Students SPEAK Up For Peace

Youth voices matter! The Peace Center piloted our new teen peacebuilding and leadership program, SPEAK: Students for Peace Empowered to Act with Knowledge.

For four days in July, a diverse group of teens from three different school districts came together at Bensalem High School and learned how to be change agents for peace in their schools, communities and the world. Through activities that build trust and community, teens learned skills in leadership, conflict resolution, communication, and how to be effective advocates, activists and allies. Throughout the week, we engaged in deep conversations about issues facing teens, such as prejudice or intolerance, and how youth can be upstanders in response to those challenges.

The week culminated with teens creating their own change-making campaigns for issues they care about. Putting their skills into practice, students created a map of their goal, their potential allies, and the strategies they would use to create their desired change. Some issues they took on were climate change, equal pay, electoral reform, and fair treatment of transgender students.

Inspired by their training, Bensalem students have started a SPEAK club at their school to teach their peers how to be allies and upstanders in response to prejudice or bullying. Every student who participated said they would recommend SPEAK to other teens, so The Peace Center is ready to bring this program to more teens and schools!

For more information, please contact Kate Whitman at kwhitman@thepeacecenter.org.

Join Us for a Bridges to Peace Storytelling Tour!

The Peace Center is pleased to announce the launch of our Bridges to Peace storytelling tours! Whether you are new to the Peace Center or a long-time participant and supporter, we invite you to join us for an exciting one-hour “tour of our mission.” Our AMAZING peace educators will regale you with stories about how we support children and teachers in our schools, help create safety for families, and work to enrich communities. We promise you will learn something new and leave feeling HOPEFUL & INSPIRED!

Upcoming storytelling tours will take place from 1:45 - 3:00pm on January 15, February 7, February 10, March 3, March 20, and from 6:30 - 8:00pm on January 24. Tours will continue into the spring.

For more information, please contact Debra Wachspress, Director of Relationship Development, at dwachspress@thepeacecenter.org or call (215) 750-7220. RSVP’S ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED! Looking forward to seeing you at an upcoming storytelling tour!
From the Leadership Desk

Enduring Peace

There is so much happening in our world, and we can know about it almost instantaneously. Our newsfeeds and social media threads buzz with what is happening not just in the lives of our friends, but also with our neighbors 8000 miles away. It seems that most of what we are bombarded with are the traumatic events and tragedies that befall others. Over time, we can become saturated with “bad news.” As a result, we may become paralyzed into inaction at best, or normalized to the suffering of others at worst. We have people constantly telling us the world is ‘going to hell in a handbasket’!

And we know that those voices are wrong! We see the goodness when communities come together to respond to acts of hatred painted on the sides of school walls, to assure each other that those behaviors will not be allowed to grow in their neighborhoods. The Peace Center helps communities gain the tools necessary to spot, respond, and diffuse community conflicts. To quote President Ronald Reagan, “Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with conflict by peaceful means.” We help bridge that gap until the time comes when all conflicts are settled peacefully.

We listen to and hear our children in the school programs as they learn to be upstanders against bullying. Though the programs of the Peace Center, the seeds for a hopeful future are being sown and nurtured as we teach our youth to respect and celebrate their differences and learn to appreciate the various gifts that will shape a more peaceful future.

Although it presently looks bleak at times, many of our youth are expecting a better future than what we are currently shaping for them. Although we get concerned at the seeming apathy and lack of optimism, especially as people gripe about the millennial mindset, they are onto something. The Peace Center is recognizing that we are not trying to recapture some “good old days” of past peace. That was an illusion. As Cornel West said, we have to face the future as “prisoners of hope” who are willing to do something different to get the peaceful future that will endure. We have to look into the future willing to see with fresh eyes and hopeful spirits that we will make a change. Peace isn’t just a passing calm but an active pursuit!

Our goal at the Peace Center as we educate, reach out, and advocate for peace, is to lean into a future where the Peace Center staff 10, 20 or 50 years from now will share stories about the actions that we are taking now to create an enduring peace. As they walk through the halls of a peace museum, they will look fondly upon the old programming of Celebrating Me, Celebrating You; Respect Me, Respecting You; Girls Unlimited; Racial Equity, Restorative Justice in Education and the myriad of other programs developed to create and shape the future.

For more information about the work we do and to get involved, please email me at dthomas@thepeacecenter.org.

-Danny Thomas
Chief of Operations

Drs. Robin & Warren Heydenberk
Evaluators, Lehigh University
Karin Kasdin honored by Bucks County NAACP

Congratulations to Karin Kasdin, Founding Director of Girls Unlimited, who was awarded the Community Service Award from the Bucks County NAACP at their 67th Annual Freedom Fund Banquet.

The award was given to Kasdin for bringing the Girls Unlimited program to so many middle school girls.

