



Merrimack Valley People For Peace

Serving the communities of the Merrimack Valley

Merrimack Valley People for Peace, Inc. works for a sustainable future for all life on our planet. Our members commit themselves to the interrelated activities of education for peace and justice, the prevention of war, an end to arms sales, the abolition of nuclear weapons, and protection of the environment.

December 2008 -- July 2009

Merrimack Valley People for Peace joins the United Nations and peacemakers around the world in proclaiming the years 2001-2010 to be the "International Decade for the Culture of Peace."

GOOD NEWS

Student Granted Asylum in the US

Mario Rodas, the Chelsea High School honors graduate facing deportation to his native country Guatemala, was granted asylum in the US last December after three years of struggle. Many citizens and community groups, including MVPP, have actively worked to rally local and State elected officials to Mario's cause. Mario was the guest speaker at the MVPP 2006 annual meeting. His story and his gentle but resolute personality led many in the audience to intensify their understanding that immigration reform must become one of the priorities in MVPP's ongoing work.

The day he was granted asylum in the US, Mario sent out an exuberant and moving e-mail to all who had supported him and worked on his behalf, inviting all to a celebration party. In his letter, he said: "Because of your work, we succeeded in getting my court date delayed for 6 months. I never imagined this would be possible. Almost 3 years later, after many days in courts, I want to communicate to you that as of today with great gratitude, I have been granted asylum here in the US. I am extremely grateful and overwhelmed for all of your support and I know that this would not have happened without you. From the bottom, of my heart: thank you, thank you, thank you!"

Senator Franken

Al Franken will be the 60th Democratic Senator. In Minnesota, on June 30 (Iraqi Sovereignty Day), the Republican, Norm Coleman conceded the election after an eight month court fight. Now Democrats have the votes to prevent filibuster, and another peace advocate is in a position to vote effectively. May he be among the ones who are not going to disappoint us.

MIT architect helps in Haiti.

MIT professor of architecture Jan Wampler together with four of his undergraduates and with Haitian born Green-Rainbow party activist Gerthy Lahens, is working on a project for a sustainable village in Arcahaie, Haiti. Wampler intends to work with local workers and to use the limited local resources. "The poor have only one house. They should have the best architecture, not makeshift architecture", says Wampler, well known for his work in different parts of the world hit by poverty or natural disasters, and for prizing people before profit. He has been inspired for the Haiti project by Ms Lahens, a former MIT research fellow with an impressive history of partnering with professors and students at the institute for the betterment of her ravaged homeland.
community.green-rainbow.org/?q=node/64

DU research

The Norwegian government has agreed to fund three ICBUW research projects in an effort to increase the international com-

munity's understanding of the impact and proliferation of uranium weapons. This greatly adds to the 'respectability' of arguments against DU. 1 April 2009 - ICBUW (International Coalition to Ban Depleted Uranium)
www.bandepleteduranium.org/en/a/267.html

Helping Independent Media in Pakistan

The Ploughshares Fund made a grant to the Internews Network to defuse the conflict along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. It will fund cellular transmission equipment and training to local journalists in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Independent newscasts could counter the hate speech that dominates local radio and inflames conflict in a volatile, nuclear armed region. (Thanks to Mary Todd for this article.)

LaOnf Wins 2009 Pfeffer Peace Prize

The the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) has awarded the 2009 International Pfeffer Peace Prize, "to honor those around the world working for peace with justice," to the LaOnf network of Iraqi nonviolence communities.

LaOnf ("No Violence" in Arabic) is a coalition of organizations and individuals who have joined together to promote nonviolence as the most effective way to work for a democratic and peaceful Iraq, free of foreign occupation. Since 2005 when it was founded, the group has grown from a handful of visionaries

MVPP Meeting – August 25, 7:30 PM First United Methodist Church, N Andover

<http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/>

You can view newsletters on line (where most links work) at <http://www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/oldmins.htm>

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to a network of more than 100 organizations. Members include a diversity of men and women of all ages from Iraq's many ethnic and religious groups, united by their commitment to nonviolence and reconciliation.

