



# News

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## PEACE Iowa goes to the Johnson County Fair

Ann Stromquist

How do you want your federal tax dollars spent? This was a question that fair-goers faced when they stopped at the PEACE Iowa booth at the Johnson County Fair this summer. Just as we did last year, PEACE Iowa shared space with Iowa Veterans for Peace, Iowa Physicians for



Volunteers from four local organizations, including PEACE Iowa, staffed a booth at the Johnson County Fair.

Social Responsibility, and 100Grannies. The booth was decorated with large banners of each of the four organizations and tables were laden with information about peace and environmental issues.

About 60 volunteers from the four organizations volunteered to work during the four days of the fair. They reported enjoying meeting with the many women, men, and children who strolled by and stopped to talk, to read the literature, to sign a petition, to enter the raffle for a “Granny Bag,” or to vote, using corn kernels, for how they want their federal tax dollars to be spent.

Each person who stopped at our booth had the opportunity to “vote” for their top four choices (out of seven possibilities given) by dropping a corn kernel in each of the tubes that represented their choices. Education was the highest vote getter with nearly 27%, followed by the Environment with 18.5%. The military (which did not include Veterans Benefits) lagged behind with 8.5%. Veterans Benefits and Health Care each received 15% of the vote. Following their vote, we showed voters, on a graph, how our federal tax dollars were actually spent in 2013. Many expressed shock that so little was spent on, for example, Education (6%), Housing & Urban Development (4%), Agriculture (2%), Energy (1.5%), Labor (1%), EPA (1%), and Transportation (1%), especially in relation to Military spending (60%) which included Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Nuclear Weapons Programs. We don’t pretend that the corn kernel voting was a scientific poll, but we think it says something about the relative priorities of Americans.

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## PEACE Iowa Annual Meeting and Potluck

Saturday, October 3, 2015

Lower City Park, Shelter 8 (by the pond)  
Park Road & Dubuque Street, Iowa City

12:00 **Potluck** & live music, sing-along

1:00 **Program**

Overview of the year's activities  
Awards  
Speaker

**Music:** Pigs & Clover (Matt and Jamie Kearney), including a peace sing-along

**Speaker:** Newman Abuissa will talk about the crisis in Syria in the context of the Middle East in general, ISIS, and the Syrian refugee crisis. Newman was born in Damascus, Syria, and has family in Syria now. There will be time for questions and discussion.

The four organizations at the booth urged folks to support the negotiated settlement with Iran by contacting their congressional representatives and encouraging them to vote for it, to sign pledge cards supporting an Iowa City Council resolution



A fair-goer votes for how she wants her federal tax dollars to be spent.

banning single use plastic bags, and to sign a petition expressing opposition to the Bakken Pipeline. And we handed out a list of questions to ask the many candidates for political office passing through Iowa between now and the elections of 2016. (Email [peaceiowa@gmail.com](mailto:peaceiowa@gmail.com) to request a copy of the list.)

Children were drawn to our booth by an interactive opportunity. They could throw balls at “coal-fired power plants” (made with blocks) to try to knock them over. If they succeeded, they were given the prize of a bracelet (with a message on it such as “Books not Bombs,” “Want Health, Make Peace,” “Solar & Wind, Not Coal & Oil”). Parents of these children were thus drawn to the booth as well and often ended up talking with us about issues that concerned them.

Our booth at the Johnson County Fair is a work in progress. Sharing its creation and evolution with Veterans for Peace, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and 100Grannies has been wonderful experience. Together, we continue to evaluate how we can be more effective in engaging fair-goers in the issues we care about. Look for us at the fair next year and plan to volunteer! ☺



When Steven Kanner was in Iowa City, he was an active member of Iowans For Peace, the coalition of local organizations that later founded PEACE Iowa.

## The Passing of Steven Kanner

Andy Douglas

One of the founding members of Iowans for Peace (the forerunner of PEACE Iowa) died in August. Steven Kanner was an activist, a former Iowa City City Council member, who put his values into action. He was a participant in the Great Peace March, the march across the US in 1986 to bring attention to nuclear disarmament. He moved to Iowa City in 1995, and became active in—among other things—anti-GMO organizing, helping to organize an alternative transportation conference, and a car cooperative, as well as his beloved potluck sing-alongs. With Karly Whitaker, who would

## How to Respond When People Yell at You

Miriam Timmer-Hackert

Wanting to know how best to handle disagreement and rudeness, volunteers who were planning to work at the Johnson County Fair booth asked for some non-violence training. Mediators Annie Tucker and Miriam Timmer-Hackert led an hour-long workshop at the Coralville Public Library to practice de-escalation skills.