Girls Unlimited teaches girls the skills needed to deal with the pressures of their daily lives and encourages them to choose kindness, compassion and to be upstanders.

Welcome Kathia Monard-Weissman, Bullying Prevention Coordinator

Kathia Monard-Weissman serves as Peace Educator and Bullying Prevention Coordinator at The Peace Center. She holds a Ph.D. in International and Development Education from the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Education. She has experience facilitating bullying prevention programs and diversity workshops. In Ecuador, her country of origin, she directed study-abroad programs. She has also worked as an educational and evaluation consultant, researching the impact of educational programs on students’ character, resiliency and citizenship. Her work has been published in journals including Academic Exchange Quarterly and The Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement.

We say goodbye to JoAnn Woodman, one of our beloved early founders

I met JoAnn more than 30 years ago. She was a retired teacher from the Centennial School District who devoted her life to issues of peace and justice.

She and her husband, Lew, were part of a group of early founders of Bucks Alliance of Nuclear Disarmament of The Peace Center. A bright light, JoAnn led efforts at The Peace Center to teach conflict resolution in schools to teachers and students. She believed if children understood how to deal with conflict, bullying, racism and all “isms,” we could shape them into adults who could change the world using non-violence and become leaders who could think beyond war. Her values and tenants of Quakerism served to steer The Peace Center to focus on peace from a place of love rather than anger.

Thank you for your steadfast service as a peace educator and activist, JoAnn. May you rest in peace.

—Barbara Simmons
Successful School Programs

Girls Unlimited (GU) has had a very busy fall, and by the end of this year 10,000 seventh grade girls will have had their lives touched by the lessons in kindness they learned from GU since we began offering this program.

We have reached 981 girls in four months! Since September, we have delivered the program in these schools:
- Klinger Middle School
- Log College Middle School
- Bristol Borough Middle School
- Neil Armstrong Middle School
- Newtown Middle School
- Holland Middle School
- St. Andrews Catholic School
- Maple Point Middle School

Girls Unlimited is also scheduled to run in: Morrisville Middle School, Cecelia Snyder Middle School, and Robert Shafer Middle School.

This past fall our two elementary school programs, Respecting Me, Respecting You (bullying prevention) and Celebrating Me, Celebrating You, (diversity and inclusion), reached more than 400 elementary school students!

Respecting Me, Respecting You
- Bristol Borough 21st Century After-School Program
- Bristol Township 21st Century After-School Program
- Makefield Elementary School
- Our Lady of Grace Catholic School
- Snyder-Girotti Elementary School
- St. Andrew Catholic School
- St. Michael the Archangel School

Celebrating Me, Celebrating You
- Grey Nun Academy
- Our Lady of Grace Catholic School
- St. Michael the Archangel School

6th Annual MLK Jr. Teen Peace & Social Justice Summit

Sunday, January 20, 2019
4:00—7:30 pm
William Tennent High School
333 Centennial Road, Warminster, PA

This FREE event is open to all 7th through 12th graders!
Inspirational Speakers
Youth Empowerment
Meaningful & Courageous Conversations on Race, Prejudice, and Intolerance
Pizza Dinner Provided!

Schools, faith-based and other community organizations, and the public are all welcome!
For registration and information, visit: www.thepeacecenter.org or call (215) 750-7220 or (215) 833-7877.
1. Don’t react; instead respond thoughtfully with the help of other groups working on similar issues. Don’t go it alone!
2. Move beyond your fear to function from a place of love. Our cortisol levels are high due to stress, and stress comes from fear… of feeling helpless, that our leaders are not defending our democracy. We can’t address and solve the issues at hand with the same energy that created the problem.
3. Courage is needed - move through your fear and be present for what needs to be done.
4. Resilience: allow yourself to fall apart when the news is bad. Scream, yell, cry and grieve. Your emotions are necessary to your ability to be resilient. Get centered again and be the rock that is needed.
5. Keep Hope Alive! The African American community has been doing this for 400 years… don’t confuse this with optimism. As Cornel West stated ‘we are a people of hope. Hope wrestles with despair – and generates energy to be courageous – to bear witness…to see what the end is going to be.
6. Mentor young activists. Many are ready so give them the safe space to fall and get up, and be there with them.
7. Rest is crucial. When you are exhausted, step back and let the next wave of activists step forward.
8. Nurture the Light inside you & each other. We may not always see that light – and sometimes we can’t even see our own. It helps to envision it and feel it within you.
9. NO ONE is born to hate. It gets “put in” and calcified if they see no good model of compassion and empathy.
10. Stay strong peace warriors! You are needed now more than ever. Lift one another up! Work on expanding our numbers with the unyielding power that comes from a place of love, hope and resilience.

