

ALTERNATIVES

SPRING/SUMMER 2014

From Our Director:



As I write this, even over a month later I am still basking in the glow of our annual April event which commemorates Sister Karen's journey to God and raises funds to keep her vision alive through the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence.

The Reverend John Dear is a gifted speaker (you can read about his presentation on the following page), but even more of a gift is the opportunity we have at our event to gather with all of you, our treasured supporters. Your commitment to the mission of the Sister Karen Center shines bright in your faces as we share and confirm our faith in the transforming power of nonviolence up close and personal! We are touched!

We do have a lot to share. I'm always amazed at how quickly the blank newsletter pages get filled with all that's going on. So enjoy the newsletter. And please, keep in touch!

In friendship,

Vivian

Vivian Ruth Waltz
Director



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In This Issue

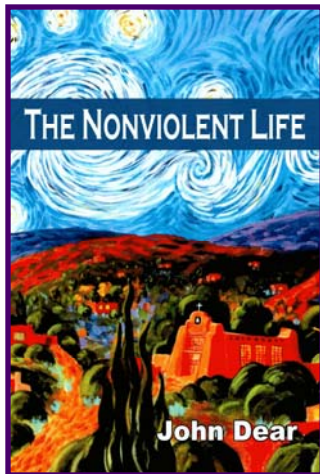
John Dear Event.....	pg. 2
Peacemakers Grant.....	pg. 3
Peace Education Project.....	pg. 4
Peaceprints Project.....	pg. 4-5
Campaign Nonviolence.....	pg. 5
Photos from April Event.....	pgs. 6-7
AVP News.....	pgs. 8-9
Community Peace Memorial.....	pg. 10
Camp Peaceprints.....	pg. 11

***** Save the Center's resources
for the work of nonviolence! *****

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**Send request to
vivian@sisterkarencenter.org**

“The Nonviolent Life” with Rev. John Dear



Palm Sunday evening, April 13th, brought the Reverend John Dear to Medaille College for “The Nonviolent Life,” the seventh annual fundraising event for the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence. His passionate, powerful and at times humorous presentation focused on his own life’s journey as a person of nonviolence, and how we can join him in working for a more nonviolent world. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu once told John about the work for peace, “Keep on! Every day!” John took frequent opportunities to remind us that Sister Karen lived that life of unwavering commitment to peace and nonviolence.

As put forth in his latest book *The Nonviolent Life*, John explained that the life of nonviolence requires three simultaneous attributes: being nonviolent toward ourselves; being nonviolent to all people, all creatures, and all creation; and joining the global grassroots movement of nonviolence. He stressed that we have to be relearning and practicing nonviolence continually because there is so much violence surrounding us, particularly in the global conflicts that the United States has perpetuated. In his travels around the world, John visited Iraq where he found children mystified by our country’s aggression. In Afghanistan, young girls surrounded him singing “We Shall Overcome” in their native language.

The occasion of Palm Sunday brought particular meaning for us as John elucidated the gospel of nonviolence. As foretold by the prophet Zechariah, Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey demonstrated his humility and nonviolent spirit in stark contrast to the Roman soldiers and their weapons. John used the occasion of Jesus turning over the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple to demonstrate that Jesus was a nonviolent activist. Nonviolence must not be passive in the face of injustice.

A special part of the event was the presence of members of the Buffalo Peacemakers Gang Intervention and Outreach Program. John drew parallels between violence in the inner city and the violence of wars around the world where domination and abuse lead to poverty and violence as a way of life. Supervising Peacemaker Pastor James Giles presented John with a Buffalo Peacemakers t-shirt with gratitude for the inspiration to continue working on the streets of Buffalo. Pastor Giles assured John that the Peacemakers will be praying for him.

Sister Jean Klimczak presented John with the book *Peaceprints: Sister Karen's Paths to Nonviolence* after which there was a time for questions and answers. While John was signing his book for those who purchased it, a reception with beautifully presented food gave an opportunity for people to fellowship together and share how meaningful the event was for them.

