

RPEC NEWS

The newsletter of the Richmond Peace Education Center

May-June 2008

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Profiles in Peacemaking

Joe Szakos

Cathy Woodson



photo by Jen Fariello

Joe Szakos goes about his work quietly, unassuming, to get people involved in working for social justice and social change. He believes that all people should be treated fairly, with dignity in all aspects of life and there is no reason every person should not have a decent quality of life. You may see him at a legislative, community, or school board meeting, you will see him talking with people who care about issues and trying to figure out how to work for a solution. He works with community members directly affected by the issue. Joe is a community organizer, serving as the Executive Director with the Virginia Organizing Project. He believes that one part of working to bring peace in our society is to focus on the common good and work together for change.

“We have enough resources to make it happen,” says Joe, “the challenge is to figure out how to make it happen.” Understanding the need to share with and care about one another describes the driving force that fuels the work he has been involved in for more than 30 years this June. Joe is

creating a community where we all have affordable, decent and safe housing, access to a public education system that promotes equal opportunity for all, affordable childcare, access to affordable physical and mental health care and people should be paid enough money to take care of themselves and their families. This means every family should have enough nutritious and safe food to eat.

Greed, consumption and misguided intentions create a fear of not having what we need to be comfortable—this perpetuates an individualistic society instead of caring about others. We live with the outcomes of this everyday. Figuring it out does not have to be complicated; Joe shares a story that gets to the heart of this.

“Let’s say you invited 10 people for dinner. Everyone sits down to eat and some guests are told they can only eat one piece of bread; others can have nothing, while others stuff themselves with the splendors on the table. How would those who can see the wonderful feast, but cannot access it, feel? What could happen to change this and have everyone share in

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The opinions and announcements in
RPECnews are those of the
individual writers and are not
necessarily endorsed by RPEC.

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article and calendar submissions.

Deadline for the next issue is July 10
Contact Bill Gerow at
mbgerow@comcast.net.

Reflections

Adria Scharf, Executive Director

We've all heard about the debate over "nature" versus "nurture."
Where do we acquire our traits as individuals--are they innate or learned?
Where do qualities like prejudice and hostility originate? Having a 10
month old gives one new insights into these questions. I can report that
my 10 month old--and I don't think she is unique--has a spirit of
openness, and a desire to connect with others, that is inspiring to
observe. When we're out and about together, her interaction with the
people we meet mostly takes the form of big smiles and loud baby talk--
with everyone. She seems to like the woman working behind the counter at
the convenience store just as much as she likes the mailman, the neighbors,
and the homeless man standing on the sidewalk.

It seems that at 10 months, when we are just beginning to develop our
social selves and our understanding that we exist within a community, we
have an openness about us. We have an untrammled spirit of connected-
ness, with no knowledge of "us versus them"; no ranking of others; few
presuppositions. We seem to have in us at that age an innate spirit of
goodwill--and playfulness.

We adults would do well to peel back some of our learned assumptions and
habits ... and seek out that toddler spirit, that young impulse of
openness and that desire for connection, that I believe we all still have
within.

RPEC Having an Impact

Thank you for having First Contractors participate in your peace summit.
As you know our program is to prepare our (at risk) youth for a brighter fu-
ture. We try to ensure that our young men & women that have had an un-
pleasant past have a great future. The youth expressed to me that they had a
great time and can't wait to attend the next summit.

Letitia M. Beasley
First Contractors Inc.
Case Manager



RPEC Web page:
<http://www.rpec.org>

Interview with Peace Promise 2008 Chair Wendy Bauers Northup

Chris Clarke, RPEC Board Chair

Chris: Wendy, why did you agree to chair this major donor drive?

Wendy: Because I think the work of RPEC is so important, now more than ever. We have made such strides with Adria, Paul, and Johnnie and I want to ensure that we can keep our staffing at at least our current level and perhaps increase it. Having staff with the time to really organize the work makes a huge difference in the number of things that RPEC is able to accomplish in the community.

C: Why would that be so important?

