

NASHVILLE PEACE AND JUSTICE CENTER ANNUAL REPORT for 2011

Dear lovers of peace, justice and sustainability,

In 2011 we continued to pursue our goal of being a voice for peace and justice in the community. Rather than just “preaching to the choir”, we worked to provide many opportunities for good hearted people from various walks of life to exchange ideas, to examine new ways of looking at the challenges which face our society and to make plans and execute them to achieve change for the better. And we have succeeded in communicating to the general public the fact that there are many of us who reject the notion of “every man for himself” and who are actively seeking peace and justice for all.

Over the years, it has become more and more clear to us that peace, justice and sustainability are inextricably intertwined. The same forces that benefit by keeping us at war also benefit from inequality and injustice and profit from despoiling our environment. Worst of all, they achieve their ends by undermining our democracy. We must all struggle together to make progress on all of these fronts. This year, our analysis proved to be in tune with the analysis of the millions worldwide who have participated in the pro-democracy and Occupy movements. And we were there ready to help.

By holding monthly roundtable discussions, organizing and participating in rallies, demonstrations and vigils, offering speakers on various topics, publicizing progressive activities through our Eblast and tabling with literature and exhibits at community events, we continued to reach out to, include and work with many of the diverse communities that make up the larger community of the Nashville area.

We feel that our work is extremely important at this point in time and we hope to be able to continue it for years to come. Thank you for your support!

Here's a summary of our activities in 2011:

MONTHLY ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Our Roundtable program has been very successful. We have had a Roundtable each month, (with summer and winter breaks in August and December), attracting up to 60 persons at each one. Different groups and individuals, both members and nonmembers of NPJC, have assumed leadership on different issues. The topics covered so far include: Issues Facing the State of Tennessee and Metro Davidson county, GBLT, Labor, Energy and Economic Issues, Community Gardens, the Death of Osama bin Laden and the XL Pipeline. Sustainability and Green Jobs will be discussed in January 2012 and Landfill Issues in February. Please consider organizing a roundtable around YOUR urgent issue!

PEACE and JUSTICE EVENTS

- We started the year by participating in several large **RALLIES** in support of the public employees in Wisconsin, Tennessee teachers and Tennessee employees. We participated in the “It’s OK to Say Gay” protest and the Tax Day demonstration against the tax shirker Bank of America. This summer we participated in demonstrations against cuts in government

services and against continued tax cuts for corporations and billionaires. Our signs and banners were prominent in newspaper and television coverage of these events. Our “No Money for Endless War!” banner even appeared in an Asheville, N.C. newspaper!

- In March, our weekly “**HONK FOR PEACE**” vigil was expanded to a candle light demonstration of 300 in support of the **ARAB SPRING** demonstrators in Tehrir Square, Cairo, Egypt. This event utilized our contacts with both the immigrant and the student communities; 1/3 of the participants were people from the Middle East, 1/3 were students from various campuses in Nashville and Murfreesboro and 1/3 were the more traditional Peace and Justice activists.

- During “**BRADLEY MANNING WEEK**” from April 8 to 16, we hosted the Iraq Veterans Against the War bikers and had a Bike Decorating Party at Watkins School of Art, a “Release Bradley Manning Bike Ride”, a Counter ROTC Demonstration on Vanderbilt University campus, a panel discussion at Belmont United Methodist Church with representatives of veterans groups, a film showing of “Yes Sir, No Sir” at Lipscomb University, a fundraising concert for the Bike Riders and a “Release Bradley Manning” Demonstration in front of the Tennessean office with the veterans attending the National Veterans for Peace Annual Meeting in Nashville.

- In July we hosted the **PASTORS FOR PEACE CARAVAN TO CUBA** and held a Potluck Dinner at Belmont United Methodist Church where Lisa Valanti of Pastors for Peace spoke on conditions in Cuba. 50 attended.

- We decided that “**STOP THE MACHINE! STOP CORPORATISM! STOP MILITARISM! CREATE A BETTER WORLD**” would be the theme of our major peace and justice event this year in solidarity with events going on in Washington DC to mark the 10th anniversary of the War in Afghanistan. We felt that it expressed our conviction about the connection between peace and justice. In July, we invited representatives of all progressive groups to join the Steering Committee planning the October events in Nashville. We also decided to help fund travel to Washington DC to participate in the events there. Hundreds of people participated in our two **STOP THE MACHINE rallies** on October 6 and our **Teach-In** on October 8.

These extremely successful events marked the start of

- **OCCUPY NASHVILLE.** We are not the leaders of this leaderless movement, but we continue to provide any support possible. Almost all of the Board members and many NPJC members and member groups have been active participants. We are currently helping Occupy Nashville raise and disperse funds according to decisions made at the General Assemblies.

TABLING & OUTREACH

in order to continue broadening our outreach to diverse people and groups, including African Americans, immigrants and young adults, we participated in and tabled at many community events, making contact with a wide variety of Tennesseans and like-minded groups.

- On Martin Luther King Day, we participated in the march and, as usual, distributed hundreds of posters with MLK's portrait for people to carry. This year, the reverse side of the posters had some less well-known but thought-provoking MLK quotations on Peace and Justice.