Our annual event was a success in every way! Our thanks go out to the event committee: Sister Jean Klimczak, Kate Mang, Sister Bea Manzella, Marilyn Peterson, Sister Roz Rosolowski, Maureen Satchell, Sister Elizabeth Savage and Vivian Waltz.

See photographs on pages 6 and 7!

NYS Grant Expands Work of Buffalo Peacemakers

On February 5th, New York State Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffero, announced a major state investment that will be directed to Western New York to help improve the safety and quality of life in Buffalo neighborhoods. A grant of \$366,400 has been awarded through the state's Operation SNUG program (GUNS spelled backward) to support a targeted neighborhood violence prevention project. New York State will direct Operation SNUG funding to Back to Basics Outreach Ministries to establish a Curb Violence gang intervention program – which will be supported by the Buffalo Peacemakers Gang Intervention and Outreach Program. This money will fund the expansion of the staff of the Peacemakers in order to increase life-saving work to prevent shootings and other violent crime, while seeking to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods throughout Buffalo.

The Buffalo Peacemakers Program brings together six existing peacemaking groups—Back to Basics Outreach Ministries, Buffalo United Front, F.A.T.H.E.R.S., MAD DADS, No More Tears and Stop the Violence Coalition—to intervene in potentially violent situations with youth in or at risk of joining gangs. The Peacemakers also work with family and friends who have lost a loved one to violence, as well as protect the community at public events.

Sister Karen Center Director Vivian Waltz sits on the Advisory Committee of the Buffalo Peacemakers. By coordinating training through Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) workshops, the Sister Karen Center continues to be a vital collaborator in the Peacemakers program. AVP workshops build community among the Peacemakers and provide a forum to explore issues related to conflict in their work. The training also allows them to practice skills that lead to nonviolent solutions to situations they encounter with youth on the streets of Buffalo.

The budget of the Operation SNUG grant includes the continuation and expansion of training in the Alternatives to Violence Project by the Sister Karen Center.



Senator Tim Kennedy with the Peacemakers



Senator Kennedy and Vivian Waltz

***Members of the Advisory Board of the
SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence are:
Matthew Becton; Jean Klimczak, OSF; James Mang, SSJA;
Judy Major, SSJA; Bea Manzella, SSJ; William F. Marx; Marilyn Peterson;
Maureen Satchell, SSJA; Elizabeth Savage, SSJ and Jean Marie Zirnheld, SSJ***

Peace Education Project – A Beacon of Hope

The Peace Education Project (PEP), a collaboration including the Interfaith Peace Network, the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence, Stop The Violence Coalition, and WNY Peace Center, brings Peace Education into Buffalo schools. The need is huge.

While challenges abound – such as the violence in our society which too often translates to acts of violence by students their age, the youth's difficulty focusing, the programmatic confinements of the school day, and the inadequate degree of resources – delivering the program is frequently an uplifting experience. Presented with positive ideals and adults who care, youth often show real interest in and awareness of the subject. For example, presented with the A-B-C-D-E's of Problem Solving, a group decided they wanted to go through the entire remainder of the alphabet with other problem-solving strategies. They picked excellent ones, too! Also, 7th and 8th graders in the program who were asked what Peace Education means to them, said:

- learning how to be kind and not only to respect others but to respect yourself.
- how to deal with our own problems.
- how to not be violent and to be nonviolent instead.
- how to help other people especially when the other person is sad.
- to care about each other and love each other.
- about respect and responsibility in a safe environment.
- a group of people who talk about positive things and work on skills to be a better person.

PEP exercises lead to experiential learning, and the safe space encourages discussions of personal and community issues. PEP provides tools and inspiration for the most important of our Beloved Community: Our Children.

