

April-May  
2009

Vol. 44 No. 3



Newsletter of **LEPOCO**  
Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

## "Voices of Experience" Tour to Visit Easton

The gripping personal stories of murder victim family members and their journey from anger to reconciliation and forgiveness will be presented on Monday evening, May 5<sup>th</sup>, at the First Presbyterian Church, Spring Garden Street, in Easton, at 7 pm.

Rev. Walter Everett's son, Scott, was killed in 1987, and since then Rev. Everett has committed himself to sharing the story of his experience, the importance of restorative justice to help in healing the injury, and the numerous ways that the current system, with its promise of more violence as a response, fails to help the victims of crime.

Bess Klassen-Landis was only 13-years-old when her mother was murdered. This year is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death and Bess has taken the year to share her story of healing and forgiveness.

This appearance is part of a series of speaking engagements throughout Pennsylvania arranged by the Pennsylvanians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and is called "Voices of Experience." The Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing (L.V.-CASK) is the local sponsor. You are urged to attend.

While the program at First Presbyterian in Easton is their only public event Rev. Everett and Ms. Klassen-Landis will also speak at a local prison, for a minister's meeting and for a college gathering.

**Several students at Lehigh University** have focused on death penalty issues in their classes this semester. They have held several programs (see related story on page 6 written by one of those students) and will be offering their perspectives on why they became involved in working on the death penalty and what they have gotten out of the experience at a 4 pm, forum/teach-in on Monday, April 20, in Maginnes Hall, Room 101, at the university in south Bethlehem.

The students are Calvin Smiley, Luke Miller, Jackie Scully and Claire Sullivan. The public is invited to attend their program.

Several older members of L.V.-CASK have been working with these students.

One Lehigh student, Kristen Dalton, an intern at *The Morning Call*, wrote about the death penalty and the efforts of the other Lehigh students in the Wednesday, April 8 edition of the paper.

## Youth Peacemaker Training: Saturday, April 25



The Association of Students Advocating Peace (ASAP), will be hosting the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Youth Peacemaker Training on April 25<sup>th</sup>! The Youth Peacemaker Training is an all-day activism workshop created for and by highschoolers.

The training will feature a nonviolence training activity, a talk by Bethlehem City council member Karen Dolan about getting your voice heard in local government, and (perhaps most importantly) a free vegan lunch.

The bulk of the day will be spent in small group workshops. Participants will be able to choose workshops on a wide variety of topics including: the Obama administration, discrimination, the local food movement, advertising and the media, and the environment.

Besides the exciting activities planned for the day, the Youth Peacemaker Training is simply a great opportunity for progressive teens to meet like-minded peers from around the Valley and discuss the important issues of today.

The training will run from 9 am to 4 pm-ish, and will be held at the Lehigh Valley Friends Meetinghouse, outside Bethlehem on Rt. 512, about 1/2 mile north of Rt. 22. Space is limited, so contact the LEPOCO Office today to reserve your spot!

*Peace Camp is quite possibly the most fulfilling five days of every year of my young adulthood.*

- Nathaniel Shaffer, writing in June 2008 about his experience as a teen helper at Peace Camp.

Nathaniel Shaffer's powerful words are a reminder of the joys and opportunities of Peace Camp 2009. You will find enclosed with this newsletter a registration form to be completed for peace campers and a Volunteer Interest Form to be completed by teens or adults who would like to help with Peace Camp. (More copies of each form are available from LEPOCO or at [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org).)

The Peace Camp Planning Committee is busy making all the arrangements for this summer's event. Help is welcomed. For more information, please call LEPOCO at 610-691-8730 or talk with Donna Hartmann or Diane Dilendik, leaders of the planning for this year.

# Veterans For Peace, Lehigh Valley Thomas Paine Chapter, Report

At a past meeting the Lehigh Valley Chapter 152 VFP voted to identify itself further as the Thomas Paine Chapter, Veterans For Peace. Beyond Paine's role as a major creative force in the America Revolution, Chapter 152 selected him in recognition of his service as a Continental foot soldier.

Appropriately, members of the Chapter vigiled at Center Square, Allentown on January 29, the anniversary of Paine's birth. Leaflets pertaining to Paine's life, as well as the occupation of Iraq, were passed out. Also, a part of the action was a spirited debate with elements of the Allentown Police Department regarding such issues as the right to peaceful assembly.

Earlier this year the local VFP sent a letter signed by most of its members to President Obama urging him to do all in his power to effect a cessation of our military involvement in Iraq and to seek a negotiated settlement to the hostilities in Afghanistan.

On January 28<sup>th</sup> Louise Legun, VFP chapter coordinator, hosted a program on public radio station WDIY. Her guest was Debra Hedding who was Military Public Affairs Officer for the U.S. Central Command during Operation Desert Storm in 1991. Ms. Hedding spoke of the disenchantment she began to feel regarding the military due to several factors, among them the failure of air security during the events of September 11, 2001, and the lack of a connection between those events and the eventual U.S. actions directed toward Iraq. She concluded her remarks by expressing the belief that the anti-war movement needs to seek grassroots funding to

(continued on page 8)



## Visiting the Army Experience Center

In the sprawling Franklin Mills Mall just outside Philadelphia the U.S. Army has opened a \$12 million Army Experience Center which invites customers 13 and older to play video games.

