Cultivating Peace

Help conflict resolution take root in our community

Maybe it’s the longer days and warmer temperatures, or maybe it’s birdsong after a lingering winter — I won’t soon forget that snow in late April — but there’s something about this time of year, as spring stretches into summer, that leaves us feeling hopeful.

For me, it’s the promise of a garden. Planting a garden feels so very optimistic.

“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.” – Audrey Hepburn

It’s like that at Peace Ed, too. As we continue into 2021, we do so optimistically. We’re all looking forward to the new normal to set in. But the truth is, the new normal won’t feel “normal” at all for many of our youth and young adults who have experienced so much disruption this past year: violence, unrest, social isolation, loss of loved ones, fear and anxiety … even abuse or neglect.

Our community needs Peace Education Program more than ever.

As the new executive director at Peace Ed, I invite you to join us as we continue to plant hope and cultivate peace.

The past year has challenged all of us in many ways. Peace Ed has risen to that challenge by meeting people where they are.

“We shifted to online and virtual space to continue our important conflict resolution trainings for educators and youth workers.

°Our PeaceCasters youth leadership development program immediately dove into a virtual environment and has been serving young people through continued meeting space and virtual camps.

°We’re amending our programs and delivery to address the mental health needs of youth.

°Our Pivot to Peace staff has continued in-person contact with survivors of gun violence in a socially distant and safe way.

We’re ready to meet students and young adults in the classroom and in the community, to show them hope; to walk with them on their journey into this new season; to show them what they can grow into.

But we can’t do it alone.

We need your support and partnership.

Because hope isn’t a bunch of seeds left scattered. We have to dig deep in order for the impactful and often life-saving work of Peace Ed to take root. It needs nurturing and cultivation.

It needs you.

Please consider joining us as we continue to cultivate peace.

— Lorri Malone, Executive Director

Cultivating Peace Campaign

Will you help us shine a light on the good works of Peace Ed? By partnering with us, you help conflict resolution and prejudice reduction take root in our community.

Consider a gift to honor this new season of growth and change; a season of hope.

Go to PeaceEducationProgram.org or return the envelope provided.

Fueling Opportunities

We’re already halfway there! Thank you to our friend, Jackie Dolin, for the generous gift to sow the seeds of future success.

GOAL:
$20,000
$19,000
$17,000
$15,000
$13,000
$11,000

SUMMER 2021

PeaceEd

PEACETALKS

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There are many reasons why the PeaceCasters program is empowering. According to Lijah Fosl, it is “authentically uplifting the voices and leadership of young people.” Leadership isn’t like a light switch that gets flipped on the moment a person becomes an adult. The traits of leadership are inside children and youth from the beginning. To become more comfortable with those traits and therefore stronger, more nuanced leaders, young people need opportunities to practice in ways that are meaningful to them. “PeaceCasters doesn’t believe young people are the future; it believes young people are the present. They should be the leaders of right now,” Lijah says.

Lijah was a participant in the PeaceCasters program during late middle and early high school when it was run by the Center for Interfaith Relations. Eventually the program came under the umbrella of Peace Education Program. While PeaceCasters has changed a lot in the ensuing years, Lijah (they/them/their) has long found it a relevant and inspiring way to activate leadership in young people, which is why they returned as a mentor, a volunteer, a paid facilitator, and now works full time as the program leader.

“When I first came back to the program, I started working with Mark Steiner [who created the program with Barbara West] to re-imagine the program as one that focused on social media. We started focusing on connectedness and media literacy. We incorporated the values of conflict resolution and de-escalation. Over time, I led the development of a new curriculum which is called the Youth Influencers Curriculum,” Lijah says. PeaceCasters is at its core a youth-empowerment program and aims to have programming 100% youth-led.

No matter how young people participate with PeaceCasters, their focus is on four pillars: empowerment through story, community and civic engagement, social media messaging and online conflict resolution. Lijah says seeing the results of this focus happens over the long term, especially with individuals who stay connected with PeaceCasters as mentors and facilitators and become activists in their own right, but it also happens on a smaller scale. “I’ve seen radical changes in participants from folks who wouldn’t speak at all to speaking in front of an audience of 150 people to share an emotional personal story and a call-to-action. That kind of change is notable in the program,” Lijah says.
Thanks For Your Service

Eileen Blanton, Peace Ed’s longtime executive director, retired Jan. 1, after 30 years of service to the organization. Eileen began at Peace Ed as a trainer and served in the leadership role the last 17 years of her tenure.

“Eileen brought so much heart to her work at Peace Education.”
– Board Chair Lee Beckhusen

“She truly embraced Peace Ed’s mission, creating a lasting impact in the lives of so many. We wish her the best in her retirement.”

Eileen shared her own thoughts about her work at Peace Ed in this video posted on our Facebook page: fb.watch/5zhLFtO-BE/

Save the Date

Peace Ed Golf Scramble
Golf for the Greater Good
Friday, Aug. 27
Shawnee Golf Course

For more information, go to peaceeducationprogram.org.

We’re Social!

Follow Peace Ed on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter!

@PeaceEducationProgram
@PeaceEdProgram

Thank you to Susan Miller, Peace Ed’s part-time bookkeeper for the last 18 years, who retired in February.

“Susan shared so much of her time and talent with Peace Ed over the years.”
– Executive Director Lorri Malone

“She spent every Saturday in the office after working at her full-time job all week. She was the fuel that kept us running and we truly appreciate her expertise and all the love she put into her work.”
Nora Christensen, executive director at Squallis Puppeteers, was very familiar with the work Peace Ed does because her sister, Carrie Christensen, is director of programs there. “[Rage-O-Saurus Rex] did start by me admiring my sister’s work with young children and the lessons she was teaching them. I thought it would really translate well into a puppet show,” Nora says. “I was really inspired by Peace Ed from the beginning.”

