On track for justice in Indy

Blink and you’ll likely miss an engaging and creative event for peace and justice in Indianapolis. From bystander trainings to book discussions and film screenings to Gaza advocacy at farmer’s markets, stay connected with AFSC’s work via the Indiana Facebook page. AFSC recently held a fundraiser with Bloomington Friends called “Planting Seeds—Peace & Justice.”

We’re very pleased to announce that AFSC Intern Umaymah Mohammad, working with community members Ahmed Abbas and Leena Basha and AFSC staff Erin Polley and Mary Zerkel, has won an IUPUI Millennium Chair’s Award in support of a two-part training for local Muslim youth who want help preventing Islamophobia in central Indiana. Visit AFSC’s Communities Against Islamophobia page for ways you can get involved.

Iowans defend DACA, push for immigrant rights

Speaking of busy places, Iowa has been a beehive of dynamic work in support of immigrant rights. AFSC staff and volunteers pushed a U.S. Senator to take a stand on DACA and joined in a large protest following President Trump’s decision to rescind it. AFSC and partners continue to urge the Des Moines City Council to move forward with a Welcoming City resolution that would prevent local police cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Jody Mashek, Director of AFSC’s Immigration Legal Services Program, is offering free legal screenings for people with DACA, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and others on Wednesdays through October 4. Connect with this work and more on the very active AFSC Iowa Facebook page. Iowa’s AFSC Centennial celebration, featuring Sanctuary leader Jeanette Vizguerra, is set for November 18 in Des Moines.

AFSC Freedom School in St. Paul creates a “liberated zone”

Dominique Diaddigo-Cash writes that the summer AFSC Freedom School in St. Paul created a “space of liberation, healing, and mutual validation that people hunger deeply for, even when we might not realize it. In this atmosphere of support and truth-telling, many young people allowed themselves to be vulnerable.”

Dominique adds, “The necessity of trauma-informed work was evident as discussions about mental health, trauma, depression, and addiction were common. We discussed at length the links between these ailments and systemic racism, and how we might address the roots of these issues with grassroots community organizing.” Stay tuned for more.
Fellow joins the Palestine Youth Diaspora Project
Jennifer Bing writes that former intern Hanna Alshaikh is now a Fellow in the Chicago office working with AFSC’s Palestine Youth Diaspora Project. AFSC continued to work on the Gaza Unlocked Project last month, reaching people at Farmer’s Markets. This effort will go through September.

In August, AFSC supported a celebration honoring Rasmea Odeh; over 2,000 people attended the event, including community members and Angela Davis. AFSC will co-host a webinar with the Quaker Palestine Israel Network on Tuesday, September 19 at 3 pm Central on “What is BDS? A Webinar for Quaker School Faculty and Staff.”

Chicago looks back, moves forward
AFSC staff in Chicago recently bid a fond farewell to Darlene Gramigna, who’s retiring after more than three decades supporting and encouraging young people’s work for peace and justice. Join AFSC Chicago this November 16 for a lively Centennial celebration.

In Chicago, you’ll have the chance to meet Debbie Southorn of AFSC, a leading activist against the police state. In this recent piece, Debbie reveals that Chicago Police are increasingly responding to mental health crises with SWAT raids.

Young peacemakers gather in St. Louis
AFSC is continuing its peacemaking work with students at the newly renamed Northwest Academy of Law and Social Justice. Joshua Saleem, who directs AFSC’s work in St. Louis, recently wrote that he’s “overjoyed to have the privilege to work with the brilliant and talented youth and staff at Northwest. We had a room full of young people wanting to become peacemakers in their school and community.”

One community member responded that she “wishes we could clone Joshua all over St. Louis.”
Dayton is the first city in the U.S. to earn “Certified Welcoming” status
Migwe Kimemia, who directs AFSC’s work in Dayton, writes about a tremendous step for the City of Dayton, which was recently recognized by Welcoming America. “This certification is a testimony of the Dayton community’s determination to stand in solidarity with immigrants and refugees in this country,” Migwe says. “Moreover, the certification signifies that the City of Dayton leadership has the political will to deepen the growing welcoming cities movement in this country.”

The case for second chances
AFSC Michigan Criminal Justice Program staff Natalie Holbrook and Korbin Felder recently penned this guest commentary in support of second chances for people in prison. They cite “the mounting evidence and growing public sentiment that if we are truly going to end mass imprisonment in this country, we have to focus on our failed over-punishment policies for violence in our communities and provide meaningful remedies.”

AFSC Michigan is celebrating AFSC’s Centennial tonight in Ann Arbor. While it may too late to attend, it’s never too late to support this good work. Additional co-mentoring trainings for AFSC’s Good Neighbor Project are coming up; contact Demetrius Titus for more information.

Support Sanctuary Everywhere
This month, AFSC introduces “Sanctuary Everywhere Live!”, a series of free webinars to share strategies and tools for creating safer, more welcoming communities. Sign up for our first webinar on September 21: “Quaker Social Change Ministry: How to incorporate spiritual practice into your social change work.”

Midwest Region seeks Associate Regional Director
Margaret Jackson has announced her upcoming retirement from AFSC after more than two decades of dedicated service. Applications for this position are being accepted through September 30.

Thanks as always for your support
Your gifts of time and money help AFSC shine a bright light of hope. Go here to give. And please share this new subscription link for the Midwest Digest with anyone you think might like to be involved with AFSC’s creative work in the Midwest. Thank you!