

Greetings from Topeka Center for Peace and Justice, Inc.



Table of Contents

1. Peace Camp
2. Letter from the Board Chair
2. New Mediation Training
3. Letter from Executive Director
3. Harvesters Group
4. Shawnee County Volunteers
5. POP Update
5. Solar Eclipse
6. Restorative Practices
7. Restorative Practices Pictures
7. Washburn University Meeting
8. Happy Retirement
8. Current Board Members

It's that time of year when Peace Camp is on the horizon. This year's theme, "Growing in Peace" promises to be especially fun as campers explore peace for themselves, others, and the earth. June 24th-28th are the dates for this year's camp, with the half-day camp open from approximately 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

The Topeka Center for Peace and Justice is especially grateful to West Side Christian Church and New Life American Baptist Church for providing leadership, space, and volunteers for this year's interfaith camps. Elementary Peace Camp Director, Kit Pittier, and Middle School Peace Camp Co-Directors, Shania Ward and Patty Hodge, donate endless hours to create engaging activities for Peace Camp. In addition, guest speakers from the community are invited to share their wisdom, a field trip is included, and campers can always count on a healthy meal and a snack.

Peace Circles have become an integral part of Peace Camp. Circles are a Tier One Restorative Practice and offer each participant an equal opportunity to be heard. Not only do campers learn about peace, but they are exposed to diverse perspectives.

The cost for Peace Camp is \$30 per child. Scholarships are available if needed. Please contact the TCPJ office at 785.329.6349 if a scholarship is needed. An enrollment link can be found here: <https://www.topekacpj.org/2024-peace-camp.html>.

- Donna Gilchrist



***The youth will also be leading the Peace Walk on June 28th at the Kansas State Capitol at 10am.**





Letter from Board Chair

Every committee for the TCPJ Board is working with energy and enthusiasm to support the work of the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice. You already know about our outstanding TCPJ staff, but I wish all of you could meet each and every one of our dedicated board members and volunteers.

There is a lot of work going on behind the scenes as the Grant Committee finds and applies for funding, the Communications Committee expands the ways that we are reaching people, and the Restorative Practices Committee puts in place a scaffold that will enhance the work that is expanding in our schools. “Planting Peace” is the theme for the 2024 Peace Party to be held in October, and the Events Committee is gearing up to plan details. Meanwhile, the Finance Committee steadily and consistently makes sure that TCPJ is financially sound and is working to plan for the future.

I can’t express how exciting it is to be part of a committee meeting or board meeting that is on fire with new ideas and is doing the hard work to make those ideas happen. I’m honored to serve alongside these individuals on the TCPJ Board: Pastor Clarence Newton (Vice Chair); Dr. Lou Saadi (Treasurer); Carol Christensen (Secretary); Annie Buckland; Major Jana Harden; Reshon Moore; Dr. Beryl New; Jonathon Noble, Esquire; Mahin Para-Cremer; Gabriel Pennington; Davin Potts; Shelby Ross; and Dr. John Spethman. Thanks to each of you for your passion for making a difference!



With Gratitude,

Pastor Donna Gilchrist

TCPJ Board Chair



New Mediation Training

New Mediation Training is coming June 2024. TCPJ was allocated a \$20,000 grant from the University of Kansas, funding a new mediation training in Shawnee County. The training will cover CORE and Parent Adolescent along with a later class on Parent Youth Facilitator training. We’re excited to share that 23 individuals, the attendee maximum, have already registered to participate in this training. Tonya Ricklefs, Associate Professor at Washburn University, will facilitate the class.

- Pastor Carl Frazier



Letter from Executive Director

With all the activities happening in the local schools and community, the second quarter has been an excellent one! The 70th anniversary of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision has been especially pivotal in Topeka, and the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice (TCPJ) has been a partner in those celebrations. Thank you to community leaders Monique Pittman-Lui, Glenda Washington, and Dr. Beryl New and for leading the charge on many of the 70th anniversary efforts.



Monique Pittman-Lui, Glenda Washington, and Dr. Beryl New

In fact, I can remember my own story of school integration that occurred when I was in the fifth grade as if it happened yesterday. I was moved from my predominately Black school, located across the street from my home, and bussed to the white school on the other side of the town. The ensuing culture shock caused by a change of teachers, receiving physical discipline by a new principal, and the trauma of the bodily damage on the football field have left a lasting impression. So much so, that the fifth grade experience was my final foray into an organized game of football.