- Barbara Simmons

The statistics about bullying are alarming! Approximately one child is bullied every 7 minutes, and one in every three children experiences bullying at school. Pennsylvania is one of the top 20 states with bullying incidents, ranking 14th in the country. The negative impact of bullying can be overwhelming, affecting children’s academic performance, school attendance as well as their physical and psychological well-being. Students who are at a higher risk of being bullied are those who are perceived to be different from their peers. A study recently published found that students experiencing biased-based bullying (targeted because of a dimension of their identity such as gender, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation) experience higher levels of school avoidance and fear of being harmed. Other studies have shown that students bullied because of an aspect of their identity are more likely to suffer severe and lasting physical and psychological problems in life.

On occasion, parents and educators may avoid discussing differences with children because of the belief that to prevent bullying, we need to focus on our similarities rather than on our differences. While trying to “do good,” overlooking people’s differences does more harm than good; when children’s perceptions of people’s differences go unchecked, they can lead to stereotyping, bias and prejudice.

While delivering our bullying prevention programs in schools, we find children are eager to discuss differences with their peers. Children speak about how they have been judged, called names or excluded for being different. Opening up dialogues has helped children embrace their individual identities, while fostering in them a deeper sense of confidence. A fifth grade student who participated in one of our bullying prevention programs candidly shared, “I have learned to value who I am.” She expressed having a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity in her classroom community and beyond. Lack of acceptance and respect towards our differences is at the root of bullying. Understanding and valuing our individual differences is the cornerstone for the prevention of bullying.

To support students who are struggling with bullying, The Peace Center offers Bullying Prevention Support Circles for Students and Parents. The goal of the support circles is to help students gain confidence, strengthen their self-esteem, and learn skills to stand up in the face of bias and prejudice. Parents meet separately to share experiences and learn strategies to help their children develop healthy coping skills. For more information, contact Kate Whitman or Kathia Monard-Weissman at 215-750-7220 ext. 13 or via email at bullyingprevention@thepeacecenter.org.
Mark your calendar now! Plans are underway for the second annual “Cooking for a Cause,” fundraiser taking place on Monday, April 8, 2019 at Mrs. G TV & Appliances in Lawrenceville, NJ.

The event was a huge success last year with more than 130 people enjoying the culinary skills of talented chefs and raising money to support Girls Unlimited (GU). Girls Unlimited is a creative, interactive week-long program for 6th and 7th grade girls which addresses relational aggression. Studies show that after this program there is a drop in bullying/cyberbullying, improved behavior, and problem-solving.

Karin Kasdin, founder and director of GU, says, “Last year the event was everything we had hoped for and more, and this year the event promises to be even better. We have some new chefs participating. Enjoy wine while sampling a variety of delicacies. A wonderful culinary experience is promised, all while supporting the emotional health of our girls!”

For more information, contact Karin at kkasdin@thepeacecenter.org.
Your Contributions Fuel Our Work!
We are very grateful to all those who contributed from May 19, 2018 through November 30, 2018.