W: With the economy in such bad shape and the dangers in the world, in terms of the never-ending war in Iraq and the serious threat of global warming, we really need an organization who will keep its members well-informed and positive as we face these challenges. It's both helpful and encouraging to me to read about what others are doing in the newsletter, for example. And the work we do with the youth of



Richmond is critical for the future. It's important to me that the Peace Center keeps an eye on what is happening right now in the world, but also on the future generations of peacemakers. This is what hope is really about.

C: Peace Promise 2008. What does that mean?

W: It's a positive statement of what we are trying to do here at RPEC. As members, we have the opportunity to keep the promise of peace alive through our contributions of time and money. And this campaign seeks to get people to pledge a commitment of support for the next three years so that we can have the stability to make the promise a reality.

C: How will the Peace Promise 2008 campaign work?

W: Volunteers will be making contact by mail and by phone with the goal of setting up a meeting to talk to our major donors about making a pledge of their support for the next three years. We hope, by doing this, to also make some connections between members and to ensure that our major donors are well acquainted with the important work the peace center has been doing. We hope that everyone who is contacted will participate in Peace Promise 2008.

Richmond Peace Education Center

Our Mission:

The Richmond Peace Education Center works for a just and peaceful community by promoting nonviolence locally and globally.

Our Vision:

The Richmond Peace Education Center works for a just and peaceful community that:

- * Appreciates diversity
- * Resolves conflicts non-violently
- * Builds safety through cooperation and community
- * Shares economic and political power equitably
- * Takes its place within the community of earth responsibly
- * Empowers all individuals to live full and abundant lives

Profiles in Peacemaking

Virginia Organizing Project

Empowering Local Communities



(Continued from page 1)

the feast?” This may be a simplistic way to examine what is going on in our society, but this helps us understand the importance of relationships and power. People around the dinner table can influence the decision so that everyone is able to eat the wonderful meal. The challenge is to be truthful and ask ourselves if we put together our power for individual benefits or community benefits.”

Joe describes community organizing as a tool to drive us to solutions. We have the resources and the ability to figure it out; are we doing our share, are we being proactive and assessing how we treat one another? How can we work for the good of all? Joe continually seeks these answers and works to figure out how to challenge and agitate for the common good. He goes about this work in a respectful, peaceful and unassuming way, doing his part to ensure that people’s basic needs are met through long-term social change, not just quick fixes.

Joe tells personal stories to help remind us of our own personal experiences and to help us gain a better understanding of different points of view. He shares a story about growing up in Pennsylvania and his mother preparing food for a neighbor who was ill. His father

had a garbage truck business, when his customers fell on hard times, he didn’t stop servicing them, and he continued their service and only asked that they help someone else. He grew up watching his parents live a life of caring for everyone and encouraging others to do the same. His parents were his first role models. Joe says, “As a kid, you take all of this for granted, you share and offer to take care of one another.”

Joe’s mission could be described as working for the common good of all. In college, he met a professor who changed his life. This professor helped Joe make sense out of life experiences and the systems that affect the lives of people who are left out—it became clearer to Joe that there was a need to challenge the injustices that leave people out. He decided to become a community organizer, because people working together can make a difference and change systems to benefit everyone. There are many people with talents and skills, and working together provides a focus on getting people active to change their communities by building relationships and developing strategic solutions to concerns and issues. Identifying what we learn from relationships and how to build relationships to build a better community benefits everyone. Instead of working to get wealthy, everyone

benefits when we are working to create a vision that looks at community values and our interconnectedness. There may be anger and frustration, but Joe believes we can learn to let these feelings fuel our determination and persistence to make change happen.

“Being a community organizer allows you to work with groups to make specific, tangible changes in a community while helping people learn important leadership skills,” Joe says. “I love having the opportunity—daily—to help people raise their voices about the concerns they have in their communities, especially when it leads to major systematic changes.”

Joe looks for ways to use practical applications to make change, acting often and getting others to act. Change does not happen in one sphere; it happens across the board. Joe encourages people to raise questions and work for solutions. Identifying patterns of injustice may be uncomfortable, but he has learned when people stand together with allies and strong supporters, their power makes a difference. It is important to work together without expecting anything in return. Joe’s favorite advice to people: *jump in here and do something.*

Happenings at the Center

Recent Events

Annual Meeting

The RPEC annual membership meeting was held the evening of Wednesday, April 9, 2008. There were about 20 people in attendance. While the size of the group was smaller than in previous years, the evening was lively and positive.

