



Issue 9

Winter 2014

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Alaska Peace Center Events and You

Dear Advocates for Peace, Justice, & Sustainability

This year marks 10 years since the first planning of an Alaska Peace Center (see "...Beginnings"), and 3 years since we moved to the office at College Mall. Below are listed APC events that have occurred since the last newsletter in the spring of 2013, and upcoming events. If you have questions, a passion for a particular issue of peace, justice, & sustainability, or just want to help, contact us at: info@alaskapeace.org, or visit our website: <http://www.alaskapeace.org>.

2013:

June 2- *First Annual Peace Feast*,
June 18* - *Intro to Alternatives to Violence Project*
NonViolent Communication practice spring & fall
August 2-11 - APC booth at Tanana Valley Fair
August 14** - "*The Struggle for Justice and Equality*
in Modern Times" by Roy Bourgeois
October 10***- *No Winged Robot Assassins North*
presentation by Rob Mulford
November 11*** - *Bell-Ringing* for Armistice Day
New Facebook page, via link on web page."likes"
Regular open hours Tuesdays, 5-8pm
Monthly Potluck & Movie -last Friday of the month
Regular monthly meetings
Update of Mission Statement to include
"Sustainability" - formally approved

* presented in conjunction with *Chena Ridge Friends Meeting*

**presented in conjunction with *Call To Action Alaska*

***presented in conjunction with *North Star Veterans for Peace*

Upcoming in 2014 (at the APC office except as noted):

Open Hours each Tuesday, 5-8 pm: Discuss issues, watch a movie, use our library, have tea.

January 31 (Friday)-Potluck & audio recorded by Rob Mulford at the Code Pink Drone Summit

Thursday, February 6, 7:00 pm Monthly Meeting

April ? - **Father John Deer & Rich Moniak**

April 25 - 27-**Alternatives to Violence** Workshop

May Day event in conjunction with Fairbanks Open Radio, Fairbanks Peace Choir and IWW- details to be decided

Regular **potlucks/movie nights** -last Fridays, 6pm

Aug. 1 through 9- **Booth at Tanana Valley Fair**

Recurrent - **Nonviolent Communication** classes

And **other events** not yet pinned down...

What about YOUR peace, justice, & sustainability issue?

Special thanks to those who have been organizing & presenting events, bringing in renewed energy, updating and developing the website, calendar, and Facebook, organizing this newsletter; and for other contributions of time, energy, wisdom, and money have helped the Alaska Peace Center keep working for peace.

Heather Koponen

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) workshop coming to Fairbanks!!

Carrie Farr

The Alternatives to Violence (AVP) website says "conflict is a part of daily life ...but violence doesn't have to be." AVP was started in 1975 by Quakers and is now used worldwide in communities, schools, prisons, and war conflicts to help people react non-violently to violent situations. We are lucky to have a 20 hour beginning AVP workshop coming to Fairbanks on April 25th (evening), 26th and 27th. Participants will learn, among other things, to recognize violence in the world around them, handle

their anger and other strong emotions, communicate effectively when confronted with violence, and understand why conflicts happen. AVP workshops can be very powerful and life-transforming for participants. Read more about AVP at their website, www.avpusa.org or call Carrie Farr for more information (750-1049 or chugny@yahoo.com) and to express desire to be a participant in the workshop. The exact times, location and minimal cost will be finalized soon!

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The Human Cost of WAR!

Chuck Hugny

Collateral damage is a term that the military uses to describe unintended damage or death. This is considered one of the “prices” of waging war (or police actions as they are often framed these days). One usually thinks of civilian casualties or damage to infrastructure. There is another form of damage that occurs to the warrior. It has been called many things over the years, posttraumatic [check!] stress disorder (PTSD) and battle fatigue to name a few, but its impact and duration can’t be denied. It is often a lifetime affliction.

