rights Hotline counseling in February of 2006. The training was remarkably well attended (despite its cost of \$200 per person). Also attending were two prospective counselors from the Anchorage peace movement (who were very impressed with our Peace Center building).

We survived our first winter - despite heat and water outages - and continued to put on events. A highlight was the presentation of the puppet theater presentation of "The War Crimes Trial of George W Bush, Puppet President of the United States", which was written and directed by David Koester. Safia Rawoot began organizing thematic monthly potluck with presentations, which brought in many new people. A Heavy metal concert/fundraiser was organized by the Blair and Katy that brought 150 young people (12 - 18) to the Center to dance and jump for peace.

Our lease was due to be renewed in April and there was considerable discussion through the winter and spring about the large monthly rent and the problems with the building. Pete Bowers did a lot of research into ways of purchasing the building, but we found too many problems. Parking was inadequate and renovation would take not only a lot of money but too much of the energy that needed to be spent on peace work. We have also discussed moving elsewhere, but a suitable place within our budget constraints has yet to be found. Finally we decided to negotiate a new lease with Bread Line, at a lower monthly cost. We now pay \$750 a month and do not control the

whole building; however we have the lockable front office which is ideal for GI Rights Hotline counseling. We have the main room for meetings and events when we need it but Bread Line also rents it out to other groups.

Our second summer was a very busy one. Martin Freed, Ruta Vaskys, Heather Koponen, and Rob Mulford led the work to set up a booth during the ten days of the Tanana Valley Fair. We sold T-shirts and caps with our logo, displayed literature from all our associated groups, and those who sat at the booth had a lot of visitors. By chance it was right across from the Army Recruitment booth! A few weeks later, Barbara Braley organized our second annual Contra dance and Auction. Frost Fire kindly donated their music for the evening and Lynn Basham volunteered his calling. Martin Freed was the auctioneer and we raised nearly \$3000 this time. Both these activities did a lot to raise awareness of our work for Peace.

As we come to the end of this letter, several events for the fall are in process. Kathy Kelly is coming to speak about her work in Iraq and Lebanon on October 9th. We are sponsoring the movie "Iraq for Sale" (about profiteering during the Iraq War) at the Civic Center on October 23rd, at which time we will also be selling DVD's of this shocking movie. Our fall potluck will feature the movie "My Country, My Country" – the personal story of an Iraqi doctor and his family, caught in the complications of the American Occupation, the Insurgency and the Election last year. This will be on Friday November 10th at the Peace Center. Finally in celebration of nearly 2 years of peace work at APC, we have our first Newsletter, produced and edited by Claire Alix.

2005 & 2006 Events

Held at APC and/or coordinated by groups
associated with APC

March 2005:

- Workshop on Non Violence, Conscientious Objector Status and Military Recruitment with Howard Welsh

April 2005:

- Open House Potluck with Iraq journalist Dahr Jamail

May 2005:

- Mike Boehm, My Lai Peace Park talk "Hope Rises from the ashes"

June/July 2005:

Present at Festivals with brochures

- Fairbanks Folk Fest,
- Angry Young & Poor,
- Clucking Blossom.

August 2005:

- APC Contra dance Fundraiser & Auction organized by Barbara Braley, Martin Freed & Ruta Vaskys
- APC's website: up: www.Alaskapeace.org

September 2005:

- Book Club/Chaat group formed (met weekly until March 2006)

October 30th 2005:

- Sunday potluck with Tibetan monk Palden Gyatsu and his translator; ceremonial blessing of APC

November 2005

- Rhythm is The Mother Tongue: Drumming Circle organized by Tarika Lea

December 2005:

- Open House December 9th: first T-shirts printed up. Logo designed.