We practiced with partners to experience the difference between being listened to and being blown off. We discussed two methods in depth, Bill Eddy’s BIFF and the CLARA method:

**Calm** and center yourself. Breathe, and be the peace you wish to see in the world!

**Listen** and try to understand what motivates them. (What needs are they trying to meet?)

**Affirm** what you heard them say: reflect their words and feelings back.

**Respond** respectfully, answer their question.

**Add** information—personal stories can be most powerful.

Then we encouraged participants to take turns yelling at each other to practice these methods. One thing we learned is that role players should stand up when trying to yell at someone!

If repeating their words back seems to escalate or make things worse, try BIFF: Be **B**rief, **I**nformative, **F**riendly, **F**irm. ☺



later become his wife, he traveled to a School of Americas protest, and also helped organize a protest against the use of the name “Blackhawk” by the U. S. military.

What people seem to remember most about Steven, however, was his love for and connection with people. He reached out to everyone he met and was always

ready to help. He regularly visited several people who were home-bound. Going out to eat or walking down the street was an exercise in connecting with people. Steven listened deeply, he was generous, and he brought out the best in people. Members of the peace community are mourning his loss. ☺

## The Movement Empowers the Community

Laura Crossett

The fall of 2001 was not a particularly good time for anyone, but it was a particular kind of very bad time for those of us who are pacifists. Neal Conan was hosting call-in shows on NPR where he'd lambaste anyone who suggested maybe we shouldn't be bombing Afghanistan. And that was NPR (which my friend, who'd been calling it Neoliberal Propaganda Radio, just started referring to as Nationalist Public Radio). I couldn't bear to check any other major news source. A group of us met on an upper story lounge of the IMU a few nights after the planes hit to start a group to do something, and Iowans for Peace later did a lot of things—rallies and candlelight vigils and letter-writing campaigns and all the things you do to fight a force larger than you, one you know on some level you can't stop but that you know you have to resist. And then you wonder at your metaphors—fight, resist, disobey—because all you ever wanted to do was create the beloved community, and here you are in the master's house with nothing but the master's tools.

But we met and we marched and we stood in silence, shielding lighted candles, and we wrote letters at a pizza joint downtown, because we cared about stopping the war, but also because we cared about each other. And so sometime that fall when some people started talking about taking a caravan down to the School of the Americas (SOA) protest that year, I decided to go along.

Steven Kanner's sister Rebecca was serving a prison sentence at that time for civil disobedience at an SOA rally a year or two before. Steven had been going for some years, and likely he was the impetus for the trip that year. I knew Steven as the progressive on City Council, the one who came to Students Against Sweatshops events, the one who took us seriously, as he took everyone seriously. I also knew him as something of a doofus, a guy I knew and liked and respected but that I knew no one on Council, and few in town, would ever take as seriously as he took us.

The times were awful, and the cause was deathly serious, and the drive was long, but it remains suspended, as some drives do, in a magical, out of time place. My friends Meg and Erica and I lost track of the caravan at some point because we got so dreamily

distracted singing along to "Rocky Mountain High." None of us had cell phones yet, but we found each other again somehow. We drove through the night, taking turns, and pulled into a Waffle House in Georgia just at dawn. We stood in the parking lot, dazed, exhausted yet awake, blinking slightly, and Steven—of course Steven—insisted we all do a sun salutation, which he led us in, right there in the parking lot: nine pasty white Midwestern hippies doing poorly formed yoga in a deep South Waffle House parking lot as the sun rose. That was Steven all over.

That night we settled into our rooms at the motel, and Steven—of course, Steven—organized a group to go watch the Leonids meteor shower, and of course I did not go. I don't remember if it was that night or the next day, but at some point Meg came to me and said, "Oh God, we're in trouble." What was it? I asked. "You know Karly rode down all the way next to Steven?" she said. "Well, she just came and told me, 'Steven and I are in love!'"

We rolled our eyes and sighed, certain we knew better, sure this was going to end in more heartbreak.

We were wrong, of course—or if we were right about the heartbreak, we were wrong about its cause or its timeline. Meg is dead now, and the School of the Americas is still there, and we are still at war. And now Steven is dead, too.

But we were wrong about their relationship, which started on that trip and carried on. We were wrong to doubt love and faith and strength, which are the only things, ultimately, that keep us going—the things themselves, and the memory of them. For Steven was, above all, a person who in his own life created the beloved community.

We live, I think, by these moments of grace that come in the midst of chaos and tragedy and fear and boredom and nitwittery. Mostly you work and grocery shop and pay bills and do dishes. Sometimes you drive insane distances to protest human rights abuses and don't get enough sleep and eat too much bad road food and possibly have no effect on the state of the world at all. But then sometimes you find yourself with your friends, doing sun salutations in a parking lot.

Steven lived more of those moments than anyone else I know, and he was better at creating them than anyone I have ever met. I wish I had paid more attention and shown up more.

