

Peace Day Philly 2012 Launches!

June 29, 2012

The local initiative **Peace Day Philly** hosted a 2012 launch event at the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia on June 20th, marking the 3-month countdown to the United Nations International Day of Peace. **Peace Day Philly** promotes September 21 as a worldwide day of ceasefire, non-violence, and peace education as advocated by unanimous United Nations resolutions in 1981 and 2001.

Approximately 50 people attended, representing a wide variety of organizations across the region (both PA and NJ based) that included those related to spirituality & faith, social service, sports & youth, community, advocacy & law, international perspectives & activities, education and the arts.

Globally, over 100 million people and many major cities now observe Peace Day. The worldwide Peace Day theme for 2012 is “Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future.” (Go to <http://www.cultureofpeace.org> for information about Peace Day efforts and activities around the world that are developing for September 21, 2012.)

At the event, **Peace Day Philly's** 2012 Public Service Announcement was shared (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlK5TBxJrFO>), as well as a video message from Mayor Nutter, encouraging people across the city to get involved in **Peace Day Philly** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7allwVt49JQ>).

Participation in Peace Day can take a wide variety of forms and expressions, depending upon the interests of an individual or the mission and vision of a group or organization. **Peace Day Philly** initiative members asked “WHAT CAN YOU DO?” to get involved in a way that is meaningful to you or your organization, the week of September 17 and especially on September 21? How can your actions and voices in the name of peace sweep across our communities in observance of this global day?

A Philadelphia mother of two, whose brother was killed in a gun incident, shared her hope that we could all come together on Peace Day to help create greater unity and non-violence in our neighborhoods. She commented on the meaning the day could have for families like hers so deeply wounded by violence. “We cannot allow the multitude of senseless acts of violence to plague our communities. It’s time to take action for the future of our children, our mothers, our fathers and all of our fellow citizens. **Peace Day Philly** provides us with a platform for our voices to be heard, a possibility for our children to have a day to be safe and celebrate peace.”

Charlotte Council, the Deputy Police Commissioner, also spoke at the event and expressed her personal commitment, and the commitment of the district offices, to participate in **Peace Day Philly 2012**. She was thanked for her leadership in **Peace Day Philly 2011** which resulted in 40 community-based peace and non-violence activities facilitated by 21 Police districts across the city. Deputy Commissioner Council also emphasized the importance of supporting and strengthening the many year-round peace-building activities that take place across the region.

Representatives of several organizations shared how they are using the platform of Peace Day to offer peace and non-violence activities in keeping with their mission. Heidi Warren of the Starfinder Foundation, a non-profit that utilizes soccer as a tool for youth development, explained that the youth in her program learned about four conflict areas in the world, such as Southern Sudan and Colombia, and in particular what is happening to children there. Over the summer, Starfinder staff will work with youth in the program to help them develop leadership skills necessary to take Peace Day back to their schools and soccer leagues, and to build support for the idea that games played during the week of September 17th are in observance of the International Day of Peace and part of **Peace Day Philly**.

Jeff Neher of the Philadelphia Free Library’s LEAP after-school program talked about how his program, hosted by over 50 libraries across the city, will facilitate peace poetry activities on September 21 again this year. Poetry was chosen as the activity since the LEAP program uses poetry as a literacy tool. The

LEAP program was one of the first programs to be part of ***Peace Day Philly*** in 2011, the first year of the initiative, and dozens of libraries across the city participated.

Alex Kimmel, a senior at Unionville High School in Kennett Square, talked about the ways her school will be involved through the “Students In Action” chapter at her school. These included peace and non-violence activities during the week, a football game played in the spirit of peace on Sept. 21, and a fundraiser with benefits going to a peace cause. (***Peace Day Philly*** is working with the Regional Director of the Students In Action/Jefferson Awards program, the communications office of the Philadelphia School District and the Friends Council of Education, a 2012 endorsing organization, to share ideas about how teachers and students can participate in Peace Day. These ideas are also available on the “Children and Youth” page of the “What Can You Do?” section of the website.)

The Legal Ceasefire Campaign of ***Peace Day Philly*** and its goals were also outlined (go to our website and <http://legalceasefireday.org> for more information about this sub-campaign).

Some of the ways organizations intend to participate in ***Peace Day Philly*** 2012 include: a workshop on non-violence communication for social change, a program on peace and public health, a candlelight walk and prayer service for peace, an intercultural concert, morning meditations, intercultural dialogues and programs, peace-themed children and youth activities, film, sports games, service projects and raising funds for humanitarian causes. Participating organizations will be listed on the ***Peace Day Philly*** website. Organizations were encouraged to contact ***Peace Day Philly*** with their plans, as well as with information about events open to the public during the week of September 17th for posting on the ***Peace Day Philly*** website.

Events being planned by ***Peace Day Philly*** include a late morning public event at LOVE Park and an evening Peace & Music event at the Ethical Society, both on September 21. On September 22, a “Play for Peace” soccer tournament for African immigrants will be played in Southwest Philadelphia, co-hosted by ***Peace Day Philly*** and community leaders.

The week of September 17th was offered as an effective platform for organizations to issue communications about ongoing peace and non-violence activities and programs and to announce a new or upcoming programs related to peace. Initiative members also urged organizations, groups and individuals to also get involved by spreading the word about September 21 through websites, newsletters, community venues and social media sources. Participants were also encouraged to submit story ideas about local peace-building efforts to press sources for the week of September 17, encouraging press to highlight peace activities as news during this week of global peace activity.

Through these efforts, in addition to events hosted by organizations across the city, ***Peace Day Philly*** hopes to raise the overall level of awareness and dialogue about peace and non-violence activities and issues in the region.

Initiative materials such as “What Can You Do?” postcards and posters, as well as posters for “Poems for Peace” and “Play for Peace” are available as PDFs upon request—images are on the ***Peace Day Philly*** website. These materials were developed as a result of a project with Philadelphia University’s Design Workshop (PUDW) whereby students develop a campaign for “real world” organizations working to make a difference. PUDW also developed the initiative’s 2012 website, logo and PSA.

For more about the ***Peace Day Philly*** initiative, and ideas for how you can get involved, go to the new website: www.peacedayphilly.org, and the Peace Day Philly 2012 Community Facebook page. Peace Day Philly is also on twitter (@peacedayphilly).