

From Our Director:



There is much for you to celebrate along with us at the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence featured in this newsletter! Our annual event in April was a special time of being together with friends of the Center. We were inspired by Sister Anita Baird, DHM and her belief that "Justice is JUST US!" It was at the event that I announced an extraordinary donation from inmates at Attica Correctional Facility to the Camp Peaceprints scholarship fund. The work of the Buffalo Peacemakers to prevent violence is succeeding and expanding in our region. This fall will bring a special focus on youth in our Alternatives to Violence Project workshops. Although we are sad to close out our year-long collaboration with Unite By Night, we rejoice in the work they have done for and with us. Soon our Camp Peaceprints campers will arrive at St. Mary's School for the Deaf for "Discovering Diversity: An Intercultural Adventure!" Your continued support of all we do is vital to the ministry of nonviolence in our community and beyond. May the months of summer be relaxing and rejuvenating for all!

Vivian

Vivian Ruth Waltz



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Our Advisory Board

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(SSJ Leadership Council liaison)



"Justice is JUST US" **with** **Sr. Anita Baird, DHM**



It was a gorgeous spring day on Sunday, April 7th when we welcomed Sister Anita Baird, DHM from Chicago to Buffalo as the speaker for the annual event of the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence. Hosted by SS. Columba-Brigid Church, Sister Anita's presentation was an inspirational call to seek God's Spirit each new day that "will allow us to put down our fears and to take up LOVE, to be consumed by love... Sister Karen was that hope, that joy, filled with love. She knew God's faithfulness would guide her."



After an opening prayer by the Reverend Antwan Diggs (whom Sister Karen helped years ago through her ministry with formerly incarcerated men at Bissonette House) and singing "This Little Light of Mine," Center director Vivian Waltz celebrated the work of the SSJ Sister Karen Center by sharing highlights of this past year. Alternatives to Violence Project workshops continue at Wende Correctional Facility, in the community with seminarians, and with youth at Compass House Resource Center and Teaching and Restoring Youth (TRY). Camp Peaceprints 2018 touched the lives of 59 children and youth, exploring together "The Language of Peace." Inmates at Attica Correctional Facility recently contributed a large donation for Camp Peaceprints scholarships. Antionette (Tracy) Craig, wife of SSJ Sister Karen Center board member Kali Williams, presented a \$1,000 check for camp scholarships during the event program.

Middle school students from Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts then performed an excerpt from their play "Ruby" about the life of Ruby Bridges, the first African-American student to attend an all-white school in New Orleans in 1960. The cast of four girls included a young Ruby, an older Ruby who reflected on her childhood experience, Ruby's mother Lucille, and Mrs. Henry, Ruby's first grade teacher. When Ruby asked Mrs. Henry about being a teacher, Mrs. Henry told her she had taught overseas in integrated schools. Ruby responded "Then you ain't know nothin bout segregation?" Mrs. Henry replied, "I know that it's wrong." The close relationship between Mrs. Henry and young Ruby was evident even in the short presentation by the BAVPA students.



Sister Elizabeth Savage, SSJ introduced Sister Anita, citing her numerous awards and honors, but more importantly, sharing Sister Anita's motto of faith in God: "Do whatever he tells you!"

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Sister Anita then took the podium and began by thanking the SSJ Sister Karen Center's Advisory Board for our invitation. She also recognized members of the audience from Nardin Academy. Sister Anita's congregation, the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, founded Nardin in Buffalo in 1857.

Noting that we are in the fifth week of Lent, Sister Anita began by talking about the price of love. She believes that practicing love and mercy are the only ways to please God: "Love of neighbor is the pathway to justice and justice is the pathway to peace." Quoting scripture that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends, Sister Anita testified to Sister Karen's passion for equality and justice which was the impetus for her willingness to lay down her life for the least of her brothers and sisters.