Individuals
Amanda Amarotico · Cory Amsler & Eileen Shapiro · Bob & Peggy Anderson · Anonymous · Barbara Atkinson · Beth Ann Bailey-Rinkus & Robert Rinkus · Kim Barber · Peace Baxter · Carol Benderson-Lighter & Stuart Lighter · Katherine Borish · Chuck & Cheryl Boyle · Menina & John Boyle · Barbara & Edward Bromley · Denise & Lewis Brooks · Nancy & William Brosius · Christine Burgess · Andrew Burgess & Rachel White · Malcolm & Mrs. Madelaine Burgess · Eleanor Burgess & Andrew Frick · Debbie & Ed Burns · Maureen & Tom Camphire · Michelle Carter · Marguerite Chandler & Richmond Shreve · Rein & Brenda Clabbers · Dawn & Joe Clabbers · Kathyn Clabby · Rosemary & Dewey Clark · James Coan · Renee Cologne & Kari Steiniert · Christine Connelly & Walt Mlodzinski · Diane Coyle & Jim Coyle, Jr. · Betsy & Dan Crofts · Deidre Crumbley & Steve Schnur · Libby Curtis · Steve & Carolyn Cutler · Ann DeMers · Judy & Michael Doherty · Nancy & Mike Doyle · Susan Duval · Cate & Dave Ebaugh · Christine Edmonds · Patricia & Joseph Engle · Gene & Marlene Epstein · Merle Eskowitz · Maggie Farley · Barbara Fineman · Linda Fitzpatrick · Karen Flamm · Maun Flanagan · Mindy & Marc Friedman · Linda & Jim Gloner · Mary Gonzalez · Gayle Goodman & Jim Searing · Emmet & Edith Gowing · Barbara & Steve Gross · Patricia & Jonathan Harding · Joanne Hassis · Sue Hennigan · Karl & Ally Hommen · Hayes Honer · Mike & Robin Hoy · Sheila Jacobs · Walter & Polly Jamison · Julie Johnson · Inge Kargberg-Stannik · Corey Karsch-Tandler & Jared Tandler · Karin Kasdin & Harold Weinstein · Connie Keener · Chris Keener & Gayle Shapiro · Barbara Keener & Ken Sharples · Cheryl & Bernard Kelberg · Sallie & John Kingham · Susan Korman · Rona & Stephen Kornfeld · Kathy & John Kramek · Ruth Laks · Larry Langhans · Ruth & Kevin Lax · Philip & Marilyn Lebovitz · Jeanne Leslie-Hughes · Gail & Philip Lewis · Lorraine & Peter Lins · Lisa & Daniel Litovsky · Rachel Litovsky · Viviana Lipovsky-Green & Thomas Green · Ray Mattern & Mary Taylor · Alice Maxfield & Nelson Camp · Linda & Michael McGowan · Christine McKee & Tony Walsh · Ward Mcmasters · Raina & Jigar Mehta · Patricia Merkel · Sheila Milecostos · Karen & Francis Milles · Janet Mintzer · Ann & Donald Mitchell · Kathia Monard-Weissman · Elizabeth Moran & Brad Zeiler · Stephen Moyer · Stu & Alisa Myles · Kevin Nakashima · Judy Nussbaum & Marvin Gelblat · Sara Organic · Jackie Orr · John Ortolf & Gail Linenber · Keith Pacheco · Jennifer & Achilles Paparsonos · Beatrice & Thomas Paparsonos · Cindy Parvis · Iris Pearson · Betsy & Tod Peyton · Tim Philpot · Karen & Joseph Quinlan · Deb & Marisol Ray · Mary & John Reinhart · Ann & Paul Rhoads · Natalia & Arthur Ritter · Ann & Charles Rucker · Sharon & Marc Russo · Ann & Beth Sadoff · Joan Sadoff · Athena Sarafides · Cathy Scarpello · Petra Chesner Schlatter · Jane Scopelite · Judy Seelig · Brad Sheeks & Pat McDee · Lisa Shelby & Ken Glick · Wendi & Brian Silverberg · Barbara Simmons & Steve Nolan · Marion & Sam Snipes · Cathy Sorace & Jim Dodaro · Kati & Ray Sowiak · Claire Staffieri · Jane Staffieri · Harvey Stahl · Susan Stall · Nancy & Bill Strong · Ron Stouse · Stephen Suffian · Nancy Terry · Dave Tickel & Marie Lian · Nancy Trent & David Head · Barry Truchil & Bernadette West · Karen Pendergast · Kim & Wayne Vaccaro · Mark Van der Gaag · Liliana Vigovsky-Attar & Ricardo Attar · Debra & Dan Wachspess · Alexander Wein · Megan Wetzel · Bob & Florence Wharton · Ginna Wilcox · Don & Geri Williams · Lynn Williams · Richard Wilson · Karen Winkler · Ellie Winslow · Linda & Steve Wisniewski · Jerel & Shari Wohl · Gina & Doug Wohl · Kim & Clifford Xantus · Kimberlee & Marc Yampolsky · Larry & Carol Zetterberg

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Note: Our apologies if we inadvertently omitted or made an error in the listing or spelling of your name.
Please contact us at 215-750-7220 so we can correct our records!

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Bridges to Peace
Storytelling Tours
at The Peace Center
Read about our inspirational Bridges to Peace tours, and join us for one!
  Tuesday, January 15
  Thursday, January 24
  Thursday, February 7
  Sunday, February 10
  Sunday, March 3
  Wednesday, March 20.

What Teens Say About SPEAK
“I feel a lot more motivated to create change in my school that is more needed.”
“I just loved the immense friendship building.”
“I learned how to be an ally and exactly how I can do that without causing harm.”
“Thank you for helping me learn that there are many different parts to a leader, and it is so much better to work with people than work over them.”
“Thank you for showing me that I can have a voice, even though I am young.”

What 7th Grade Girls Say About Girls Unlimited
“I really like this program. It taught me a lot of really good things and made me feel a lot more confident about being a girl.”
“The activities were fun and it gives you a lot of confidence to just BE you.”
“I think that this really helped me out. I have been going through stuff and this lifted me up and now I feel better about what is happening at home.”
“This program was very informative and the group leaders were very open and kind.”

What Elementary Students Say About Respecting Me, Respecting You and Celebrating Me, Celebrating You
“I learned that I’m not the only one who got bullied, that I’m appreciated, and that other people are ‘outside the box’ like me.”
“Thank you so much for teaching us how to accept others, even if they are different. Another thing I’ve learned is that everyone is different and you shouldn’t judge others.”
“I learned how to fight less with my brother and how to be kind to my classmates.”