The meeting opened with a powerful poetry performance by Richmond Youth Peace Project founding youth member Kamala Bhagat.

Volunteers Bill Gerow, Kelly Evans, and Paula Powdermaker received volunteer awards for their service to the center (Bill for editing the newsletter for the past nine years; Kelly for her help soliciting sponsorship for the RYPP peace summit in 2007; and Paula Powdermaker for her years volunteering in the peace center office and serving on the auction committee).

Following the report from Director Adria Scharf, which focused on the year's accomplishments and coming priorities, board member Ram Bhagat led a conflict resolution activity called "concentric circles." The activity was designed to give each participant a personal connection with a number of other people in the room, and to encourage all to share their personal values and their visions for the greater Richmond community, with one another.

Naturally, some business also took place. The members at the meeting approved the current slate of new board members, and

RPEC's annual report was made available.

5th Anniversary Protest to Iraq War (3/19/08)

A protest/vigil was held outside of Richmond City Hall along Broad Street to mark the 5th Anniversary of the start of the Iraq War. The event was sponsored by the Virginia Antiwar Network (VAWN) and Richmond Peace Education Center (RPEC). About 100 people participated during the course of the 2 hour, street-side demonstration. In addition to several organizers, a number of veterans and those with family members serving (or having served) in the Iraq spoke to the crowd in attendance.

A forum on the impacts of the war here at home was held at Asbury Methodist Church in Church Hill following the vigil. The forum was sponsored by VAWN and included five guest speakers. All were women of color, giving those who attended a different and enlightening perspective on the war not generally covered by the mainstream media or politicians on Capital Hill.

John McCutcheon Celebrates Peace in Richmond

On a warm spring night John McCutcheon returned to Richmond for a benefit concert for RPEC. His eclectic program of songs and instrumentals celebrated families, peace and the labor movement (it was the day after most of the world celebrates Labor Day), with such favorites as *Labor Day*, *Room at the Top of the Stairs*, and *Christmas in the Trenches*. And he offered "for the last time in Richmond" his tribute to the present occupant, *Hail to the Chief*. The audience of over 150 responded enthusiastically.

Net proceeds of \$2,000 will help to fund RPEC's many programs. The financial success was enhanced by the donation by Dabney Morriss of proceeds from the ice cream sales, by the continuing support of La Difference, and by the 17 others who placed ads in the program booklet.

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Nancy Gowen
(on right)
Demonstrates at
protest vigil



Happenings at the Center

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Conflict Resolution Workshops

On April 12-13, over 20 participants spent the weekend taking the first steps in learning to be conflict resolution trainers. Wendy Northup, Ram Bhagat, Santa Sorenson, and Iman Shabazz did this training. The weekend workshop covered the basics of conflict resolution: affirmation, cooperation, communication, problem solving, and emotion regulation. Participants experienced the various skills in hands-on activities. We examined the roots of conflict and the things that can make conflicts escalate or de-escalate. Everyone had a chance to role play potential conflicts and possible solutions. At RPEC, this weekend is the first step in becoming a trainer. Subsequently, any of the participants who wish can apprentice with experienced trainers at a variety of workshops. The weekend following this training, one of our group filled this role at the Youth Summit. The Peace Center is always trying to expand it's group of conflict resolution trainers, and workshops such as this one play a big role in this expansion. . A follow up mini-training focused on the basics of running a workshop was held on May 27 for those who were interested in joining the conflict resolution team.

RPEC facilitators also recently completed a series of three workshops with male foster care youth through Richmond Department of Social Services.

Youth Peace Project News

RYPP seeking teens to participate in next Fall's Conflict Resolution training

This fall, RYPP will once again train a group of teens as youth conflict resolution trainers. Young people in grade eight and above who are interested in participating should send their name, address, telephone numbers) and email contact information to rypp@rpec.org.