Victoria Ross, Peaceful Conflict Resolution Consultant
WNY Peace Center; Interfaith Peace Network



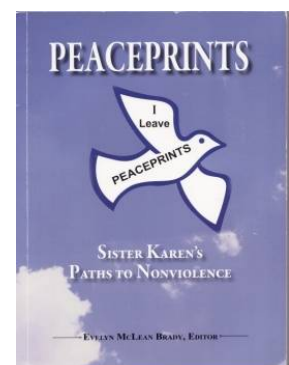
*Math, Science, Technology School
girls with Victoria Ross*



MST boys with Vivian Waltz

The Peaceprints Project Continues

The Peaceprints Project uses the book *Peaceprints: Sister Karen's Paths to Nonviolence* and its accompanying lessons to bring themes of peace, reconciliation, forgiveness, alternatives to violence, tolerance and "second chances" to students in grades 7-12. Through discussions, art work, readings and writing of poetry, stories and reflections, the project encourages the students' desires for peace and nonviolence within themselves and in their circles of family, friends, schools, and society.



Excerpts from thank-you notes for the
Peaceprints Project from students at Nardin Academy



"Sister Karen was a kind, gentle, and loving woman and I am happy we were able to learn about her movement for peace and nonviolence...Sincerely, Serena"

"The most important thing I learned was to be respectful of others and not to judge others because of their backgrounds or what they did. Sister Karen changed my view of people who have been in prison...Thank you! Kayleigh"

"I will challenge myself to be more understanding of those who make the wrong choice when it comes to violence because the decision can be hard...Thank you, Shannon."

"I learned many new things about forgiveness that I never knew could be summarized in the realm of nonviolence...I have tried harder to evaluate my own reaction to conflict...Sincerely, Emma"

"This activity challenged me to keep an open mind and really listen to my classmates and their individual perspectives...Thank you again, Gabby"

"You made me and my friends realize that our arguments are silly and we need to face and solve the problems...Iman"

"It's important to know that even though bad things happen, good things are always there to counteract the violence...Thank you for teaching me about myself and what I can do...Molly"

"Your insights on forgiveness, which seemed to all be done in the blessed name of Sister Karen, will help me in my relationships and in life...Sincerely, Andrea"

"Sister Karen's story touched me the most. She was extremely brave to live with the men out of prison and help them get another chance. Her death is truly a tragedy, but her soul lives on and inspires many. I will work on leaving peaceprints...From Rachel"



John Dear was the perfect speaker April 13th to unite all of us striving to live Sister Karen Klimczak's legacy of nonviolence. Part of his message was to ask us all to join Pace e Bene's (peace and good will) Campaign Nonviolence. Campaign Nonviolence is an international movement initiated to take a stand against the widespread violence and injustice we face today by promoting and activating the power of nonviolence in our lives, our communities, our nation, and our world. Campaign Nonviolence quotes Martin Luther King, "The choice humanity faces is no longer violence or nonviolence – it is nonviolence or nonexistence."

At a time of permanent war, of the threat to civil liberties, of growing poverty, of ecological devastation, and of the urgent need to mend many forms of bitter structural brokenness that spell despair for millions of women, children and men; humanity faces the challenge and opportunity to choose powerful and creative nonviolent alternatives. Fortunately we are in an era when, despite its tremendous violence, a deep historical shift is taking place in support of the cooperative power of active, transformative and effective nonviolence.

To join, support or stay posted on Buffalo's Campaign Nonviolence events that will be part of the international kick-off week of September 21--27, 2014 (starting on the International Day of Peace) in hundreds of cities contact Tom Casey caseytpc@aol.com (716-491-9172). For more information visit: <http://paceebene.org/campaign-nonviolence>.



**"The Nonviolent Life"
with John Dear
April 13, 2014**





Opposite page, clockwise from top left: John Dear with the Buffalo Peacemakers; Rebecca Wightman and Tom Casey; Marilyn Peterson and Sr. Karen Shaver; Srs. Jean Marie Zirnheld, Michele Beiter and Mary Jo Colucci; Sr. Jean Klimczak and friends from Ontario; John Dear in wide embrace.

This page, clockwise from top left: Sally Tower, Sr. Maryann Kolb, Sr. Bette DiCesare, Sr. Virginia Young and Jackie O'Donnell; John Dear with Srs. Christelle and Barbara Marie; Matthew Becton; Reception buffet; John Dear and Vivian Waltz; Sr. Bea Manzella and friend.