Senate Voted to End Production of the F-22 Fighter Jet

On July 21., the Senate voted 58 to 40 to strike down 1.75 billion US dollars in the fiscal 2010 defense budget bill that would fund more F-22 fighter jets. The vote was hailed by President Obama, who earlier had promised to veto any Congress budget proposal that allows for more money for the program. Though 500 of the less expensive plane, the F-35, will still be produced, this legislation restrains excessive defense spending. Maybe it frees more for stimulus investment.

Aurelian Honor Society Award for Eli Grober

This year's prestigious Aurelian Honor Society Award at Phillips Academy, Andover, was bestowed on graduate Eli Grober during the commencement ceremonies on June 7. It is being "awarded to a member of the graduating class who, in the opinion of the faculty and fellow classmates, is outstanding in sterling character, high scholarship, and forceful leadership." Eli, whom many of us know and love since the time when he was twelve and came to vigil with us, graduated cum laude and soon will start his first semester at Columbia University, in New York. We wish him a lot of success and luck in this new period of his life, and hope that he will always work for peace and justice.



Actions

Gaza Crisis

In January we sent out the following Press Release:

A statement by the Merrimack Valley People for Peace of North Andover, Massachusetts, USA regarding the immediate crisis in Gaza.

The Merrimack Valley People for Peace (MVPP) mourns with those in the Middle Est who are suffering the loss of loved ones and living in fear and desperation.

MVPP, agreeing with Albert Einstein's definition of insanity: "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results," calls for an immediate cease-fire by Palestinians and Israelis to end the insanity that has overtaken them.

MVPP stands in solidarity with those Palestinians and Israelis who are working nonviolently to bring peace and reconciliation to their people.

Why we Still Vigil flier updated

Mary, Masood, and Don updated the flier originally written in 2003 and updated in 2005. Mary has printed copies and you can print your own from our site:

www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/ystill.htm

Some reformatting may be necessary.

Summaries of Recent Meetings.

January 9, 2009

January Pot Luck – business meeting followed

15 refugees from Iraq were guests. They left before the business meeting.

Announcements:

The Fund for Reconciliation is sponsoring a program entitled, "What Can We Do? The Israeli/Palestinian Peace Process – U.S. Policy and Beyond" on January 24th from 3-5 PM at the First Universalist Church in Essex. Members of the group were encouraged to attend.

Richard noted that Combatants for Peace, Israeli and Palestinian (former) fighters who are working on reconciliation in both Palestine and Israel, will visit his class at the University of Mass, Lowell.

Terry Rockefeller will make a presentation about LaOnf in Iraq on February 24th at the First United Methodist Church in North Andover. Other groups are being invited to co-sponsor the group and more information will be provided.

The group voted to co-sponsor the letter to Obama on the Israel-Palestine issue.

On January 14 legislation will be introduced to the Massachusetts legislature to bring the National Guard home. There is no authorization for them to be there. Please contact your State senators and representatives to co-sponsor this bill.

Veterans for Peace want to sponsor a residence for veterans who have substance abuse issues like Phoenix House that uses the tough love approach with veterans. Pat will have more information later.

Jim Todd was nominated to be on MVPP's Board of Directors.

January 27, 2009

Mary read several thank you notes from organizations that had received money from MVPP. It was also noted that Military Families Speak Out is looking for someone to fill a position of national director of the organization.

Weekly Vigils

Andover: Sunday, noon-1 pm; Shawsheen Square, Junction of Routes 133 and 28; Lawrence Friends Meeting/ Shawsheen Peace Witness; Allan Sifferlen, asifferlen@sbra.com.

Andover: Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 7-8 pm; Saturday, 10:45 am-noon (in good weather, 10-noon); Old Town Hall, 20 Main St.; Merrimack Valley People for Peace; Lou Bernieri, lbernieri@andover.edu.

Andover: Tuesday, 6:30-7:30 am; in front of Raytheon plant near Routes 133 and 93; Raytheon Peacemakers; Arthur Brien, 978-686-4418.

Gloucester: Saturday, noon-1 pm; Grant Circle.

Marblehead: Tuesday, 6:30-7:19pm in front of the high school and Community Center at the lights at the intersection of Humphrey-Pleasant and Lafayette Sts.; Tom Gale, 781-631-1218.

Nashua, NH in front of Nashua City Hall from 11 to Noon every Sat. www.nashuapeace.org

Newburyport: Sunday, noon-1 pm; Market Square; Niki Rosen, 978-463-3208.