Fourth Annual Youth Peace Summit Was a Huge Success

Almost 130 teens participated in the fourth annual Richmond Youth Peace Summit on April 26 at Fifth Baptist Church—about 50 more than for last year's event. Participants came from a broad range of school systems throughout the Richmond region. A number of local youth-serving organizations—including William Byrd Community House, GEMS, 4-H, and First Contractors--brought groups of young people to the event. Evaluations turned in by the participants at the end of the event were almost universally positive. Participants chose from among twenty different workshops, including conflict resolution, legal rights, yoga, radio production, vegetarian cooking, hip-hop culture, stress management, theater,

music and dance. Author and educator Muriel Branch gave this year's keynote speech, and the summit closed with music by Hotel X.

2008 Peace Essay Contest Winners Announced

This year's Peace Essay Contest garnered more than 500 entries from schools throughout the region. Our judges have now finished scoring the students' work. Thanks to all who entered, to the teachers and parents who encouraged them, and to the volunteer judges who read their work.

All winning entries are posted on the RPEC web site. Reading them is an inspirational experience!

Congratulations to the winners:

Grades K-3

First Place:

- **Elizabeth Harrison**, gr. 3, St. Catherine's School, Richmond

Second Place:

- **Haley Butcher**, gr. 1, Seven Pines E.S.

Third Place:

- **Emma Ellis**, gr. 3, Home schooled, Richmond

Honorable Mentions:

- **Faith Emba**, gr. 3, Our Lady of Lourdes School
- **Cassidy Maund**, gr. 3, W. A. Walton E.S.,
- **Emma Gay**, gr. 3, Mary Munford E.S.
- **Matthew Evans**, gr. 1 Mehfoud E.S.

Happenings at the Center

- **Sierra Spain**, gr. 3, Seven Pines E.S.

Grades 4-5

First Place:

- **Katie Cantone**, gr. 4, St. Michael's Episcopal School

Second Place:

- **Lynette Sequiera**, gr. 4, Three Chopt E.S.

Third Place:

- **Paris Eve Reinhard**, gr. 5, William Fox E.S.

Honorable Mentions:

- **Noah Kim**, gr. 5, Seven Hills School,
- **KeAnna Booker**, gr. 5, Amelia Co. E.S
- **Owen Ayers**, gr. 5, Tuckahoe E.S.
- **Eli Reece**, gr. 5, William Fox E.S
- **Samuel Swanlund**, gr. 5, Colonial Trace E.S.

Grades 6-8

First Place:

- **Martin Slag**, gr. 8, Seven Hills School,

Second Place:

- **Sean Youngstone**, gr. 8, Lucille Brown M.S.

Third Place :

- **Cole Hawkins**, gr. 7, Tuckahoe M.S.

Honorable Mentions:

- **Jake Dorsey**, gr. 8, Seven Hills School,
- **Ben Youngstone**, gr. 6, Binford M.S.
- **Grace Wilson**, gr. 7, Tuckahoe M.S.

- **Katherine Freeman**, gr. 8, St. Catherine's School
- **Julia Whitehead**, gr. 8, St. Catherine's School,
- **Courtney Robinson**, gr. 7, Tuckahoe M.S.

Grades 9-12

First Place:

- **Avery Ellis**, gr. 10, Home schooled, Richmond

Second Place: (tie)

- **Jane Rolland**, gr. 11, St Gertrude H.S.,
- **Emma Clark**, gr. 11, Monacan H.S.,

Honorable Mentions:

- **Starneka Taylor**, gr. 12, Franklin Military Academy
- **LeAnne Le**, gr. 12, Franklin Military Academy
- **Carlesa Carter Bias**, gr. 10, Precious Blessing Academy
- **Caleb Chen**, Hanover H.S.,
- **Brandy Walton**, gr. 11, Hanover H.S.

Upcoming Events

Eyes Wide Open-Virginia

RPEC continues to serve as a statewide coordinator of Eyes Wide Open-Virginia, together with Midlothian Friends Meeting and Richmond Friends Meeting. The exhibit focuses on the costs of war to the state of Virginia. We make the exhibit available to other groups across the state to host in their own communities.