January 2006:

- Movie Night (12/08): *Unconstitutional: The War on Our Liberties* by Monny de la Peña, sponsored by ACLU
- Puppet Show by Fairbanks Coalition for Peace & Justice "The War Crimes Trial of George W Bush Puppet President of the United States. (Full House)
- Blair & Katy movie night: *The Corporation* by Mark Achbar & Jennifer Abbott (2004)

February 2006

- Blair & Katy movie night: *Bush Brain - A Documentary about Karl Rove* by Michael Paradies Shoob & Joseph Mealey (2004)
- GI Rights training
- Blair & Katy movie night: *WMD - Weapons of Mass Deception* by Danny Schechter (2004)
- Heavy Metal Concert Fundraiser for Peace organized by Katy & Blair
- 1st monthly Potluck, Book club presentation on Oscar Arias

March 2006

- Blair & Katy movie night: *Wrestling with Manhood, Boys bullying and Battering* by Sut Jhally & Jackson Katz (2002)
- Blair & Katy movie night: *White King, Red Rubber, Black Death* by Peter Bate (2003)
- Monthly Potluck: Peace vigil with candles to Veterans' Memorial for the third anniversary of the US invasion of Iraq
- Blair & Katy movie night: *The great Deception: The War on Terrorism an Alternative View* by Bernie Wallace Zwicker (2002).



Audience Applauding the Puppet show on February 13, 2006

April 2006

- Monthly Potluck: Abel Bult-Itto on Depleted Uranium

May 2006

- Monthly Potluck: Carl Stancil on the Vietnam Friendship Village
- GI Rights Hotline division officially open

June 2006

- Monthly Potluck: Civil Disobedience and Income Tax Evasion with Rob Mulford and Chris & Jim Hall

July 2006

- GI Rights Hotline 888 number goes live

August 2006

- Booth at the Tanana Valley State Fair
- Annual Fundraiser: Contra dance and Auction
- Monthly Potluck: preparation for the Rumsfeld Demonstration
- Press Conference of 'Military Family Speak Out' for International Press (AP, Reuter, AFP, Los

Angeles Times, News Miner, Channel 11, Fairbanks Open Radio) held at APC

September 2006

- Monthly Potluck: Movie showing of Kathy Kelly *In a Time of Siege* and Camillo Mejia *Soldiers Speak Out*
- Declaration of Peace Week, Candle Vigil at the Golden Heart Plaza

October 2006

- Anne Wright, former US State Department ambassador who resigned in 2003 in opposition of the invasion of Iraq by the US gave a talk at Schaible Auditorium at UAF (organized by MFSO, FCPJ, VFP)
- Oct.8-10: Kathy Kelly cofounder of Voices in the Wilderness and three times Nobel Peace Prize Nominee gave a talk at the Salsbury Theater, UAF and at Unitarian Church (organized by APC, VFP, and with a University of Alaska Foundation's Gene Sharp Lectureship on Non-Violent Action Fund)

****UPCOMING EVENTS****

Monday October 23, 2006, 7.00pm
At the Civic Theater, Pioneer Park, APC

Screening of the film

Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers

Iraq for Sale is the story of what happens to everyday Americans when corporations go to war.

For more information go to: <http://iraqforsale.org/>

Friday November 10, 2006, 6.30pm

APC Monthly Potluck

Screening of the film

My Country My Country

Synopsis: This movie reveals the agonizing predicament and gradual descent of one man caught in the tragic circumstances and contradictions of the US occupation of Iraq and its effort to spread democracy in the Middle East on the eve of the controversial January 2005 elections

(<http://2006.sxsw.com/film/screenings/film/F4548.html>)

A Note about G.I. Rights Hotline

By Alison Carter

Alaska Peace Center is a member of the G.I. Rights Hotline, a national toll-free service staffed by trained volunteer counselors from a coalition of nonprofit, non-governmental organizations who provide information to members of the military about discharges, grievance and complaint procedures, AWOL regulations, conscientious objector procedures and other civil rights. Counselors do not give legal advice or advocate a specific course of action, but are trained to provide reliable information about all the options available and the possible and likely consequences of those different options. Often, the person seeking help simply needs someone outside of the military who will listen and offer compassion.

Civil rights and rights to redress of grievances are limited for members of the military. Personnel facing difficulties with military life often feel isolated and trapped within a closed system. They may fear that attempts to seek help within the military system will subject them to harassment or retaliation by their command. Current strains on troop levels and low recruitment figures are resulting in extraordinary pressure on commanders to retain service members who normally would be released for emotional, mental or physical disabilities, family hardship, conscientious objection, and other dischargeable conditions under military regulations. The pentagon has reported nearly 40,000 AWOL/UA service members since 2000.