As a high school teacher for over two decades, I had the opportunity to work closely with young adults as they forged their futures. Many choose further education, either college or vocational training. Some join the workforce upon graduation, some start families and some choose a military career. Between recruiters in the school, flashy TV ads and movies of the "Top Gun" ilk it's easy to see how young impressionable people could be “swept up in a wave of patriotism”. Young people want to make a difference and have an impact, and the military promotes these virtues.

Unfortunately, all too often, the recruit finds that the reality of enlistment is not as advertised. Missions with little known point, evaporation of promised jobs and the reality of war (it's not a video game, they shoot back!) can result in stress and depression or worse! Quoting information found in a report published by the British Medical Journal Published online 2008 January 15 [Check!], “Studies have estimated that as many as 30% of Vietnam war veterans developed posttraumatic stress disorder at some point after the war; between 9% and 15% had the disorder by the end of the 1980s. Among 1991 Gulf war veterans, as many as 10% were reported to have posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms years after returning from deployment.”

I would like to share how some of my former students have been affected by their tour of duty. For the record, none of these individuals are being treated for or have been diagnosed with PTSD, which makes me wonder if the published estimates reflect only a fraction of those

actually affected. I have changed the names to protect individual identity.

Oscar was a gung ho army recruit. He enlisted right after high school and got high marks in boot camp. He was leader material and was primed for action. Sent to Iraq and Afghanistan in three tours of duty he experienced many life-threatening events. Sleeping under his Hummer to the clicking of bullets off the armor plating, a close IED call and frequent mortar attacks kept him on edge. Upon returning home all seemed in order. Except for some sleep issues, he seemed unchanged. While attending a basketball game at our local gym someone in the crowd popped a paper bag. Oscar hit the floor and fumbled for his nonexistent holstered sidearm. Glazed frantic eyes eventually cleared and he stated “I’m all right” but it was obvious he was shook. Another event occurred while driving his dad home from town. One of the streetlights near the off ramp flickered and went out. Oscar hit the throttle and went shooting down the road at top speed. His amazed father yelled, “What are you doing?” Slowly the speed let up and Oscar’s now sweat-covered face softened. It seems that just before an attack on a convoy, the attackers would cut the streetlights. The flashback was sudden and reflexive.

Carlos was 19 when he was sent to Haiti during their civil war as part of a “peace keeping” force with the army. His day consisted of cleaning the streets of the corpses after each night’s conflicts. Shook by the brutality and terror that was constantly surrounding him he couldn’t finish his tour and was discharged from the service. All these years later he has sleep issues and has trouble holding a job.

Finally there is Joe. He never saw any active duty but was instead recruited into the Marine's military police ranks. He was most enthusiastic about service and was raring to go. Instead he spent six years “policing” Marines who were helplessly addicted to drugs and alcohol. For the first few years he still thought he could make a difference, but the stream of damaged humans never let up! Frustrated, feeling cheated and depressed, he left the service changed.

It is my sincere feeling that we need to hate the war but have compassion for the warrior. They often are helpless victims of political decisions made by leaders who view their usefulness as pawns in a global chess game. Damaged, they return with hidden illnesses that fester until a catalyst sets them off. Lives are often changed, ruined and destroyed.

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What Peace Means To Me

Dick Farris

Peace to me is simply how I live my life and how I work to relate with others in a peaceful, non violent way. I have to work to relate with others peacefully as, like most people, I was taught to be patriotic and to 'hate' enemies of my country which always describes itself as a freedom-loving democracy among other such terms.

The way of peace for me became an inner journey and one that is ever on-going. At some point in time I began to realize happiness, love and peace are connected. Unhappiness, hate and war are likewise connected. In Buddhist philosophy, you can look anywhere, in any person, place or thing and you will never discover happiness until you discover it within, in the region of your own heart. Once you discover your own path within and to happiness, you realize it was there all along, you just didn't know how to access it.

For me, happiness, love and peace come from sharing with others. Conversely unhappiness, hate and war come from taking more than my fair share. It is that simple so I attempt to share as much as I can.