Reading: 2nd Saturday/each month, 11 am-noon; Reading Square; Reading People for Peace; Bob Connor, bobconnor1@yahoo.com.

Rockport: Wednesday, noon-1 pm; First Congregational Church (silent for peace).

Salem, MA: Saturday, 11-noon; Riley Plaza (by the Post Office).

Mary distributed a sign up sheet for people at the meeting for who were interested in getting their newsletter by e-mail. All MVPP members are encouraged to help save the organization printing and mailing costs (and trees) by getting their newsletter each month by e-mail. Contact Brian Quirk, at brian@quirk.ws to sign up for e-mail.

We'll send \$100 for Gaza relief. Jane will research organizations that Kathy Kelly supports and will select one. (Jane reported the next day that she had researched several organizations and decided to send the money to the Palestine Children's Relief Fund.)

Six MVPP members attended a Fellowship of Reconciliation event last Saturday in Essex, MA, about a "Peace People to People" program. They reported on the wonderful work FOR is doing.

Terry Rockefeller from September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows" will present a program about their work with LaOnf, a group in Iraq that teaches and practices non-violence. Terry will speak and do a Q & A. We will have coffee and goodies following the program. There will be no business meeting in February as this date falls on our regular meeting date. Any business that needs attention will be done by e-mail and/or phone.

We discussed the wonderful program we had with several refugee families from Iraq earlier in the month. Bobbie reported that they are grateful and had a great time. One of the people who attended – not even an MVPP member – has donated a car to one of the families, and another person is donating a computer to another family. How wonderful! Bobbie reported that many new families from Iraq will be arriving in the Worcester area soon.

We are urged to talk with our congressional representatives about cutting funding for military spending. There is not a bill yet, but Barney Frank is talking about a 25% cut in funding. Please call or write your representatives in support of this initiative when it does happen or encourage them to be a co-sponsor.

MVPP Members of the group working at the Lawrence Technical High School were asked to leave the last time they were at the high school, because they had never been asked to have a CORI check. Jim will meet with the principal to talk about these results. Jane volunteered to go to the high school with Jim.

The "Why We Still Vigil" needs to be updated. Masood and Mary will work on this and they will ask another member to join them for a revision

Masood updated us on the issues in Pakistan and his family there.

March 24, 2009

We shared impressions about the LaOnf event. One of the highlights was talking with one of the Iraqi refugees. The program focused on Northern Iraq. We learned about how dangerous fire-works can be in a war zone. Having many co-sponsors increased attendance. We had a good turnout. It was refreshing to meet a world peace crusader. Many thanks to Jane and Brian for publicity.

On the 6th anniversary of the war Andover vigil participants shared the space libertarians who were there to protest against Bank of America and capitalism as well. There were lots of honks for MVPP. There was Lawrence Eagle Tribune publicity.

There was correspondence from Jacob Zar. "Greetings from one of MVPP's oldest members." Both are well in California. He writes a blog for peace. People and peace groups and religious congregation should call for a boycott. Brian posted the blog on the MVPP site. www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/links.htm

Bobbie asked for some guidance around Rise-Up (our e-mail network), what editors should pass on?

Note was made that both Mary Kate Small and Richard Hudak had surgery.

UJP REPORT: Bobbie – Big push to support Bernie Frank and his support of a 25% reduction in defense. Get it on the agenda in June. There is also an effort to coordinate peace groups. Coordinate with Susan Lees. Boryana represents MVPP. We need to understand what is going on in Afghanistan. Are we interested in a 30 minute power-point presentation? Yes. Fact sheets were passed around.

To continue to receive this newsletter... **We Invite You to Join /Rejoin Us**

\$20.00 Individual

\$10.00 Student/Senior

\$30.00 Family

Circle One

\$50.00 Supporting

\$75.00 Sustaining

\$100.00 Peacemaker

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ E-Mail _____ Date _____

Return to MVPP is registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions to MVPP are tax P.O. Box 573 deductible. Last year, approximately one-third of our members joined/renewed at higher than North Andover, MA 01845 the basic rate. **Check here [] if you prefer to receive your newsletter via e-mail.**

DU – Brian and Jane’s letters on DU were in the North Andover Citizen. One man was incensed. He responded from California. He accused Jane of lying. He claimed Jane was misinformed. You can read the letters at www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/depleteduranium.htm.