The Alaska Peace Center joined the coalition of nonprofit organizations providing counseling to troubled service members in May 2006. Twenty-three volunteers from Fairbanks and Anchorage received 20 hours of classroom training from the national G.I. Rights Hotline coordinator in February 2006. That training was followed by several weeks of group study sessions where trainees became familiar with the issues and regulations described in the text "Helping Out". The group study sessions progressed to roll-play exercises based on real-life scenarios. An experienced counselor from the Humboldt Committee for Conscientious Objectors/Northern WRL spent one week in May 2006 working with small groups of trainees on active listening skills, maintaining objectivity and taking live calls. The Alaska Peace Center branch of the G.I. Rights Hotline went "live" and began helping clients shortly after the final training in May.

Volunteers in Fairbanks staff the phone line for approximately 20 hours per week and spend an additional 10 to 15 hours per week counseling clients on extended issues like conscientious objector applications and resolving AWOL status. Counselor group debriefs and ongoing training are conducted once weekly and often include guests like the director of the local suicide hotline and the American Red Cross military liaison.

Clients call from throughout the U.S. by way of a toll free number for the Alaska hotline. The primary costs of running the G.I. Rights program are office space, telephone bills and outreach.

Remembering the Fallen A Veteran's Iraq war vigil (in Juneau)

By Rich Moniak,

(This text was originally published in The Whalesong, the student newspaper of University of Alaska Southeast)

According to the calendar, March 20 is the first day of spring. The season evokes images of flowers, trees budding, and the songs of birds adding a pleasing melody to drift along in the warm air. But to the several people standing in a circle at the Dimond Court Plaza, the cold gray Juneau weather joined a flag-draped coffin at the foot of the stairs to reveal the solemn reason for their gathering.

It was only 6:15 in the morning as John Dunker spoke into a hand-held microphone. It sent his voice beyond the snow and slush covered plaza. His thin gray beard and wire-rimmed glasses escaped the edges of his bulky winter clothing. Though his appearance and quiet tone didn't command attention, the idea of paradox leaned forward between the odd mixture of fierce focus and sadness. He was reading.

Sergeant Daniel J. Londono, 22, Boston, Massachusetts. PFC Joel K. Brittain, 21, Santa Anna, California. Staff Sergeant Joe L. Dunigan Jr., 37, Belton Texas...

The casket was empty. The names being read were of soldiers who have died during the Iraq war. The group was comprised primarily of veterans, each claiming a uniquely silent bond to those who serve the current call to duty. The

vigil honoring the fallen commemorated the third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, not only in protest to this war, but a call to question the merit of any and all wars.

In the mid-60s Dunker spent a year in Vietnam, before the peak of US involvement in the two decades-long war that took the lives of more than 58,000 American soldiers. He says that when he returned from combat he felt inclined to show an opposition to the war, but struggled with finding a meaningful focus to do so. But today he is certain of his role in speaking out.

What is the nature of the 40-year-old memories that instills such a conviction? Are they standing next to the briefly spoken names of the men and women who can't return home to wonder about their place after the war?

When Dunker finished reading a page of 25 names, Ed Hein, another vet, gently struck a Buddha bowl, sending a solo note to momentarily pierce the still air. As the vibration faded, the book of names was passed to KJ Metcalf. His coarse voice caught the same steady cadence that flowed from Dunker.

PFC Nichole M. Frye, 19, Lena, Wisconsin. Specialist Michael M. Merila, 23, Sierra Vista, Arizona. Specialist Christopher M. Taylor, 25, Daphne, Alabama...

Metcalf was in Germany in the fall of 1956 when the Soviet Union sent tanks into Hungary to crush an uprising against the Communist dictatorship. US troops were poised for battle. The Hungarian revolt coincided with the brief war between Israel and Egypt over the Suez Canal, and both superpowers had threatened to reach into their nuclear arsenals as the conflict escalated. Ever since, Metcalf believes there must be a better way than turning to the military for solutions to conflicts between nations.