Alternatives to Violence Project News

199 people have been touched by AVP since our newsletter last fall!

AVP Community Workshops

Three Basic community workshops were held in three different locations. In February, ten people participated in a workshop at St. Mary of the Lake Roman Catholic Church in Hamburg. One of the participants was Ashley Patronski who is the Regional Coordinator for the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition. Ashley will be assisting in the cooperation between AVP and ECRJC programs.

The second AVP workshop took place at the Sister Karen Center in March and brought thirteen participants who hailed from such diverse locales as Forestville, Dansville, Rochester and Grand Island, as well as the greater Buffalo area.

An April workshop was held at Back to Basics Outreach Ministries and brought fourteen volunteers from the Peacemakers Gang Intervention and Outreach Program. Because of the seriousness of their work and the level of their commitment, they reached a deep level of sharing and many expressed that the workshop was a healing experience.



*AVP workshop with
Peacemakers Volunteers*

AVP School Workshops

A dozen young men from St. Joseph Collegiate Institute took the second level AVP workshop in January. They had completed a Basic workshop last July and were ready to further their skills at conflict resolution. At the end of the workshop they created a long list of actions they can take to help the SJCI community.

Harvest House was the host site for the junior retreat for Mount Mercy Academy. Fifty-four young women participated in a mini-AVP workshop during the school day. A pizza lunch was enjoyed by all!



*Young men from SJCI attempt
to unravel a "pretzel"*



*The mission of the
Alternatives to Violence
Project is to empower
people to lead nonviolent
lives through affirmation,
respect for all, community
building, cooperation, and
trust. Founded in and
developed from the real
life experiences of prisoners
and others, and building
on a spiritual base, AVP
encourages every person's
innate power to positively
transform themselves
and the world.*

A Basic (Level I) AVP workshop will be offered on August 8-9 at St. Columba-Brigid Church, 418 N. Division Street in Buffalo. To register, write to vivian@sisterkarencenter.org or call 362.9688.

AVP Prison Workshops by Tino Bellanca and Bill Marx

It's Sunday afternoon, the end of two three-day workshops searching for alternatives to violence. The setting is the Wende State Correctional Facility in Alden, NY. The occasion marks the end of the workshops in a joint graduation and certificate awarding ceremony. Now, a community of inmates which had been built over these three days, are basking in the accomplishments they have achieved. As each graduate of the Alternative to Violence Project workshop approaches the awards table, a jovial chanted rap, based on the good things each personifies, greets them. Their fellow participants join in with appropriate clapping and shouts of encouragement, as they graciously accept their certificates of completion, along with an 'affirmation poster', addressed to them, from all of their new colleagues.



Prison workshops address the needs of our society to reduce recidivism. These are effective and curative. But an opportunity exists here in our city of Buffalo for the prevention of the violence which populates our prisons. Reaching out to school-age participants and the general community to which the Sister Karen Center is directed must be expanded if we are to accomplish the goals of a peace-filled community.

Help us to further the AVP work which began in a New York prison forty years ago. This work has spread throughout the States and into over 50 foreign countries. We can expand it here in Western New York with community volunteers who first attend an AVP workshop, then train as facilitators. Become an AVP volunteer. The personal rewards you will experience are far greater than the effort you will invest. The goal of attaining a nonviolent City is worth it.

A big THANK YOU goes out to our volunteer AVP facilitators for the last series of workshops: Tino Bellanca, Jan Burns, BaBa Eng, Heidi Jones, Audrey Mang, Kate Mang, Bill Marx and Victoria Ross. We also appreciate help with meals provided by Tino Bellanca and Kate Mang.

Sister Karen Center joins VOICE-Buffalo in Restorative Justice Movement



*Sister Karen Center friends
Karima Amin and Baba Eng
in Peace Circle Training*

Our Director Vivian Waltz is in the process of training to be a Peace Circle Keeper with VOICE-Buffalo's Restorative Justice initiative. Restorative justice is an approach to justice that focuses on the needs of the victims and the offenders, as well as the involved community. Peace Circles create sacred spaces for healing, accountability and rebalancing harmful relationships. The new Code of Conduct of the Buffalo School District includes restorative justice as an alternative to suspensions. We plan to use Peace Circles to address disciplinary issues in the schools.