PAX CHRISTI – Jane reported many developments, starting with DIME (Dense, Inert, Metal Explosion). Jane explained the weapon’s nature and how doctors do not know how to deal with the injuries and amputations resulting from the weapon’s use. DIME was used as a part of the Gaza conflagration. She mentioned Kathy Kelley, and the High School Youth conference at Contookook, NH. The high school has a peace club of about 30 youth.

There was a Nuclear Disarmament Campaign on March 13. Military generals are saying to work on “nuclear disarmament,” work together as a world seriously looking at getting to zero. There is new thinking in the White House, even “hawk” support. There needs to be grass roots support for this effort. Arthur suggested e-mails to the MA Convention.

We voted to have MVPP support the PAX CHRISTI initiative.

Jane was asked to be the point person to keep in touch with Pax Christi on these issues

IRAQI FRIENDS IN LOWELL Pat McCarron shared about lots of contacts. There is a new Iraqi family. She had him home for a family dinner. Things are leading to a job interview. He is coming to speak at St. Michael’s. Collections of goods have gone to the families. Pat has donated a 1996 Chevy to arrive in April. The new family has two disabled children, 8 and 12. The International Institute is working with the family. Bobbie is also working with them. Parents are also medically challenged. They all have debilitating diseases. The mother is visually impaired. One of the children has times of improving. Mary has also been in touch with an Iraqi doctor. Some of the families need food processors and other furnishings.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS;

We were asked to support the Communities Together (Council of Churches) Peace emphasis during Lent, the Good Friday Death Penalty Vigil, in Reading, and Pat Scanlon’s Concert in Arlington

April 28, 2009

Announcements:

- 1) Kathie reported that there will be a presentation about Afghanistan from a member of UJP at the May meeting.
- 2) MVPP will be represented at the Lowell Folk Festival in late July, and the Bread and Roses Festival on Labor Day costs \$35 to reserve a space and will be coordinated by Boryana (convener), Michael and Brian.
- 3) Barbara reminded people about the National Call-in Day this week to stop nuclear/coal subsidies.
- 4) Pat Scanlon told of the Memorial Day program at Christopher Columbus Park in Boston at noon.

The tentative date for the annual meeting is June 5th. Mary will check on church availability. We’ll invite the Iraqi families for a pot luck dinner and some way for us to have fun and get to know each other. Mary will explore some options and report at the May 26 meeting. The guests will be free to leave before the brief business meeting.

A Nominating Committee was formed. Peter will schedule the first meeting with Barbara and Michael.

Mary reported on her visits with Iraqi families and thanked everyone who had been so generous in their support to help one of the men complete a training program. In addition she and Jane Cadarette met with Jayan Conlin of the Trauma Intervention Program in Methuen. Jayan is a terrific resource.

Possible programs: 1) Barbara has a friend with the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons. There will be a photo exhibit at the United Nations in 2010 and the photos may be brought to Boston. We discussed being a co-sponsor with Grassroots International and perhaps other groups. 2) Winslow Myers, a Beyond War member, has written a book and is a good speaker. He lives in the area and we might partner with the North Shore Coalition to have him speak next fall or next year.

Boryana reported that the **Friends Conference** with UJP was very good.

May 26, 2009

Cole Harrison brought a Powerpoint presentation about Afghanistan which gave a good overview of the history and current situation. The powerpoint is available on the UJP website and is called **“What Are We Doing in Afghanistan/Pakistan.”**

The pot luck dinner and the annual meeting were discussed. Boryana and Peter will help set up. Arthur will help set up or will drive Iraqi families if needed. Arthur volunteered to try to

get a truck from Lazarus House if needed to transport items to Lowell for the Iraqi families.

We decided to have regular meetings throughout the summer months. A table for the Bread and Roses festival on Labor Day is already booked. There is a possible speaker from Beyond War for this fall. The Educating for Peace committee will set a date. There are also people willing to come to talk about the Palestinian issue. The Israel/Palestine Committee will be asked to follow-up. The DU Committee is sharing materials with other communities' DU groups.

A volunteer job fair is being sponsored by "Pennies for Poverty; 2 Cents for Change" in Newburyport in October, and we are asked if we wish to donate \$10 toward grants. We will make a decision at the next meeting.