On President's Day various peace groups converged on the Center to express displeasure in the Army's tactics. The groups included Veterans for Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Vietnam Veterans Against War, the Granny Peace Brigade, and the Brandywine Peace Community. The main theme of the protest was "War Is Not A Game!"

The group first covered their provocative clothing to enter the center without questions. Some members of the group applied for a card enabling them to play the video games. Some of the games featured the operator in a helicopter shooting at civilians on the ground and others showed spilled blood.

The recruiters staffing the Center dressed in jogging suits to convey being regular people. Their entice-

ments include job training (combat jobs cannot be used in civilian life), character development, comradeship and education benefits as a result of enlisting. However, the downside is not mentioned or is down-played. This includes sleep deprivation, inadequate armor and equipment, lack of pure drinking water, heat or cold, hostile stares from frightened civilians, and above all veteran suicides, crippling wounds and death. Due to inadequate funding of the Veterans Administration many veterans face difficulties in getting continued medical care.

After scouting the Center, the protestors bared their logos and froze in position. Security was called and threatened the group with arrest if they did not leave.

Phil Reiss and I arrived late. I had on a cap, "U.S. Army Veteran," and was met with smiles while I looked at the games played by the few teenagers present. The one combat game I observed had a soldier shooting at targets in a village. On my way out I bared my t-shirt, "Stop the War," and tried to make eye contact with the recruiters with little success.

Hopefully the media publicized the protest and the existence of the Center to Philadelphia area residents.

- John R. Zachmann

**Editor's Note:** Another demonstration at the Army Experience Center is set for May 2<sup>nd</sup>. It is being planned by several Mid-Atlantic region peace groups. Contact LEPOCO if you are interested in attending.

### Newsletter of LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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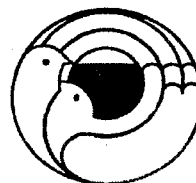
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The LEPOCO Newsletter is published 10 times a year by the Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern, a nonviolent, non-profit organization dedicated to peace in all forms.

#### Annual dues are:

Regular Member ..... \$35

Limited Income Member ..... \$ 5

Household Membership ..... \$45

Supporting Member ..... \$75

Articles/news should be submitted to the address above for consideration for the next issue of the newsletter.

Newsletter Staff: robert Daniels II, Bob Riggs, Tom Stinnett, Nancy Tate, Jeff Vitelli.

Thanks to all the people who staple, fold and label the newsletter each month.

LEPOCO Steering Committee: Addison Bross, Peter Christine, robert Daniels II (ex-officio), Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Ruth Karpinski, Mimi Lang, Michelle Mecham, Janet Ney, Susie Ravitz, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio).

# Popcorn & Politics

Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, 7 pm: El Norte

Popcorn and Politics: A *First Friday Film* projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

A brother and sister flee persecution at home in Guatemala and journey north, through Mexico and on to the United States, with the dream of starting a new life. A work of social realism imbued with dreamlike imagery, "El Norte" is a lovingly rendered, heartbreaking story of hope and survival. Directed by Gregory Nava. 139 minutes. 1983.

*Please bring a snack or beverage to share.*

Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 7 pm: The Thin Red Line

Popcorn and Politics: A *First Friday Film* projected on the big screen at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

Francois Truffaut, the noted French New Wave filmmaker, once declared that no war film can be truly anti-war, because it inevitably presents "an energy and order which appears appealing." It's a shame that he did not live to see director Terrence Malick's classic, set during the Guadalcanal campaign of World War II. Not only an anti-war film, but a haunting exploration of the meanings of life, death, and conflict, as seen through the eyes of a group of disenchanted soldiers. 170 minutes. 1998.

*Please bring a snack or beverage to share.*



## Tax Day 2009: War Is Not Over

As this newsletter is in process, plans are in under way for handing out the War Resisters League "Cut the Military Budget" flyer at local post offices on Tax Day, April 15. Below you see one of the charts and quotes from that flyer.