We are grateful to the following Sisters of St. Joseph who stuffed, labeled and sealed envelopes for our last mailing. All in record time!

Sisters: Philip Marie Cirincione, Phyllis Connors, Dorothy DeMaria, Mary Glose, Ruth Haselbauer, Ann Therese Hedges, Marie Kerwin, Monica Krupinski, Marion Zimmer, and Laurenita Zogby. Ann Alexander and Anne Painter also helped.



Words Spoken at Community Peace Memorial for Ameer Al Shammari, 13 years old

Good evening. My name is Vivian Waltz and I am the Director of the Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence. The Center was borne out of a tragedy as senseless as the death of Ameer Al Shammari. Eight years ago the murder of Sister Karen Klimczak shattered the community just as violently as the murder of Ameer. Buffalo has been outraged at the cruelty and injustice of the killing of both a peace-loving nun and an innocent child.

How do we move on from here? I think we need to acknowledge and accept that anger at the one or ones who perpetrated this act of extreme violence against Ameer is natural. Grief and a sense of profound loss also accompany any tragedy of this magnitude. Fear is another emotion that we must deal with. For those who loved Ameer and those in the community whose hearts have been broken by this child-upon-child violence, what do we do with this jumble of feelings?

I am here to give testimony to what those who loved Sister Karen and were moved by her story did in response to her tragedy. They realized that in order to honor her memory, they needed to respond with the love and peace that defined Sister Karen's life. And I believe we are here this evening to do the same in honor of Ameer.

We often forget that calling for peace is the most courageous act we can take. It's easy to call for revenge, to claim injustice, and to launch an attack. But as Mahatma Gandhi taught us, "An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind."

The life of nonviolence calls us to a higher standard. Peace requires something far more difficult than revenge or merely turning the other cheek; it requires empathizing with the fears and unmet needs that cause people to attack each other. Even in the face of anger, we can lose our desire to retaliate because we can see the human ignorance that caused the child who killed Ameer to attack him. The ultimate spirit of nonviolence sees that every person shares a common humanity.

The more we practice nonviolence in our words, thoughts and actions, the more peaceful will be our inner state. If there is anything Ameer's murder can teach us, it is that in the midst of death, there can be peace and even hope.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream was a manifestation of hope that humanity might one day find the courage to realize that love and nonviolence are not indicators of weakness but gifts of significant strength.

In his great wisdom, Gandhi understood that "Nonviolence is a weapon of the strong." Anger, grief, confusion and fear in the face of this horrible violence are natural, but we must deal with our feelings with care, with love, with tenderness, with nonviolence.

That is how we can show strength and courage in the face of this terrible tragedy. Let us pledge ourselves to being more peaceful and nonviolent each day of our lives in honor of young Ameer Al Shammari. Let us build up our Beloved Community and truly leave Peaceprints in our city. It is the only way we can move from the tragedy of death to the promise of new life. Thank you.

May 10, 2014



SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence
Interfaith Peace Network of Western New York
Western New York Peace Center

CAMP PEACEPRINTS

Alternative Summer Camp for Youth 8 - 13 years old

"Peace Messaging"

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Nonviolence

Activism

Community

Social Change



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Day Camp
Monday - Friday
9 am - 4 pm

July 14 - July 18, 2014

July 21 - July 25, 2014

St. Mary's School for the Deaf
2253 Main Street in Buffalo

For more information:
www.sisterkarencenter.org

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vivian@sisterkarencenter.org

716.884.0582

victoryross9@gmail.com

Seeking Adult Volunteers
and Youth Assistants

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Our Mission Statement

To carry on Sister Karen's vision of a world without violence, the **SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence** is committed to eliminate violence in ourselves, in our society, and in our world. We work to create a nonviolent community in our thinking, our acting, and our relationships.

***The SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence
is a ministry of the Congregation of the
Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates of Buffalo, New York.***