Seacoast Peace Response is honoring David Diamond and will have a celebration dinner booklet. We voted to send \$25 and Mary Kate and Jane will write an appropriate letter for the occasion.

Barbara noted the wonderful article about the Veterans for Peace Memorial Day program that was on the front page of the Metro section of the Boston Globe. It was a spread on two-pages and had great photos of Pat Scanlon and one of Boryana and Pat on the second page as well as good coverage on the event. Kudos!

Jane suggested we go online to read articles on the Voices for Creative Nonviolence website <http://vcnv.org/>.

Next meeting is the annual meeting and pot luck dinner with our Iraqi friends as guests – Friday, June 5th at 6:30 at First United Methodist Church, 57 Peters Street, North Andover.

June 23, 2009

Cady Landa and Maria Tajeda from UJP made a presentation about the Student Immigration Movement www.simforum.com, which is about undocumented students who are not eligible for federal or state aid in public colleges. There are bills in the MA house and senate which would give students who had completed at least three years of public high school in-state tuition at public colleges and universities. The Governor has promised to sign it. We are encouraged to call our senators and representatives.

We discussed Pat Scanlon's generous offer to host the Iraqi families at his summer place in Maine during August. Many of those present were not available during that time and the group felt they needed more input from other members. We want to be able to provide transportation from Lowell to Maine and back for families in Lowell.

The group decided to contribute \$10 toward the Community Volunteer program in Newburyport in October. Niki is the contact person.

Bobbie is in touch with one of the Iraqi families through her work and she gave us an update of their needs. Mary requested some assistance with the many details of trying to meet the needs of the families.

Plans were made for Hiroshima Day on August 6th. We will have a vigil on that Thursday at 6 PM in Andover Center. (Later changed to 7PM).

The group discussed buying a share of the Peace Abbey. The shares are \$1000 each and, although that is too much for our group, we wondered about going in with other groups to buy a share.

MVPP will have a table again this year at the Lowell Folk Festival July 25th from 11 AM – 5 PM. We will make sure our Iraqi friends know about this fun event and we'll encourage them to come.

Brian and Boryana volunteered to be responsible for staffing the table at the Tommy Sands program on August 20th. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

MVPP will also have a table at Andover Day in September. Boryana will make sure we are all set for that.

Arthur announced that it is time to pay our dues. Please make checks to Merrimack Valley People for Peace and send to MVPP, P.O. Box 573, North Andover, MA 01845. (Use the form in this newsletter on page 4)

Recent Events

LaOnf, Iraqi peace group.

February 24, Terry Rockefeller of September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, spoke and showed a film of local peace group efforts to peacefully settle conflicts in Northern Iraq. The Iraqi organization LaOnf was shown encouraging discussions between enemies, and other activities.

Since we had asked many to cosponsor, we had many people from other groups, and the discussion was interesting. At the end we had refreshments.

Memorial Day

Veterans for Peace organized the second annual Memorial Day commemoration on the Boston waterfront. Speakers from Veterans for Peace and Military Families Speak Out pointed out the situations veterans face, and a ceremony of many volunteers throwing flowers into the harbor honored those lost in Iraq.

Pat Scanlon got many from MVPP involved. The Boston Globe wrote of it the next day and their article is copied to the MVPP website at www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/Memorial09.htm.

David Diamond Honored

June 14, MVPP members Barbara Haack, Niki Rosen and Jane Cadarette went to the Strawberry Banke Museum Visitors Center in Portsmouth, NH. The Seacoast Peace Response held a celebration honoring David Diamond, long time peace and justice activist.

MVPP at our May meeting had authorized \$25 for an ad in the program booklet, and we donated a peace flag to a raffle.

The celebration was a wonderful event, with the Leftist Marching Band (<http://leftistmarchingband.org/music.html#Sounds>), potluck, a video, Middle Eastern drumming, and an awards presentation.

MVPP Annual Meeting

We invited the Iraqi refugees from Lowell, and got to know them better.

Lowell Folk Festival

We set up our table and tent west of Boarding House Park and had many interesting conversations with festival goers.

Coming Events

Hiroshima Vigil August 6

Andover Old Town Hall 7PM. Bring a sign and a candle to remember those killed in the nuclear holocaust, and to urge all to not use nuclear weapons.