It was held in Williamsburg, on the campus of the College of Wil-

liam & Mary, in early April. Next it will be displayed in Charlottesville during Memorial Day weekend, May 23rd, 24th, and 25th, hosted by Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church Peace Conversations, Charlottesville Friends Meeting, the Charlottesville Center for Peace and Justice, and Veterans for Peace.

Following Charlottesville, it will be displayed at the United Methodist Annual Conference in mid-June in the Roanoke Civic Center. The Annual Conference is the gathering of all the United Methodist districts across Virginia, so having Eyes Wide Open there will bring a powerful reminder about the human cost of the war to an important statewide faith gathering.

The Roanoke exhibit will be held Monday, June 16, 2008, 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Roanoke Civic Center in the courtyard. The site is open to the public, and families of military members who have died in Iraq, who live in the Roanoke area, will be informed and invited to attend.

Family Peace Festival

The next Family Peace Festival will be September 21, all afternoon, at St. Joseph's Villa. Don't miss this celebration of tolerance and diversity. It will include youth performances, an interfaith prayer service, vendors, food, and more.

Nominate Your Peacemaker by June 15

It is once again time to choose our Peacemaker of the Year, an award which will be given at our

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Happenings at the Center

Annual Dinner on November 8, 2008. Please think of someone you know who has made the world a better place by their dedication to peacemaking in its myriad forms. The nomination form is easy to fill out and can be found on our website. If you don't have access to a computer, call the office at 232-1002 and request one by mail. Help make this award the important honor it should be by nominating someone worthy of the recognition. The deadline for nominations is June 15, 2008.

Conflict Resolution

Upcoming Workshops include:

- AVP Basic workshop (contact 232-1002 for more details about the location and times).
- A series of four workshops with Shiloh Ministries summer camp in the Northern Neck in July.

Conflict Resolution Committee Meets

The next RPEC Conflict Resolution Committee meeting will be Tuesday, June 17, 6:30-8:30. Facilitators come together at the committee meetings, which are held a few times per year, for updates on recent and upcoming workshop opportunities, sharing of new activities, improving skills, and more. Attending this committee meeting is a good way to learn more about RPEC conflict resolution. Please RSVP to rpec@rpec.org if you are interested in participating.

Support the Center

Please mail in or drop off your Ukrops Golden Gift Certificate by June 10. Our mailing address is:
RPEC
400 W. 32nd Street
Richmond, VA 23225

Annual Dinner & Auction

This year's RPEC Annual Fundraising Auction and Dinner will be Saturday, November 8, 6 p.m., at the Troutman Sanders Building.

RPEC Night at Ten Thousand Villages

RPEC Night will be Wednesday, November 12, 5 pm-8 pm, at 3201 West Cary Street in Richmond. Ten Thousand Villages sells fairly traded handicrafts from around the world. Net proceeds from sales the evening of November 12 will go to support the peace center. Mark your calendars now—this is a great way to do your holiday shopping, while supporting the center and third world artisans simultaneously.

Big Thanks to "Another Limited Rebellion"

RPEC would like to express a special thanks to Noah Scalin and his socially responsible design company Another Limited Rebellion for providing RPEC with graphic design assistance on a large number of projects in recent months.

Just since December, Another Limited Rebellion designed our holi-

day card, laid out our annual report, designed the membership mailing reply card ... and redesigned two peace center brochures. (They look amazing, by the way.)

In past years, Noah designed our logo, stationery, and more. All of this graphic design assistance has been provided free of charge to the center as a donation. We are grateful.

Learn more about Another Limited Rebellion at www.alrdesign.com.

Volunteers

We are looking for a qualified and reliable volunteer to moderate the RPEC list serve. This job involves checking email twice per day and sending occasional postings about list serve policies. A brief application process and interview are required. Please contact 232-1002 if you are interested in applying for this important volunteer position!

We are also looking for an individual to serve as "Tabling Coordinator." This job involves organizing the literature table at events in the community for the coming year, and training and supporting other volunteers who help. If you are interested, contact RPEC staff.

Beginning in September, we will need a regular office volunteer to help with letters, mailings, and other administrative tasks, approximately four hours per week. Contact Office Manager Johnnie Taylor if you are available, 232-1002.