I have learned over time that words are so often used to mask our nation's actions, especially in regards to war.

To me, peace is inseparable from justice and equality. Democratic socialism is an economic vehicle for a nation to move toward peace, justice and equality. Capitalism requires war and war profits. War profits go to a few and these same few rarely put themselves or their sons and daughters on the front lines. It is for someone else to sacrifice. Their job is to take more than their fair share.

So how does one realize inner peace? You have to seek peace within and your own path is something only you can realize. Meditation is a beginning of the path. Sit quietly and just watch your own thoughts within your mind. Let them be and as you learn to let go of thoughts, you will discover the inner feelings of the heart and the mind as one. Therein is peace and no one and nothing can ever take this from you. These feelings last forever which is a long, long time.

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Alaska Peace Center Beginnings

Excerpted and paraphrased from article by Ann Mallard in APC Newsletter 1, Fall 2006

The idea of a Peace Center in Fairbanks had been kicking around for a few years, but the immediate catalyst was Chuck Fager, the Director of Quaker

House in Fayetteville, NC. He organized a Peace Workshop in Fairbanks and emphasized an extended plan for Peace as an alternative to the military plan for endless war. 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 we had named it the Alaska Peace Center 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 wish to come. It should be a "large umbrella", especially for those struggling with issues related to peace and justice. It should 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.

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Reflections

Niilo Koponen (1928-2013) as related to Dick Farris in 1998

"When World War II began for the United States following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, I joined in the patriotic fervor of the moment calling for war and victory over the 'enemy'. In 1944 after hearing Norman Thomas speak, I began to see that war is never an answer as aggression only leads to more aggression. I began to see that our nation was bent on extending colonialism by using the corporate structure to extend the taking of natural resources from underdeveloped nations.

"I became a pacifist in 1946 when I was required to register for the draft. The draft board in the Bronx refused to grant me conscientious objector status as I would have been the first person to ever be given C.O. status by that particular draft board. Until I came to Alaska [in March 1952] I would every year renew my draft status by registering as a conscientious objector. Every year this same board ignored my request for conscientious objector status.

"As a pacifist, I saw that war and violence to settle international and national disputes only created more war and more violence. I became opposed and rejected the use of physical violence to obtain political, economic or social goals.

"My service in Finland with the American Friends Service Committee rebuilding homes destroyed in World War II [in 1948] solidified my pacifist ideas. I learned through cooperative work experience that inner peace is obtained by working and sharing with others. From this inner peace of mind happiness is realized. I was further influenced by Gandhi and his non-violent efforts to realize independence for India. I realized there is no way to peace for me or for anyone else. Rather peace is the way.

"So in essence I realized peace ends and begins with me and in this way, inner peace is realized. Peace lies within each and every one of us. Each and every one of us must discover our own path to peace."

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Alaska Peace Center Mission Statement

As amended and approved by the APC Board on 12 December 2013

Mission: The Alaska Peace Center works for peace, justice and sustainability - individually, in our community and globally - with a commitment to nonviolent conflict resolution.

Values/Strategies:

- o We facilitate fellowship, community and mutual support for those working for peace, justice and sustainability by providing a welcoming common ground for meetings.
 - o We contribute to the understanding of the basis for peace, justice and sustainability through shared inquiry and exploration, and by networking with other organizations.
 - o We increase public awareness and appreciation of peace, justice and sustainability through presentations, performances, exhibits and discussion on local, national and global issues.
 - o We serve individuals and families seeking more peaceful, just and sustainable ways of living by providing sound information and training.
 - o We teach and promote a culture of peace by drawing from examples of the work and thought of past and present peacemakers.
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The Alaska Peace Center is committed to nonviolent conflict resolution and to working for peace within ourselves, our communities and our world. APC opened in 2005. It is a nonprofit organization with 501(c)(3) status.

Board members and officers:

Heather Koponen, Carrie Farr, Alan Batten, Rob Mulford, Flyn Ludington, Suzanne Osborn



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