Tommy Sands, from Northern Ireland, will be singing in Ipswich August 20. see www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/events.htm (ed. Missed in printed version)

Bread and Roses Festival, 9/7/2009, Campagnone Common Lawrence, 11 to 5.

Letters

Palestine

Newburyport Daily News Nov. 24, 2008
Letter to the editor

As this is being written the people of Gaza are being denied critical supplies of food, fuel and medical supplies. This is genocide. Why is there no outcry?

The Palestinians have been robbed of their homes, property, livelihoods and human rights. Why is there no outcry?

Remove the myths and long history of merciless, brutal aggression against Palestinians is revealed. Britain and the United States have fostered and supported this state of siege against the indigenous peoples of the region. Is this bloodshed another means to control the oil fields of the Middle East? Why is there no outcry against it?

Diana Philip, Newburyport

Media Bias

Reading Advocate January 7, 2009
Letter to Editor

I went to a rally on Saturday, January 3, at Copley Square, to show support for the Palestinian people. A crowd of about 2000 people assembled, who listened to speeches and then marched for an hour through Boston. One of the speeches I heard was actually a statement written by Hasidic Jews. Because of the Sabbath, they could not read it themselves. They urged peace and rights for all people, including Palestinians. At the end of the speech a chant was begin, I believe it was "Jews yes, Zionism no."

A significant portion of the crowd was Arab, yet most if not all of the crowd immediately joined in the chant. It was very mov-

ing. My hat's off to the courage of those Hasidic Jews who were willing to take a stand.

When I got home later in the day, I checked for TV coverage. NECN had a spot for a few seconds, but beyond that I saw nothing. I saw nothing in the Sunday Globe either. Why is there such a news blackout on this issue? It leads me to believe that, unfortunately, if people want to find out what is really happening in Palestine and Israel, they will have to search out alternative news sources. The media is presenting a one sided picture, and we are unaware of the mayhem that is being wrought in Palestine. To cite some examples, when was the last time you heard a news story about children having their fingers broken when they threw a rock at a tank, or farmers being shot like ducks at a shooting range when they went out to work the fields, or the need to have fences built overhead to keep garbage and debris from landing on you when you walked by?

There are thousands of other atrocities, large and small, occurring daily in Gaza, but all this is not reported by the press. We have to end the stranglehold that AIPAC and other power brokers have on our media sources if we are going to have a true functioning democracy.

I urge the citizens of Reading to contact Congressman Tierney (6th District) and demand that he help the people of Palestine.

We are watching almost genocidal conditions being imposed on the Palestinian people, and it is being funded with our tax dollars. This "problem" will not be resolved until the Palestinian people are recognized as a state and given some rights. Otherwise, our grandchildren will be watching the same evening news about Israel as we are. Congressman Tierney's office can be reached in Peabody at 978-531-1669. His e-mail is <http://tierney.house.gov/e-mail-john>.

Robert Connor
Reading

To MVPP

Dear Friends,

Greetings from one of your oldest members. Winnie and I are both well and living in an assisted living facility in Chula Vista, California, to be near our daughter. One of my life long passions has been peace. I have written some peace blogs which can be accessed at www.end-wars.blogspot.com. Governments have not been able to end war. It is up to the people to do it. My blog shows how peace groups and religious organizations can cooperate to call for a boycott against nations or businesses that foment war.

I am hoping that the members of MVPP will read these blogs and pass on the URL to other organizations. Up to now our main effort has been to try to get the government to bring peace. That has not succeeded. Governments love war. It brings them fame and glory and takes the people's minds off the failures of the capitalist system. It substitutes false slogans like "the land of the free and the home of the brave" for realistic appraisals of their actions. It is time for the people to take the initiative. My blogs deal with this matter. So please give my regards to my friends back east. Ask them to read my message and pass the word on to other organizations. Maybe we can finally do something effective.

With all my hopes and love.
Jacob Zar

WHAT ARE THE TRUE COSTS OF GUNS?

Gloucester Times June 10, 2009

Letter to the Editor

In 1999 I wrote an article for this paper about the context in which the Second Amendment was presented to the American people. Revisiting what I wrote, I found that I said groups called anti-Federalists were suspicious of standing armies called for in the ratification of the Constitution, remembering the oppression of British troops. The Amendment was intended to prevent the federal government from passing laws that would disarm the state militias that were made up of ordinary citizens who served as part-time soldiers. The right to keep and bear arms in those militias was the issue.