What images that never materialized into a physical event but struck a distinctly dark fear is he remembering 50 years later? Would some of these soldiers follow his footsteps if given the chance to remember what almost happened had their last battle not been fought?

Again and again the bowl rings, as each person in the group passes the black book along. Morning continues to arrive. A few more cars pass by, and the occasional pedestrian attempts to negotiate the snow covered sidewalks. State maintenance workers shovel snow from the Capitol steps. A four-wheel ATV with a plow attached pushes mounds

of snow across the plaza, briefly upsetting the rhythm of the group. They move off to the side and resume, the cadence of names in the air unchanged.

Staff Sergeant Thomas W. Christensen, 42, Atlantic Mine, Michigan. Staff Sergeant Stephen C. Hattamer, 43, Gwinn, Michigan. Captain Christopher J. Splinter, 43, Platteville, Wisconsin...

Sunlight can't penetrate the clouds and brighten the morning. The gray mood prevails and the drizzle continues. The comings and goings increase around the plaza. The street noise begins to alter the quiet.

Specialist Aaron R. Clark, 20, Chico, California. PFC Ray J. Hutchinson, 20, League City, Texas. Specialist Ryan C. Young, 21, Corona, California...

Business as usual reclaims a Monday morning in Juneau. Except at the Dimond Court Plaza, where a few men and women read, sound a chime, and pass on to the next a 93-page book of names as the light rain falls. Occasionally a few drops rolled down the plastic sleeve that keeps the paper dry. Maybe the pages are shedding tears for the 2314 souls who will never again know a Monday morning, snow, rain, or those places where in spring the flowers bloom.

Peace and Justice Groups in Fairbanks

Alaska IMPACT

Richard K. Heacock, Jr.; 474-0700. Alaska IMPACT is an Interfaith Educational Legislative Network for Alaskans who care about Peace, Justice, and Creation. Publications include background papers on critical issues called PREPARE, current status of issues called UPDATE, and ACTION alerts. Membership is \$20 per year and the annual meeting is one you won't want to miss.

Call to Action Alaska

CTA Alaska is a chapter of the national organization Call to Action, a 30-year-old network of some 25,000 persons, working for peace and justice at home, within the Catholic Church, and around the world.

Contact: marjoriekc@yahoo.com; 455-7629.

Fairbanks Coalition for Peace and Justice

www.fairbankspeace.org; 457-5578

The FCPJ is an "unorganized" anti-war group that came together after September Eleventh in response to the call for what seemed potentially unending global war. The FCPJ works to raise awareness of issues of peace and justice with protests, vigils, and other events that get the truth out. The FCPJ email list provides event announcements, pertinent news and opinion pieces, and action alerts (2-3 emails a week). We are especially focused on the War on Iraq, but are concerned with the many wars that our government is waging—on the environment, on civil liberties, on the poor, on (some) drugs, and more.

Grandmothers for Peace

www.grandmothersforpeace.org

Grandmothers for Peace International is composed of volunteers from all over the globe who share our philosophy of making the world a better place for this and future generations. Membership is open to all. We are grassroots activists and encourage others to become as actively involved as their health and time permit. Join our efforts to address the issues of violence and injustice that continue to plague our planet and the human family. The abolition of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction remain a top priority. We believe it is imperative to foster in the next generation of world leaders the principles of non-violence and responsibility for their community and the world. We welcome the "stay at home" grandparents who care for and guide their grandchildren in these principles.

The Fairbanks Chapter started with 3 grandmothers last fall and is growing. Local contact: Bryson Dean at 488-2371 or brysondean@acsalaska.net.

Grandmothers for Peace is asking donations for Fair Trade Coffee (requested donation of \$10.00 per bag). We have whole beans and drip grind. Monies raised go to help the G.I. Right Hotline defray phone expenses. Call Bryson Dean at 488-2372

Military Families Speak Out

MFSO is a national organization comprised of people with a family member serving in any branch of the US military. We are opposed to the war and continued

occupation of Iraq. Our soldiers can't speak out, and most military family members also struggle with how to speak in opposition to the war. We believe it is our duty as citizens to express ourselves to undo the damage done by the President's simple rhetoric that implies supporting the troops means supporting the failed policies of his administration. We support the troops but oppose the policy that guides their mission.