Sister Karen worked closely with the African-American community and Sister Anita talked about the evils of modern day segregation, in both Buffalo and Chicago as well as across the nation. Recognizing that we have made significant progress in housing, education, and income disparities, she described how the majority of people of color in this country continue to live in forgotten neighborhoods with failing schools, lack of healthcare, food deserts, and joblessness. Crime is high in these communities because people are desperate and there seems to be no way out. "We can scream to the top of our lungs that 'Black Lives Matter' but the reality is that angry, hopeless black youth and racially-biased law enforcement paint a very different picture... Peace and justice for poor communities is ever elusive."

According to Sister Anita, Sister Karen's martyrdom continuously calls us to put on the mantle of peace. Her lasting legacy is that we are all our brother's and sister's keeper. "Sister Karen's voice was more than the communication of intellectual ideals and spiritual vision. Hers was a call to action... by her example she taught people that there is a way out of violence and despair and that it begins with each one of us." Justice is JUST US!

The sin of racism was the focus of the next part of Sister Anita's presentation. Harkening back to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1967 speech, "Where Do We Go from Here?" she concurs that the effects of hundreds of years of slavery and segregation cannot be wiped away in a generation or two. She talked about how the Christian Church was and is complicit in racism because of the silence of the Church's leadership in the face of continuing injustice.

There has never been a social problem more enduring in the life of our nation than racism, according to Sister Anita. "Let us truly believe that we are in the struggle of our lives. We must determine who we will be as Americans. We must stand up to speak the truth, for future generations, like the young actresses in the play, are depending on us. We cannot remain indifferent. We cannot remain silent... Anything less means that we are dishonoring this woman that we honor today."

Sister Anita continued to call us to be stalwartly committed to the struggle for justice and equality for which Sister Karen gave her life. "We cannot rest until the children in the neighborhoods where Sister Karen lived and walked are no longer imprisoned behind bars of poor education and victimized by an often unjust criminal justice system that incarcerates black and brown bodies, providing free labor for modern-day slave plantations that we call prisons."

It was then that Sister Anita spoke a prophetic message:
"Yet in the spirit of lament, we hold firmly to the belief that God is in our midst, that there is no pain, no hurt, no injustice so deep that God is not deeper."

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Drawing from the depths of God's mercy, Sister Karen was a prophet, according to Sister Anita. "She spoke with the passion and poetry of those anointed by God to preach the good news that justice can and will prevail. We must continue to be challenged by the contagious hope, love, and optimism in the midst of life's daily struggles that Sister Karen exuded in all that she said and did. We've all been given a light that will overcome darkness."

Sister Karen let her light shine! She was the light in the midst of darkness for those who had long given up on life. "She was a mother to the motherless, a friend to the friendless, and a ray of hope to the hopeless." We are to emulate the unwavering faith of Sister Karen, of whom Sister Anita testified: "She listened. God spoke. She acted." Justice is JUST US!



Sister Anita testified to the eternal legacy of Sister Karen's life and ministry. "This woman is now among the saints of glory, this woman is praising God day and night and is interceding for us and for this world, watching over us, loving us, praying for us, challenging us, encouraging us to continue to move forward, to fight the good fight, to keep our hands on the plow and not look back. We have been called; we have been chosen to leave peaceprints wherever we go!"

It was time to sing the "Peaceprints" song as we do every year. Good food and friendship at the reception were enjoyed by all.

*Walk with me, fly with me. Follow the way of love
See the path unfolding now, led on by a dove
Fearing not, we live in trust, listen to the sound:
People singing, people praying. Ways of peace abound!*



*I leave peace prints where I walk
I leave peace prints where I fly
Leave your peace prints where you go
It's easy if you try
I leave peace prints where I live
I leave peace prints where I play
Leave your peace prints where you go
Bringing peace today.*

*Wonder why the fighting ways distract our peaceful lives
The answer lies within our hearts where truth and good survive
All we are and all we have must be left behind
Why not leave a sign of peace, proof of being kind.*

*See the birds, they live outdoors and fly throughout the year
So we must leave our comfort nests to protect what we hold dear
Our neighborhoods, the children know we yearn for peaceful days.
It's time to light the way to peace, our spirits full, ablaze!*





Criminal Justice Task Force Seeks Alternative to School Suspensions

The SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence is a member organization of VOICE-Buffalo. The mission of VOICE-Buffalo is to faithfully bring forth social justice and equity in our region through organized, collective action. The values we share with VOICE are:

- We believe in the **Power of Faith** to unite rather than divide us; our diverse faith traditions call us to act together to improve our communities.
 - We believe in **Justice**. We work to eliminate bias in ourselves and in the systems that structure our way of life.
 - We believe in **Equity**. If we are to overcome systemic oppression, we must address individual needs.
- We believe in **Democracy**. People should have a say in the decisions that affect them.
 - We believe in **Inclusion**. True democracy means that no one is left out.
 - We believe that **Positive Change is Achievable**.