After all, there were no established police forces, National Guard nor a standing army when our county was founded. The Amendment stated, "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

These were organized forces regulated by the state governments. Keeping people in line and bringing a sense of safety were essential but establishing a sense of boundaries went along with this. The militia were intended to be "well-regulated". Without such behavioral boundaries, a frontier mentality might have ruled supreme for decades. If a creature out there in the distance looked menacing, a gun would come out of its holster and the threat would be erased.

To my disbelief, a recent ruling by the Massachusetts Judicial Court stated that the possession of an illegal weapon is a "passive and victimless crime". That seemed to contradict the idea of a modern-day, functioning society, rather than a far earlier one that was still experimenting with the terms of the Constitution which had been presented to the citizens with the primacy of the rule of law foremost.

If guns had been thought to pose no threat, a victim could take the place of a live human being in no time if he or she didn't pass muster. Returning to the present with some facts in mind, how well has this supposedly maturing country done when the statistic is confronted that 120,000 Americans have been killed in non-terror related homicides since 9/11/01? Bob Herbert reported this in The NY Times, saying the figure is nearly 25 times the number killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. He points out in another article that 70,000 have been injured but haven't died with 3,000 of those being children.

Closer at hand, on May 21st, a mother of three children was shot as she sat on her front porch with them. Two men on bikes rode off. In the same month a 16 or 17-year-old boy fired a gun through the window of a liquor store in Dorchester impairing a toddler and a woman.

These are just two of a number of heart wrenching examples of a culture increasingly without those boundaries that are essential. This past month, an amendment to a bill concerning credit cards, stated that people could carry loaded weapons in national parks, including AK-47s. According to Derrick Jackson in May 26th's Boston Globe, The Fraternal Order of Police and the National Association of Park Rangers feel this law puts them at risk in the face of armed, possibly angry visitors. Poachers of rare resources could be there, too. It was said that instead of the possession of a gun being an offense as it always has been in national parks, they'd have to wait until likely damage is done

and the damage could include them. "Ah, but you're leaving out the crowd that hunts and the need for self-defense in our homes and yards." The latter point is a possible miscalculation. The Harvard School of Public Health reports that a gun in the home triples the likelihood of a homicide, and is 43 times more likely to kill a friend or relative than an intruder. How many mishaps come about when hunters are on the loose? It's important to take a long look.

There are 280 million guns in this country. Hasn't the time come to weigh their costs in human lives? Scientists are discovering that we're hard-wired for cooperation and caring, not for a frontiersman's fight or flight response. The old-style right to bear arms in a well-regulated militia doesn't obtain when citizens can brandish guns on their own, too often with no discretion or oversight. Guns without checks and balances, can and do maim and kill. Our neighborhoods must not be like war zones.

Consider that the U.S. has the largest collection of armaments in the world along with sophisticated police forces and National Guardsmen. It's later than late to grow beyond the outmoded mindset of having a right to keep and bear guns as citizen soldiers and be part of a culture increasingly dedicated to the fostering of our innate qualities of cooperation along with the ability to resolve conflict without violence. This will require dedication and hard work but our world and its people can then endure, not meet their demise because of guns and bombs.

Cynthia Fisk
Gloucester, MA 01930

At the Curb

One Saturday, when the Old Town Hall was crowded with town politics, I was out with my flag at the parking lot near the Andover Bookstore. A man parked and talked for a moment, saying six years ago he disagreed with us, but not any more. Ten minutes after he left he gave me ten Dunkin Donuts gift certificates to share with the others who vigil. Thank you whoever you were!

Brian Quirk

Electronic Newsletter

This newsletter is available on the web as a pdf. You can view newsletters back to 2003. www.merrimackvalleypeopleforpeace.org/index.htm On the menu at the left, click "Newsletter" or "archived minutes and newsletters."

The pdf newsletters have working links, and a table of contents that can jump to your article, as well as pdf search tools.

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Please use the form in this newsletter (page 4).

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A link to all in US legislature:

<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/legbranch/legbranch.html>

How Senators and Representatives voted:

Senate: http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/legislative/a_three_sections_with_teasers/votes.htm
House: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2004/index.asp>

State Voting Information: Look up who you vote for at
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