- Pastor Carl Frazier

In April Topeka Center for Peace and Justice's Board voted to start a Retirement Plan for employees. Staff met with a representative from Harvester's Group to discuss the different options we have to prepare for our future. Not only are they willing to set up a portion of our salaries to go directly into the retirement fund, but the Board has also promised to match 1% for those of us who opt in. Harvesters have also created a way to roll over any existing 401K accounts, to make it easier to manage.

We are all very excited and feeling very valued that the Board has taken these steps to protect our futures.

- Amanda Saylor

Harvesters Group



Spring 2024



Shawnee County Volunteers

On Thursday April 18th, 2024, Topeka Center for Peace and Justice attended our first Shawnee County Volunteer Event at Fairlawn Plaza Mall. The day started out rainy and cold. It was a great adventure and a way to create new relationships with other non-profit organizations throughout Topeka and Shawnee County.

I was given the opportunity to take a class on self-care and sit in on the United Way's Brett Martin's education session on the way data can help us keep up with the needs of our community.

It was an amazing day to meet and speak with others about TCPJ and its mission and ways our contributions are helping others in the community.

On Friday June 7th we will be setting up a fundraiser with Wings etc. called Dine to Donate. A portion of all food sales will go to Topeka Center for Peace and Justice, Inc.

We met with Girls on the Run and First Tee hoping to create a partnership that would allow us to pair up with Peace Camp with these groups and give us a full week of care for kids and teens during the summer.

-Amanda Saylor



Spring 2024

From the desk of Glenda Brown, Peace Outreach Project (POP) Manager

“A kind word is like a beautiful spring day.”

Since the start of the Peace Outreach Project in July 2023, Topeka Center for Peace and Justice and our collaborative partner, Family Peace Initiative, have had sixteen court involved youth successfully complete the Peace Outreach Project, (POP) program.

We are very hopeful and looking forward to more court involved youth to be impacted by the sixteen week Youth Initiative Program, directed by Assistant Director, Tish Taylor, and group facilitator’s, Hope Thompson and Payton Gengler. The program focuses on the development of healthy families and relationships with an emphasis on emotional awareness, emotional regulation, personal responsibility, and personal accountability.

The Topeka Center for Peace and Justice provides victim/offender mediation using the restorative principles focusing on resolving conflict through dialogue and creative problem-solving rather than violence, holding offenders accountable, giving victims a voice in the process, giving an offender an opportunity to share his/her story and the harm caused by his/her actions, preventing further offenses, and restoring youth, contributing to a safer and healthier environment for themselves, their families, and the community.

Upon completion of the Peace Outreach Project, the court involved youth complete a POP survey reflecting on the effectiveness of the POP program.

I’m happy to report that those who were given the survey, reflected an increase in a more harmonious family atmosphere. In other words, family relationships had improved.

- Peace, Glenda Brown



Solar Eclipse

On April 8th, 2024, the solar eclipse took place. At the time the eclipse took place, the staff at Topeka Center for Peace and Justice were all present in the office. Regina and Carl provided the staff with protective solar eclipse glasses, so that we would all be able to watch it. All of us staff: Carl, Regina, Glenda, Amanda, and myself (Haven) went outside around 1:30pm to watch the solar eclipse. We were also able to see it at its peak which was around 1:48pm. We all thought it was such a beautiful and amazing thing to see!

- Haven Jarrett





Restorative Practices

As spring arrived, we at TCPJ experienced growth and development, fostering connections and seizing opportunities. Our focus on respectful relationships and accountability has remained unwavering, as we create space for reintegration and healing within our community. In March, our Restorative Justice manager, Regina Platt, was honored with the Unsung Hero Award from Robinson Middle School and a certificate of appreciation from Ross Elementary School. Additionally, we participated in a community and law enforcement team-building seminar and the Stop the Violence walk.

In April, we began a series of lunch sessions at Eisenhower Middle School, featuring guest speakers Brenda Ring Wood, Kevin Wilson, and Angel Zimmerman, who discussed topics including responsibility, readiness to learn, respect, and the importance of community building. We also continued our YMCA Leadership and Advocacy 101 program, catering to youth aged 14-18. Our second cohort included male students from Topeka West and Topeka High. This cohort will have their mastery ceremony on June 10th. We are excited to offer the third cohort in partnership with the YMCA in August 2024.