Along with her husband and fellow puppeteer, Shawn Hennessey, Nora took three main Peace Ed lesson ideas — take a deep breath, shake it off, and count backwards from 10 — and combined them with a dinosaur world that is interesting to preschoolers. There are three characters in the show: Archie, a baby Tyrannosaurus Rex; Donna, a baby pterodactyl; and Smokey, a mediating volcano (who serves as the “adult” in the play). Nora and Shawn took the show around Louisville, working out kinks and making changes until they felt they had it in good shape to use in conjunction with Peace Ed.

“I got back together with Carrie and developed a program to go deeper into the lessons of the show,” Nora says. “She and I worked together to create three 30-minute presentations to do in the classroom.” In these programs, Carrie teaches the lessons of Peace Ed while Nora brings several puppets into the classroom. “It’s a really great partnership [that] has worked for over 10 years,” Nora says.

At Peace Ed, we teach conflict resolution and a lot of people assume we talk about being angry and what to do with that, which we do, but anxiety plays a huge role in conflict, too,” says Carrie Christensen, program manager at Peace Education Program. And since March 2020, there isn’t anyone who hasn’t experienced heightened levels of anxiety.

In trying to help others manage their anxiety once schools were no longer in-person, one of the first things staff at Peace Ed did was make a series of videos which they put online (peaceeducationprogram.org) and sent to Jefferson County Public Schools’ Family Resource Centers for families, counselors, and staff to utilize. These Conflict Resolution Building Blocks videos help elementary, middle, and high school students recognize their triggers and cues, and how to communicate when they are overwhelmed by their feelings.

The organization has also been holding virtual workshops with teachers, JCPS administrators, Family Resource and Youth Services Center coordinators and community youth development leaders. “We did a great one about how to make cooperative games work in a virtual [learning] environment,” Carrie says. “We always teach skills through cooperative games but in virtual classes that wasn’t happening.” Peace Ed translated 12 of its most popular cooperative games into a virtual setting and invited teachers to learn how to use those to build emotional literacy skills into their NTI classes.

The staff is anticipating a return to in-person trainings and programs in the coming weeks.
What is Pivot to Peace?

Peace Education Program’s **Pivot to Peace** is a program for survivors of stabbings and gunshot injuries, as well as those living at a high risk of violence.

Pivot to Peace is an opportunity to be supported post-injury, develop plans to stay safe and address the factors that have put individuals at risk for violence.

WHEN IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

• Jefferson County residents injured by gunshot or stabbing.
• Anyone living with a high risk of violence.

REAL (REALIZE AND ELEVATE YOUR ABILITY TO LIVE)

This is an opportunity for the support team and the participants to come together in fellowship and have open discussions about the challenges they are facing and to receive guidance on the road to healing.

HOW PIVOT TO PEACE WORKS

It’s a referral system. Hospital emergency departments, trauma departments, and community health workers or other medical staff can refer potential participants to Pivot to Peace. Referrals from other medical entities, doctors, schools and families are also accepted. An individual is also able to self-identify.

Once a referral is made, the Pivot project manager will contact participants for follow up and will assign a case manager upon enrollment.

WHAT PIVOT DOES

We offer guidance and help make connections. Once connected with a case manager, participants will receive wraparound case management services, including counseling and mentoring for the participant and their families, and receive referrals for services including job training, employment, parenting training, counseling (personal and family), GED, and other educational services and support as identified or needed.

Participants, as well as their family members and friends, are also invited to participate in 20 hours of training in nonviolent conflict resolution offered by the Peace Education Program.

Since 2016, Pivot to Peace caseworkers have had a 96% success rate in preventing retaliation and re-injury with survivors of gunshots and stabbings.

For more information about Pivot to Peace, contact: Deborah Barnes-Byers at 502.589.6510 Email: deborah@peaceeducationprogram.org

96% SUCCESS RATE
Thank You to Our Supporters

Thanks to our many supporters including donors, grantors and foundations. You make this work possible!

Donations 4/1/20 – 3/31/21

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Mentoring Through Navigators

Life isn’t always a smooth path; most of us go through periods in our lives when we need the support of others to get through. The critical pre-teen and early teenage years can be especially rough, and it is why Peace Ed’s Navigators program is focused on young men in late elementary and middle school who would benefit from mentoring and developing their conflict resolution skills.

Durk Davidson, who runs Navigators, worked for two decades in Jefferson County Public Schools as a Family Resource and Youth Services Center coordinator and spent much of this time working on implementing peer mediation and conflict resolution at Olmsted Academy North. It was a natural transition after his retirement to teach Peace Ed’s curriculum to young men at nine JCPS schools.

Durk visits schools to work with 10-12 young men at various grade levels who had been identified by counselors, teachers, and administrators as needing special support. Some of them may have had irregular school attendance, low grades, fights, or suspensions. What they all needed, however, was a place of camaraderie, skill-building, and trust.

Navigators provide participating students with not only the support of a consistent adult presence in their lives over the course of the program, but also a clearer understanding of their emotions, including what triggers their anger and the physical cues their bodies experience when they feel anger inside (such as sweating and biting one’s lips). Participants also learn the language and practice the skills of conflict resolution often by playing cooperative games. “They love those games,” Durk says. “Sometimes they’ll come up with some parts that they twist and change, and I’m all for that, but I follow Peace Ed’s building blocks.”

By the completion of the 20-week program, Durk says he and school staff can check various data points, including attendance rates, suspensions, referrals, and grades for benefits. “It has been the most powerful thing I’ve been a part of,” Durk says.