Consumers Corner

Finding Local Food

John Gallini and Alisha Gallini

We began our last column quoting Steven L. Hopp suggesting that we “favor food grown in an environmentally responsible way, delivered with minimal petroleum use, in a manner that doesn’t exploit the farmers.” We presume that most of you were persuaded, as we were, by his article “Looking for Mr. Goodvegetable”. This month, we would like to share some of the attempts by our two families to move in the direction of consuming locally produced food.

Vegetables – During the growing season (late April thru November) obtaining fresh, local produce is relatively simple. We both belong to Victory Farms CSA (along with two other local Gallini families) so we not only get fresh local food, but we know that it is produced without chemical inputs and we know the farmer who produces it. But the area farmers’ markets are now open, so most people can find a time to go there. With a little effort you can learn how each farmer raises her produce. And most local supermarkets tell you if the food is local or organic or both.

It is more of a challenge in the winter months. This year we spent an August afternoon canning tomatoes and pasta sauce, having purchased 100 pounds of tomatoes (at a good price) and found a friend from Hanover County who shared the work (and product) and got us into the Hanover County Cannery. These lasted through February or March. We are considering doing this again, but just doing the tomatoes, which are less work. In November we pur-

chased quantities of winter squash, bok choy cabbage, beets, carrots, turnips and sweet potatoes that we stored in bins and coolers in my garage. These, too, lasted through mid-March. And I froze a quart of green peppers that lasted through April. Alisha froze cooked pumpkin, blanched spinach, kale, and chard and, she canned peaches that she bought from Ukrops. We did lose some of the produce. I estimate 10%.

Fruit and Nuts – We ate melons from our CSA in late summer and fall, apples from the Byrd House Market beginning in November (and stored through February in the garage) and strawberries from my garden and from Chesterfield Berry Farm out Hull St Rd near Hampton Park. One can buy Virginia peanuts in grocery stores, but the price is quite high (\$6 / lb). This past week, on my way back from Nags Head, I discovered that I can get shelled raw peanuts for \$2 per pound at Wakefield Peanut Company (on Route 460). I plan to explore how best to convert this product into snacks. We buy Graves Mountain Lodge apple-sauce at Ukrop’s and Virginia apple juice and honey at Good Foods Grocery. I buy Sauer’s mayonnaise which is made locally and Williamsburg Winery red wine.

Meat, Milk, Eggs and Bread – We buy some of our meat from Brookview Farms, and recently discovered a variety of meat products from Ault’s Family Farm. These are both sources of

“pastured” meat. We buy either Yoder Dairies at Good Foods Grocery or Marva Maid milk at Stop-in-Shop. We have a friend who brings us local eggs each week along with flour from the Ashland Milling Co. We both bake some of our bread. Ukrop’s has their own bakeries, but we have not tracked down where they get their flour.

Some of our methods require a lot of driving. We keep that to a minimum by buying in bulk when we go to Brookview Farm and by buying for more than one family when we go to the Farmer’s market. Also, we are currently working on forming a driving coop to Brookview Farms.

So that’s the story so far. Some of it takes more time – going to a different store for milk, baking bread, making space to store vegetables in the winter, planning a driving coop or a bulk-buying trip. Some requires connections, like having a friend who can deliver local eggs. Most of this is about persistence and paying attention to what we buy. We have been working on gradually adding local food items to our lifestyle for over a year. If you are just starting out, set a modest goal of eating at least one local item at each meal and work from there. To continue that goal through the winter, buy extra in the fall and can (fruits), freeze (greens), or store (roots, apples, potatoes) in your garage. You will find it easier than you thought if you start gradually. If you have suggestions, we would like very much to see them – gallinjb@aol.com.

2007 Peace Essay Contest
High School Winning Entry– First Place
Emily Schenck, Deep Run High School

Not With These Hands

According to a famous Chinese proverb, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Trying to create a less violent and more peaceful community may seem like a big task, but it has to start with a single step from each one of us. When people think of ways to promote peace, they may think of big group projects that require a lot of time, organization and money. These are definitely important, but I believe that peace really can start with one person.