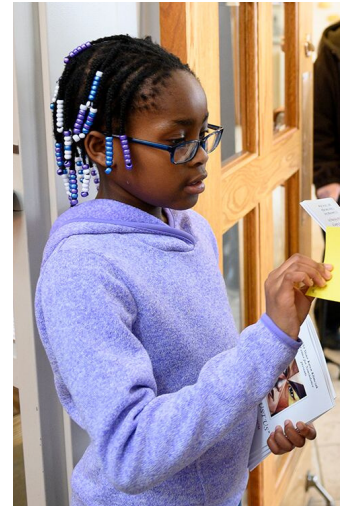
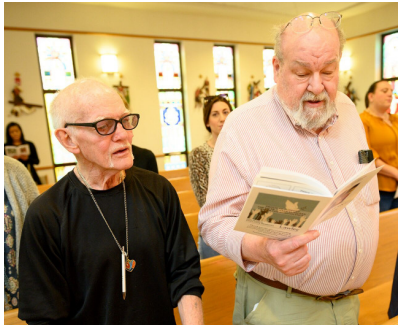
SSJ Sister Karen Center Director Vivian Waltz has recently rejoined the VOICE-Buffalo Criminal Justice Task Force. The specific issue Vivian is called to work on is preventing the school-to-prison pipeline. The SPP is the disproportionate tendency of minors and young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds to become incarcerated because of increasingly harsh school and municipal policies. In accordance with the Buffalo Public School District Code of Conduct, the VOICE task force is working with the Buffalo School Board and Superintendent Dr. Kriner Cash to implement restorative justice practices as an alternative to suspension. Restorative Justice is a philosophy that focuses on the harm done to both the victim and the offender, rather than simply punishing the one who misbehaved. Stay tuned for progress reports!

Send a Kid to Camp Peaceprints!

This summer is the twelfth annual Camp Peaceprints brought to you by the Interfaith Peace Network, the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence, and the WNY Peace Center. Our theme is "Discovering Diversity: An Intercultural Adventure." The camp, for youth ages 8 to 13, provides exposure to a diverse community while exploring communication, social justice issues, and peaceful conflict resolution. Once again this year we will be learning American Sign Language from students at St. Mary's School for the Deaf where camp is held.

We are receiving many requests for camp scholarships. To contribute to the Jim and Audrey Mang Camp Peaceprints Scholarship Fund, mail a check made payable to Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, with "Camp Peaceprints scholarship" in the memo line, to 80 Durham Avenue, Buffalo, 14215. You can also go online to sisterkarencenter.org and click on the PayPal Donate button and designate the scholarship fund in the special instructions. The cost of Camp Peaceprints is \$125 for one week of camp for one camper, \$250 for both weeks of camp for one camper, but any amount will be gratefully received!





Clockwise from top left: Chuck Culhane and Charley Bowman; Tracy Craig with Sr. Anita and Vivian; SS. Columba-Brigid youth; Sr. Anita and Sr. Karen Shaver; Audrey, Jim and Katherine Mang with Sr. Anita and Vivian; Murray Holman, Sr. Jean Klimczak, Rev. Antwan Diggs, Sr. Mary Jo Colucci, Sr. Michele Beiter and Vivian; Vivian with Unite By Night members Jessica Christensen, Samantha Sowah and Emily Perryman; Nardin Academy Administrators with Sr. Anita Center: Students from Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts



*We are grateful
for the
hospitality of
SS. Columba-
Brigid Church,
the professional
photography of
Errol Daniels,
and to all of
YOU who came
out to support
us and make
the event
extra special!*