- At the Bonnaroo Music Festival, many young adults participated in the activities and looked at the literature on alternatives to military recruitment.
- On Pride Day, at Celebrate Nashville (formerly the Celebration of Cultures) and at the Flat Rock Festival, many people enjoyed taking our “War and Peace Quiz” and receiving prizes of Mardi Gras beads and peace buttons. (Flat Rock is a very international neighborhood of Nashville.)
- At the African Street Festival, more than 100 families decorated posters filling in the blank in “Make _____ Not War!” with heartfelt pictures and words. We also met a young teacher who made use of our travel fund to go with his sisters to join the “Stop the Machine” actions in Washington DC. Upon his return, Raymond Artis became a valued facilitator at Occupy Nashville.
- At the Belmont U. Fair, we met Elli Whiteway, who has become an important member of the media team at Occupy Nashville. We are very excited that she will be interning with NPJC in 2012.
- At the Annual Gathering of the Cumberland Green Bioregional Council we added a few new dues paying members, one of whom was later nominated and elected as NPJC treasurer. The Cumberland Greens volunteered to design and build an access ramp for the Center on Poston Ave.. And at the Peoples Community Forum in Murfreesboro we renewed contacts with MTSU students, parents and faculty members.
- On Earth Day, our booth had an exhibit on the Carter Food Garden. We had a large “Support the Carter Community Food Garden” banner which we carried around the park, collecting petition signatures and distributing “I Support the Carver Food Park” stickers to Earth Day participants, including Mayor Karl Dean. (Eventually, 700 signatures were collected.)
Please be part of a tabling crew! It's fun!

ORGANIZATION BUILDING

Membership

In 2011, we recruited almost 100 individual dues paying members and 19 organizational members. We have 6300 entries in our data base, 2400 of which we know are up to date. Hundreds of these contacts already consider themselves members of NPJC because for many years now, members have not been required to pay annual dues to maintain their status as members. Therefore, it is more challenging to recruit dues paying individual members than to recruit organizational members. (Organizational members were always expected to pay annual dues, and are now no longer required to provide representatives to the Board or to Committees.) We are pleased that our member groups are diverse and have remained very active. We are now beginning the 2012 membership drive. Please join or renew!

Board: The “old Board” met in January, February and March. At our Annual Membership Meeting (an all day Retreat with breakfast and a potluck lunch) in April, the membership evaluated the past year, set goals for the coming year and elected a new nine member Board under the new By-laws. Consider serving on the Board in 2012!

At its first meeting in May, the “new Board” elected 4 officers. Unfortunately, the treasurer was faced with personal problems and resigned from both his position of treasurer and his

place on the Board, but another member of the Board volunteered to take on the duties of treasurer and was duly elected in August. Consider running for office! .

Committees (Please join one!)

The Program Committee meets monthly and organizes the monthly Roundtables, the booths at community events and other Center-wide projects. It surveyed the candidates for Nashville Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Metro Council. A summary of the results was compiled, distributed and discussed at our Metro Issues Roundtable and the complete results were available on our website.

The Facilities Committee drew up various plans for an accessibility ramp for the building on Poston Ave., and was ready to build it with volunteers. (The continued lack of accessibility had made it necessary to hold Board and some Committee meetings at the Friends Meeting House and had prevented some of our groups from making full use of the Center.) However, the owner of the building chose to sign a lease with a new tenant and we had to vacate the Poston Ave. location by October 31. The Facilities Committee found us a wonderful, fully accessible new home at the Friends Meeting House, and moved us there.

The IT Committee does not meet face to face, but sends out the weekly Eblast, updates our website and maintains and upgrades our wireless access. It has obtained and installed a donated computer to replace our older, slower ones.

The Development/Membership Committee has continued our participation with Community Shares and updated our online status with Giving Matters. It encourages giving through Kroger cards and sustainer memberships. A fundraising concert was held to support the Iraq Veterans' Against the War Bike Tour. The potluck dinner for Pastors for Peace collected cash to fund the caravan and medical and educational materials for the Cubans. We are now assisting Occupy Nashville with its fundraising. Our Office Warming Party and Annual House Party in November kicked off the 2012 Membership Drive. We are now giving Kroger cards with annual memberships, to increase that continual flow of income. The Committee will soon start planning our spring Yard Sale.

Volunteers and Interns:

We were able to recruit three volunteers over the summer who kept our data base up to date and performed other office work. We are very pleased that Elli Whiteway, a Belmont University student and an Occupy Nashville activist, will be our intern in 2012. We also have a volunteer with community organizing training to restart the Leadership Training Institute in 2012. Three of our previous Training Coordinators have offered to provide advice as we revamp and update the course. Would you like to volunteer?

CONCLUSION

Based at our new home at the Friends Meeting House, we enthusiastically continue our vital peace and justice work. We need new and renewed members, Committee participants, new Board members, volunteers and donors.

Become a member or renew your membership for 2012! Make sure that your organization becomes a new or renewed member of NPJC! Nominate a new board member or consider serving on the Board. Join a Committee! Volunteer! Become a sustaining donor! Where can you fit in? Please stay in touch and continue to be part of this! Thanks for everything you do.