During Black Maternal Week, we supported the Topeka Doula Project's ED Abriona Markham and opened the Come in, Sis! Women's Discussion with grounding and poetry, where women engaged in conversations covering topics like motherhood, body image, and mental health. We recognize the alarming trend of maternal health disparities, particularly for black women, and aim to address this crisis.

Our efforts in May involved the Stop the Violence Phase 2: Community Connection Circles, where over 20 volunteers engaged in roundtables and panel discussions at Robinson Middle School to support students in avoiding situations and behaviors that contribute to internal and external violence. Volunteers informed students of community programs and resources available during the summer of 2024. The students of the International Academy conveyed messages of support and engaged in constructive dialogue about how they could encourage peace within their community and families during the summer. We were honored to stand with Ross Elementary students and staff as Regina Platt gave the 5th-grade commencement speech.

As we move towards Summer 2024, we are pleased to announce that Restorative Leadership Circles will be available at Hillcrest Community Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm and at International Academy on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout June.

Through partnerships, the TCPJ Community remains dedicated to creating a better today while equipping our youth and families to succeed in their tomorrows.

- Regina Platt





Ross Administrator Team at the Ross Elementary 5th Grade Promotion Ceremony

Washburn University Meeting

Former TCPJ Board Chair, Edie Snethen, recently set up a meeting with Dean Kelly Erby of the College of Arts and Sciences and Dean Zach Frank of the School of Applied Studies at Washburn University to discuss what TCPJ is doing and how Washburn might partner with us. Pastor Carl Frazier and Regina Platt gave an informative and concise presentation about all facets of TCPJ, followed by a discussion of volunteer needs. Opportunities for students in departments like peace, justice, and conflict resolution studies; sociology; education; and psychology were recognized. Topeka Center for Peace and Justice will be working on creating some written information on volunteer needs that can be distributed to professors and students.

Some volunteer opportunities include training as a Neighborhood Accountability Board (NAB) member for mediations, helping with restorative circles in local schools, collecting data on the impact of restorative practices in the schools, assisting with new endeavors, and volunteering at Peace Camp.

In addition, the group discussed other ways that TCPJ and Washburn University might partner together in the future.

- Donna Gilchrist



Stop the Violence Phase 2: Panel Discussion & Community Circles



Ross Elementary 2024, 5th grade class, standing as they speak affirmations into the atmosphere during the promotion ceremony



Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Kelly Erby, Edie Snethen, Past TCPJ Board Chair, Carl Frazier, Dean of the School of Applied Studies, Zach Frank, Regina Platt, Donna Gilchrist

Happy Retirement

I'm so thankful that time has introduced some much-needed changes, but I believe we still need people in the community who are certifiable game changers! We have enjoyed working with two such visionaries in the Topeka community and want to take this time to acknowledge their contributions to bringing the TCPJ mission to life. We'd like to extend our thanks to Billie Hall, former founding President and CEO of the Sunflower Foundation, who has recently retired. Since becoming the Executive Director of TCPJ, the Sunflower Foundation has been an unbelievable partner, due in part to the excellent leadership of Billie and the impact she has made within the state of Kansas. Thank you, Billie!



Carl Frazier,
Billie Hall,
and Brandon
Skidmore

In addition, thank you to police Chief Bryan Wheelles for his service to the Topeka community. Chief Wheelles has truly been a friend of TCPJ. He is retiring in June 2024, and we will miss him and his dedication to TCPJ. We wish him the absolute best in his future endeavors.

- Pastor Carl Frazier



Pastor Carl Frazier at
Officer Warfield's
promotion ceremony
with Chief Wheelles
and Mayor Padilla.



Current Board Members

Board Chair, Rev. Donna Gilchrist: West Side Christian Church,

Vice Chair, Rev. Clarence Newton: New Life Baptist Church,

Secretary, Carol Christensen: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,

Treasurer, Dr. Lou Saadi : Islamic Center of Topeka,

Shelby Ross: Foster/Adoptive Parent/Trainer Aristocrat Motors – Internet Manager,

Mahin Para-Cremer: Baha'i Faith of Topeka,

Davin Potts: Temple Beth Sholom,

Reshon Moore: Washburn University Student,

Captain Jana Harden: Topeka Police Department,

Dr. Beryl New: Faith Temple Church,

Annie Buckland,

Jon Noble Esquire,

Rev. Gabriel Pennington: Lead Pastor at Southern Hills Mennonite Church

Dr. John Spethman