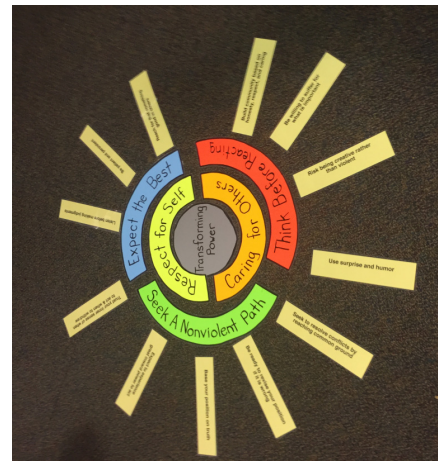


Clockwise from top left: Cake and cupcakes by Devine Cake Design; Reception table; Kali Williams; Mary Ann Logue and Sr. Janet DiPasquale; Audrey Mang, Sr. Jean Marie Zirnheld, Antionette Craig and Vivian; Sr. Mary Augusta Kaiser, Sr. Janet DiPasquale, Sr. Liz Savage and Vivian; Chuck Culhane and Sr. Roz Rosolowski; Derek Byrd and Vivian; Antionette (Tracy) Craig and Rev. Antwan Diggs Center: Vivian, Sr. Bea Manzella and Maureen Satchell

Alternatives to Violence Project News

January Basic Workshop

In January, another successful Basic workshop was held at Annunciation Church in Elma for students from Christ the King Seminary with a few additional participants. The arrival of the team of Bill Marx, Kathy Castillo, and Kathy Essek was touch and go due to the frigid and snowy weather, but they were able to travel safely and with much enthusiasm. The participants were actively engaged and were able to describe ways Transforming Power acted in their lives. A poster provided by Bill helped to flesh out the many facets of Transforming Power, and grew into a wonderful sun burst that warmed everyone (see picture). The exercise "I Messages" was a highlight and turning point that added a practical skill in communication. The evaluations from the participants were very positive. They felt the workshop was a productive and enjoyable way to spend a weekend.



AVP at Wende Correctional Facility

AVP continues to be active at Wende prison in Alden, NY, meeting the first and third Thursday each month. Wende is now showing a 15-minute dvd from AVP about the program on closed circuit tv to promote interest in our workshops. Since January 2019 three workshops have been completed with a total of over 40 new participants. Future sessions are planned for August, October and December.

After an unfortunate fall, Blest Bill is not able to continue volunteering at Wende. The inmates and facilitators very much miss his presence but are grateful for his tireless commitment in the past and his dedication to the principles of AVP. We are holding him in our prayers for continued progress toward recovery!

AVP Training

Advanced Level II Workshop: Fall 2019
Check for updates at sisterkarencenter.org



Diet Dalton (left in photo): What AVP means to me? *It's the definition of Love.*

I don't think it's a place to talk to friends or a normal club.

It's home. A place where you can feel safe, a place that everyone is equal and no one is left out. The people in it - we are not strangers that are in the same room.

We're family. We don't reject people's differences - we accept their differences and make them feel welcome. It's a place where someone can bring their problems and open up about how they feel without feeling regret.

AVP is a place where a person can feel loved and safe like home should be. It's true we're not solving world hunger or pollution, but we are trying to solve one of the world's problems, Drama - another word for a person's struggle.

AVP is such a great thing that I can't explain it in a paragraph, but if I can describe it in one word I would say it's the definition of Love.

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## **Fall Youth AVP Workshops**



Teaching and Restoring Youth

A second Level I Basic AVP workshop is scheduled for September at **TRY (Teaching and Restoring Youth)** on Brinkman Avenue in Buffalo. The TRY residence is a place for young women to find hope. Their mission is to enable young women who have suffered from abuse, violence and victimization to rebuild their lives through supportive companionship, counseling, education and the development of independent living skills. We know that AVP will provide residents with conflict resolution skills that will be a vital tool in their success at TRY and empower them to lead nonviolent lives as their future unfolds.