At the last hootenanny he hosted that I remember going to before I left town, we sang Phil Ochs's "When I'm Gone." I've always thought of it as the depressive's social justice anthem, in that it lists both all the pleasures and all the responsibilities that one can't enjoy or take on when one is dead, so, as the refrain goes, "I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here." Steven was a far more energetic and upbeat person than

Ochs, or than me, and when I let his spirit in, it's talked me out of many a funk—as it has many others, I would venture. I guess we'll have to do it on our own now, but with the moments he created to guide us. ☺

## PEACE Iowa Meets with County Officials About Acquisition of Military Vehicle

Carole Winkleblack

PEACE Iowa representatives paid visits to Johnson County Supervisors Rod Sullivan, Janelle Rettig, and Mike Carberry in late spring in an ongoing effort to address the County's participation in federal programs that provide local governments with military-grade equipment.

In May 2014 Johnson County acquired a Military Resistant Ambush Protection (MRAP) vehicle through the Department of Defense's controversial 1033 transfer of surplus military equipment program. Though the 52,700 pound, heavily-armored MRAP has been jokingly referred to as the Sherriff's "tank," it is no joke. The acquisition and use of military-style equipment sends a chilling message to citizens: If law enforcement personnel are equipped like soldiers, are we the enemy?

In communities like Ferguson, Missouri, surplus military equipment only exacerbated tension and distrust. Johnson County is not a war zone; let's not let it ever look like one.

The visits with the three Supervisors were productive and informative. We intend to meet with other local officials to express our concerns and to request actions that reduce the militarization of our communities. ☺

### Take Action

Call or visit Johnson County Supervisors and ask them to either send back the MRAP or, at the very least, develop policies to strictly limit its use. Insist that any military-grade equipment has no place in our community.

## Blue Stem Trio Lights Up the Stage at PEACE Iowa Benefit

Virginia Dreier

The PEACE Iowa Benefit Concert with The Blue Stem Trio (Margaret and Loren Brumm and Tim Schulte) and friends Katia Maxey and Larry Mossman, took place this past July and it was HOT! (Outside and in!) We had great attendance, a full house at times, and everyone was in the mood for celebrating peace and music. Blue Stem performed a lovely set of tunes with jazz, blues, and country stylings, told jokes, stories, and even had a yodeling performance. An extra treat was friends Katia and Larry who captured the crowd with their vocal/guitar performance. At the end, the audience took part in a group sing-along of peace standards, such as "If I Had a Hammer," and the feeling of togetherness and enjoyment was palpable. The success of the event was also due in great part to Tom Gilsean at Uptown Bill's, who showed great effort and generosity in setting up the room and tables with flowers and coloring materials for any children, making it a cozy and inviting environment for all. Many were generous with their time, effort, volunteering, and donations, and the result was an afternoon of wonderful music, homemade treats, community, and peace. Thanks to all who helped make it happen! It was a special event for all who attended and PEACE Iowa was able to raise over \$500. (With 15% being donated back to Uptown Bill's.) Look for it again next year! ☺



Blue Stem Trio and friends performed at a PEACE Iowa benefit concert.

## PEACE Iowa Booth Engages Soul Fest Visitors

Lori Nelson

At the PEACE Iowa booth at Soul Fest in downtown Iowa City in August, visitors were invited to play a game involving spinning a large color wheel. Younger children were asked questions about responding to common situations in a peaceful way. Older children and adults were asked questions about nonviolence in the civil rights movement. Correct answers were rewarded with a peace stamp on the visitor's hand and/or a small chocolate candy.

Another activity at the booth challenged visitors to identify three African countries on an unlabeled map. Both activities attracted a wide variety of visitors and stimulated conversations. The map activity led many people—including otherwise well-educated adults—to realize how little they knew about Africa, and to discuss why. Three energetic high school students assisted in staffing the booth. This is the second year PEACE Iowa has set up a booth at Soul Fest, and given its popularity, we plan to make it an annual event. ☺



### Donations needed

PEACE Iowa is a grassroots organization funded solely by donations from local individuals and organizations. If you wish to donate to support the work of PEACE Iowa, you may send a check to: PEACE Iowa, 26 E. Market Street, Iowa City, IA 52245

## Interfaith World Peace Prayer and Flag Ceremony

On May 17, 2015, PEACE Iowa participated in the World Peace Prayer and Flag Ceremony organized by a local member of the World Peace Prayer Society, an organization associated with the United Nations that installs peace poles around the world. The interfaith ceremony is performed on the same day around the world annually to celebrate the oneness of humanity and to express the wish for peace to prevail in every country of the world. Chiyomi of WPPS presented a desktop peace pole to PEACE Iowa at the ceremony. ☺



### Volunteers

Almost all of the work of PEACE Iowa is performed by volunteers. If you have time or talents you would like to share with PEACE Iowa, please contact us at [peaceiowa@gmail.com](mailto:peaceiowa@gmail.com).