In today's world, the rates of violence and crimes being committed are horrendous. It is clear that citizens need to address this problem. Most of the nightly news reports involve fights, shootings, war, and death. These are not the stories of a healthy and stable society. I want the day to come when I can turn on the news and see that a cure for cancer has been discovered. I want to read in the newspaper that global warming is greatly decreasing. I want people to focus on taking care of each other and the earth, not hurting each other and expressing hatred and anger.

There's a concept called "paying it forward" that describes the act of changing the world one good deed at a time. It involves doing something kind for others and expecting them to do something kind for someone else. It's something I believe in. Even if one person contributes only one act of kindness each day, this small effort can make a huge difference. There are many ways we could pay it forward and show that one person can make our community a more peaceful place. For example, if I were at the supermarket and see a person holding a large bag of groceries, I could hold the door and offer my help. This small act may make that person feel good. On his drive home, he might want to help someone else, and he'll let a car go in front of him. The driver of that car might feel grateful that someone let him in the busy lane because he would have been late for work. Since that driver is in such a good mood, he may leave a generous tip for the waiter at the restaurant where he eats lunch. When the waiter is treated well by his customer, he may feel appreciated. When he goes to pick up his child later at school, he may give him a big smile at the door because he knows how good it feels to be treated kindly and he wants his son to feel that way, too. When the child is smiled at by his father, he'll feel happy and loved. All of these positive experiences can come from one small act done by one person. Random acts of kindness like these could keep spreading and spreading throughout an entire neighborhood, city, and country.

In order for our community to become more peaceful, something clearly needs to be done. Through my school, friends, youth group, family, neighborhood, and more, it would not be hard to create a chain of acts of kindness. If people understand that one person really can make a difference, I believe violence would decrease, and our community and our world would become a more peaceful place. I pledge to contribute my time and efforts to making this vision a reality, and I pledge to start with me.

Editor's note: The RPEC newsletter will begin printing essays of the 2008 Peace Essay Contest winners beginning with the next issue.



CALENDAR

Meetings of Local Groups

Every Sunday	Food Not Bombs Richmond-Meal Sharing , 4:00 P.M. in Monroe Park. Hotline # 359-4880 for details
Every 3rd Wed.	Amnesty International , University of Richmond campus. Contact Ray Hilliard at 289-8289
Every Thursday	Richmond Organization for Sexual Minority Youth (ROSMY) , 7:00-9:00 PM. Call support line: 353-2077 for more information; 353-1699 for the administrative line.
Every 3rd Saturday	Equality Virginia , 12:00 noon at the office. A political advocacy group working towards equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens of Virginia. Open to the public. Contact number is 643-4816.
Every 4th Saturday	Pax Christi Peace Community - Call Paula Powdermaker for details - 355-7395
Every 2nd Saturday	Walk for Peace - 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM. Meet at the Boulevard entrance of the Virginia Museum. Wear black.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 15	Deadline for nominations for Peacemaker of the Year.
June 16	Eyes Wide Open Exhibit —11:00 AM to 4:30 PM at the Roanoke Civic Center in the courtyard.
June 17	RPEC Conflict Resolution Committee meeting — 6:30-8:30 PM. RSVP to rpec@rpec.org if you are interested in participating.
Sept. 21	Family Peace Festival — all afternoon, at St. Joseph's Villa.
Nov. 8	RPEC Annual Fundraising Auction and Dinner —Saturday, 6 PM, at the Troutman Sanders Building.
Nov. 12	RPEC Night at Ten Thousand Villages — Wednesday, 5 PM-8 PM, at 3201 West Cary Street in Richmond.

Stay Informed

The RPEC email listserv

will keep you up-to-date on peace and justice events in the greater Richmond region. This is a moderated list, and we are very careful to limit the number of messages we send to our subscribers' mailboxes. If you would like to receive notices about RPEC events and other local and regional happenings, it's easy to subscribe:

Subscribing:

To subscribe to a list, simply send a blank email to
rpec-subscribe@lists.riseup.net.

Unsubscribing:

To unsubscribe from a list, send a blank email to
rpec-unsubscribe@lists.riseup.net.

If you need further help with this, email us at
rpec@rpec.org or call **232-1002**.



Richmond Peace Education Center

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