Contact: rich@mfsoalaska.com; jd@mfsoalaska.com

North Star Veterans for Peace

(Coordinating committee): Jeanne Olson 488-2906 corvi@mosquiconet.com; Rob Mulford 457-5578 mulford.rob@gmail.com,

Fairbanks area veterans and supporters have been organizing to open a chapter of the national organization of military veterans (www.veteransforpeace.org) working together for peace and justice through non-violence. They are dedicated to "the abolishment of war as an instrument of federal policy." The group intends to raise awareness of the costs of war through non-violent actions and educational efforts and by lending their support to efforts like the GI Rights Hotline and Positive Opportunities.

No Nukes North

www.nonukesnorth.net; (281) 559-1958

NNN promotes educated opposition to missile defense in Alaska and encourages local peace activities. Stacey Fritz, founder and coordinator of NNN, will be away from Fairbanks for the next few years and the group is in a sort of dormancy. The email list is quiet but provides occasional, highly informative, and (often, somehow) even funny updates on provocative boondoggling in space.

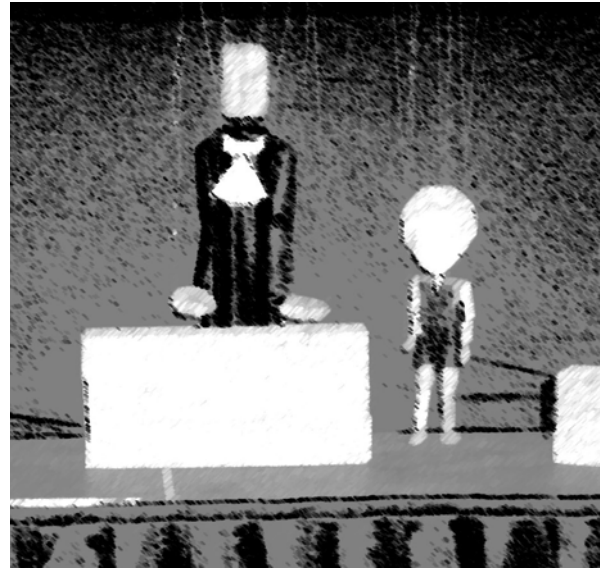
Positive Opportunities

Contact posopps@yahoo.com; 479-0981

Parents and other community members concerned about military recruitment in our schools are working to lessen or at least bring balance to the access afforded recruiters and their propaganda. In addition to highlighting the issue of truth in recruiting, Positive Opportunities is a resource for how to find out about the many positive, patriotic, productive, profitable, and peaceful opportunities available to young people.

The War Crimes Trial of George W. Bush, Puppet President of the United States

On January 13, 2006 the Fairbanks Coalition for Peace and Justice presented "The War Crimes Trial of George Bush, Puppet President of the United States" at the Alaska Peace Center. Set as a courtroom drama, the trial presented compilation of published evidence and testimony about illegal, covert and military actions of U.S. agents under the authority and/or direction of the president. The program began with a review of war crimes covered under the U.S. War Crimes Act and continued with testimony given by puppets playing the roles of real witnesses. The testimony included that of Iraqis, a journalist, a U.N. weapons inspector, a U.S. Army interrogator, Colin Powell's former chief of staff, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson and others. The performance was free and about 60 people attended. The show was performed again on April 1 at the Out North performance space in Anchorage. A DVD of the performance in Anchorage is available in the APC library.



The Alaska Peace Center is committed to nonviolent conflict resolution and to working for peace within ourselves, our community, and our world. APC opened in 2005. It is a non profit organization with 501 (c)(3) status. APC meets on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month.

Board Members and Officers:

Don Ross, David Bantz, Alison Carter, Ann Mallard, Barbara Braley, Pete Bowers, Dick Heacock, David Koester, Stan Read

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