Our Alternatives to Violence Project program at **Compass House Resource Center** on Main Street in Buffalo will continue with Basic and Advanced workshops this fall. We are looking forward to reaching a new group of runaway, homeless, and street youth with the transforming power of AVP!



**compass house**  
A new direction for a better life.



## A Heartfelt Farewell and Thank You

Our year-long partnership with the social activist group Unite By Night, Inc. is winding down. Unite By Night was created by four young professionals to dedicate one year of community service each year to local nonprofits that align with the group values:



- The beauty of diversity
- Open dialogue and frank but respectful conversations about important and timely issues in society
- Working to address racism, bias and discrimination in our community and beyond
- Helping our citizens connect and collaborate to create greater good

Members of Unite By Night first joined us last summer at Camp Peaceprints where they led a lesson and hat-making craft highlighting how clothing is an expression of identity and diversity. Campers modeled their creations in a fashion show that displayed their inner runway models to lots of smiles and laughter!



Unite By Night featured the work of the SSJ Sister Karen Center during their annual North Buffalo flashlight walk last August. The Center was also the recipient of a generous donation from the proceeds of UBN's new public art bus tour. Among other administrative support, UBN has helped redesign some of the Center's promotional materials. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to the visionary young professionals of Unite By Night. Thankfully, UBN has committed to being a presence at Camp Peaceprints for years to come!

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The Buffalo Peacemakers Gang Intervention and Outreach Program is active on many different fronts!

- The annual Juneteenth Festival at Martin Luther King, Jr. Park was free of violence once again due to the supportive and reassuring presence of the Peacemakers.
- A generous donation from the Rich Family Foundation, a philanthropic arm of Rich Products, has provided funding for a special recruiter who is working to develop the West Side Peacemakers. Assemblyman Sean Ryan continues to support this effort.
- The Safe Passage Program with the Buffalo Public Schools will continue through the summer. An exciting development is that the Niagara Falls School Superintendent Mark Laurie requested a Safe Passage Program at the Middle School there. The Niagara Falls Peacemakers (who hit the streets in April 2018) began patrolling in June. The response from the neighbors has been extremely positive and the program will be expanding in the future.
- A 5-man team of Peacemakers works the Galleria Mall on the weekends and has completely eliminated the fights that had previously wreaked havoc there.

Inmates at Attica Correctional Facility Make Large Camp Peaceprints Donation



Outside Attica Correctional Facility ~
4th and 5th from left: Arun Gandhi and
Deputy Superintendent Clinton

Working with Arun Gandhi and the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence in Rochester, inmates at Attica Correctional Facility participated in the 2019 Season for Nonviolence. The Season, launched at the United Nations in 1998, annually marks the 64 calendar days between the memorial anniversary of the assassination of Mohandas K. Gandhi on January 30th and that of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4th. The Season teaches that every person can move the world forward in the direction of peace through daily nonviolent choices and actions.

The men each took the 2019 Pledge for Nonviolence, committing themselves to practice nonviolence and to strengthen their capacity to remain peaceful regardless of circumstances. They also followed "64 Ways in 64 Days" daily practices which included both reflections and actions.

Throughout the Season for Nonviolence, inmates collected money to give for the work of peace beyond the prison walls. The most frequent comment we hear from incarcerated men is that they want us to work with children and youth on the outside to help prevent them from making the kind of bad decisions that these men made in their pasts.

Among many other worthy charities, the men chose Camp Peaceprints as the beneficiary of their donations. On stage with Arun Gandhi, and the highest officials of the Attica administration, SSJ Sister Karen Center Director Vivian Waltz accepted a check for \$640.00 for Camp Peaceprints scholarships. Vivian describes the experience: "The exuberant joy I witnessed on the faces of the cheering men could not match the joy that was welling up within me as I knew beyond a doubt that God, and Sister Karen, had brought me to this moment."



Our gratitude goes out to Sister Roz Rosolowski, chaplain at Attica, who shepherded this generous donation by advocating for Camp Peaceprints and working with both the Attica inmates and the administration to see it through.

**Update: Donations from
Attica inmates now
total \$793.00!**



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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 eliminating 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.***