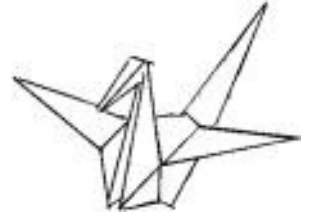




Cranes for Peace

August 6, 2005 • 60th Anniversary of Hiroshima A-Bomb

peace comes with signs & symbols



For more information, contact:

John Anthony La Pietra • 269-781-9478 • jalp@internet1.net
Calhoun County Coördinator, Green Party of Michigan

“Signs and Symbols” Mark Commemoration of Atom-Bomb Attack **Michigan Peace Activists Gather August 6 at Marshall Peace Park;** **Hang 1,000 Origami Cranes, Officially Kick Off “Unofficial Petition Drive”** **Discuss Protecting Peace Doves, Students’ Right to Privacy from Military Recruiters**

Signs and symbols of peace brought Michigan peace activists to Marshall’s small downtown Peace Park on the 60th anniversary of the world’s first atom-bomb attack in Hiroshima.

Participants from as far away as Bangor and Lansing strung and hung paper cranes; received unofficial petitions to support U.S. troops by bringing them home from Iraq now; and discussed working to protect mourning doves (Michigan’s official bird of peace) from hunting, and high-school students from unwanted military recruitment.

The event was emceed by John Anthony La Pietra, Calhoun County Coördinator for the Green Party of Michigan (GPMI) – but peaceful people of all parties, or none, were welcomed to join in – on the day, and in all the follow-up peace activities.

Cranes for Peace Cover Peace Park Dedicated to Sister City Relationship

Over 1,000 origami cranes were hung up on trees, bushes, the park’s Peace Pole, and markers honoring Marshall’s Sister City relationship with the town of Kōka in Japan – part of Michigan’s own Sister State relationship with Japan’s Shiga Prefecture. The La Pietra family has done this at the park for the past three years – and John delivered one set of cranes to Hiroshima at the 50th anniversary in 1995, hanging them at the monument to radiation victim Sadako Sasaki.

Cranes are a symbol of good luck and peace; there is a Japanese legend that anyone who folds 1,000 cranes gets a wish granted. Sadako, a 2-year-old living in Hiroshima when the bomb hit, loved to run in school sports-day competitions – until, in 1955, she became too sick. She started folding cranes, hoping to get her wish, recover her health, and run again.

Unfortunately, she was still several hundred cranes short of 1,000 when she died. Her classmates erected a memorial to her in Hiroshima’s own Peace Memorial Park. Now it, and many other memorials in the park, are covered with cranes of all sizes, shapes, and colors each year on the anniversary.

Marshall’s park was filled with cranes this year, too. Some participants brought more cranes of their own, to string or to place individually. Some loose cranes bore a message on their wings: “Support the Troops . . . Bring Them Home Now”.

An Official Kick-Off of Unofficial Petitions

That is also the message of the petition drive La Pietra announced. The event marked the official kick-off of the drive, but the petitions themselves caution signers that the petitions are unofficial. State law and local charters make getting such a question on the ballot all but impossible. Even if hundreds of thousands of Michigan voters signed official petitions, La Pietra notes, a statewide vote couldn’t take place until next November.

“Still, we can show the local council, commission, or board how much support there is in their area for an immediate, staged withdrawal from Iraq,” he added. Local representatives could pass resolutions, as many cities and states did to oppose the extremism of the “PATRIOT Act”. Or, if conditions permit, a referendum could be held to let the people vote.

(more)

“Signs and Symbols” Mark Commemoration of Atom-Bomb Attack * August 6, 2005 * continued (page 2 of 2)

And there are advantages to an unofficial petition, La Pietra adds. “We can use regular 11" paper, for one thing. And we can collect signatures separately from students too young to register, but still vulnerable to military recruitment abuses.”

The petition is posted as an Adobe Acrobat file on GPMI’s Web site, at: <http://www.migreens.org/troops/petition.pdf>

Students’ Rights to Avoid Unwanted Military Recruitment: “Peace and Freedom Go Hand in Hand”

La Pietra has been working with the Marshall Public Schools to make sure high-school students know their personal information is subject to being revealed to military recruiters under §9528 of the No Child Left Behind Act. He handed out a form created by the ACLU of Michigan to help students and parents exercise their rights to “opt out” of the disclosure.

MPS officials, after confirming with the US Department of Education, have developed their own more detailed version of the form – which is scheduled to be available for students at their pre-registration on August 15. La Pietra urged other peace activists to get together with their local schools, and privacy-rights supporters in their areas, to do the same.

“Students who want to hear from the military can do so – but students who don’t want to be recruited, and parents who don’t want their children left unprotected from the recruitment abuses we’ve all heard about in the news recently, have the right to opt out,” he pointed out. “This is another situation where peace and freedom go hand in hand.”

The ACLU-Michigan forms list the Web page they are posted on: <http://www.aclumich.org/privacy/disclosureform.pdf>

Mourning Doves: Another Symbol of Peace Needs Protection from Hunting

The other symbol of peace at the rally was the mourning dove – threatened with hunting after a promise-breaking deal by Governor Granholm ended 99 years of protection for the bird, recognized in 1998 as Michigan’s official bird of peace.

But a statewide petition drive – supported by Greens, alone among Michigan political parties – gathered over 275,000 signatures to restore the birds’ protection. This has canceled hunts scheduled for this fall and next fall. The issue will be on the ballot statewide next November. And, notes La Pietra, “We can expect wildly distorted ads from those who stand to gain if doves are hunted in Michigan: those who want to sell the guns and the lead shot to do it with.”

Michigan Greens have recognized several times that hunting is an important activity to many. But they “reject the idea that hunting of the traditionally- and legally-recognized bird of peace is a vital part of anyone’s way of life or subsistence.”

The latest Green statement on the issue is available on line at: <http://www.migreens.org/press/pr050609.htm>

#

Green Party of Michigan * 548 S. Main Street * Ann Arbor, MI 48104 * 734-663-3555

The Green Party of Michigan was formed in 1987 to address environmental issues in Michigan politics. There are Greens organized in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Each state Green Party sets its own goals and creates its own structure, but US Greens agree on Ten Key Values:

Ecological Wisdom * Grassroots Democracy * Social Justice * Non-Violence * Community Economics
Decentralization * Feminism * Respect for Diversity * Personal and Global Responsibility * Future Focus/Sustainability
created/distributed using donated labor

text of “Support the Troops • Bring Them Home Now” petitions:

We registered voters of the county of _____ in the state of Michigan have signed our names below to declare that ***we believe the United States should begin an immediate, phased withdrawal of its troops from Iraq.*** We see it as the best policy for our country to end its unjustified, undeclared war in Iraq, and work with the rest of the world to arrest and prosecute all individuals who were actually responsible for crimes against humanity committed on September 11, 2001 and since that date. We believe that the best way to support our troops is to bring them home now. And we call on our elected representatives and appointed authorities at all levels of government to recognize these positions, and do everything within their abilities and powers to implement and carry them out.

(NOTE: This petition is ***unofficial*** – because it is darned near impossible under Michigan law, local charters, etc. to get a legally binding vote on things like this . . . and if we could, it might not happen until next November! Still, we do hope to collect enough genuine signatures of registered Michigan voters to show the moral authority and the power of the people behind the drive for an end to this war, and get some action from our governments. We’d also like to keep in touch with you about this effort, and about the **Green Party of Michigan** – but if you’d rather not hear from us, about either or both of these causes, just say so. On the other hand, if you’d like to collect signatures in your area, or suggest an event we should be covering, or join the **Green Party**, just say that.)