*"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."*

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

\$772 billion  
increase in  
Pentagon  
base budget  
2001-2009\*

\$787 billion  
for the  
Obama  
"Stimulus  
Package"

\$1,000  
billion  
military  
spending in  
one year<sup>†</sup>

\$2,200  
billion  
over five  
years to  
repair U.S.  
infra-  
structure  
(recommended)<sup>‡</sup>

\$2,300  
billion  
in  
"missing"  
money<sup>§</sup>  
at the  
Pentagon<sup>¶</sup>

\*not including Iraq/Afghan. costs; see "America's Defense Meltdown," cdl.org

†over 2 to 3 years, 74% to be spent by Sept. 2010

‡including DoD, DoE nuclear weapons, 30% Homeland Security retirement, military activities of other agencies (VRL analysis)

§roads, water systems, bridges, dams, mass transit, schools, etc. (American Society of Civil Engineers, asce.org)

¶transactions without documentation, reported by Defense Sec. Rumsfeld, 9/10/01. "With good financial oversight we could find \$48 billion in loose change in that building, without having to hit the taxpayers." (Retired Vice Admiral Jack Shanahan comment to CBS)

While the Tea Party actions locally and nationally on Tax Day (see *The Morning Call*, 4/8/09) will protest federal spending for jobs, housing and the environment (all very much needed in the present economy) we are likely to hear nary a word from them about the bloated spending for wars (past and current): 51% of the federal budget in recent years.

And while congressional friends of military contractors make protestations about cuts, the Obama Administration is really proposing to raise the largest military budget in history (the Bush Administration's

military budget for FY 2009) by \$21 billion for FY 2010, plus they are seeking a \$75.5 billion supplemental for Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. While the proposed FY 2010 budget does cut some "unnecessary," expensive weapons systems, it increases other projects like drones (filling the skies with what one writer calls "round-the-clock assassins.")

The public and Congress should leap toward Rep. Barney Frank's proposal to cut 25% in military spending. As he says, "I don't understand why... building a road, building a school, helping somebody get health care, that's wasteful spending, but that war in Iraq... is going to cost us over \$1 trillion before we're through."

If you did not get a Tax Day pie chart and would like a copy please contact LEPOCO. See [www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org), to learn more about the national campaign to cut military spending.

- Nancy C. Tate

## Veteran to Speak on Middle East

On Monday, April 27, at 7 pm, the Thomas Paine L.V. Chapter of Veterans for Peace will sponsor a talk by Chris McIntosh, who served as an infantry Marine in Iraq and is now working with Veterans for American Interests in Israel-Palestine (a project of the American Association for Palestinian Equal Rights Foundation). His talk will be about his understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the link between our nation's security and our government's response to the conflict.

The talk will be held at the Lehigh Valley Friends Meetinghouse on Rt. 512, about 1/2 mile north of Rt. 22. The public is invited. For more information call Louise Legun, VFP chapter president, at 610-437-5314.

# Celebrating a Legacy of Care & Concern

I didn't know what to expect when I arrived at the Philadelphia International Airport to pick up this year's LEPOCO Annual Dinner speaker, Jennifer Harbury. When I was first tasked with getting her to come as the honored guest at this organization's big yearly peace community event I had no idea who she was. I'd never seen the *60 Minutes* feature about her and her struggle to bring justice to the case of her husband Everardo, nor was I aware of the three books she'd written.

I'd caught myself up as best I could by reading the heartbreaking and inspiring *Searching for Everardo: A Story of Love, War, and the CIA in Guatemala*, which only made me more nervous about meeting this impressive person. I was put at ease when she approached me at the baggage carousel joking at the amount of luggage she brought with her. One large suitcase contained nothing but 17 years worth of files related to the case of her disappeared husband, who was tortured for several years before finally being murdered by the U.S.-backed Guatemalan government. The Lehigh Valley would not be the only stop in the Mid-Atlantic area for the Texas-Mexico border-based lawyer and human rights activist. From here she would head to

New York City and then Washington, D.C., before making a return to Guatemala. Guatemala, where she met Everardo, where she lost Everardo, where she fasted outside the National Palace demanding information on the disappearance of Everardo. Guatemala, where the battle for justice continues, where she had just been a week before the Annual Dinner.

In our drive back to Bethlehem, Jennifer revealed that just as she'd gotten back to Texas from this most recent trip she received word that one of the main prosecutors of her case and a dear friend had died in a car accident on a quiet country road at four in the morning. There was no doubt in her mind that this was no accident. Having seen so many similar instances of loss, convenient to the murderers and those who defend them, Jennifer could only sum up saying, "That's Guatemala."

And yet she is not resigned to accept the injustices. Her tireless work on behalf of torture victims has taken her around the world and, for one evening, to the Cathedral Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. She raised

awareness with her talk, "The United States and Torture: From Guatemala to Abu Ghraib," speaking to a riveted room of LEPOCO supporters, volunteers, and activists. Her hands ran across the carved curves of a wooden podium that threatened to obscure her diminutive frame from the audience. She's a small woman with bold words large enough to topple tyrants. While her fingers were searching, her words hit their targets with a moral clarity and concise logic. Here was a public exorcism of the C.I.A. torture beast, and a call to responsibility for all: "As citizens, as people who live here and benefit by this society and this government, we have to shoulder the responsibilities that go with it. ...water boarding, electric shocks, dog attacks.... To Abu Ghraib and Gitmo by way of Guatemala, courtesy of the U.S. military, and brought to you, by your tax dollars through the CIA."

With clinical precision she sliced apart the arguments most commonly used to support the use of torture techniques during interrogations, focusing particularly on the "ticking time bomb." She pointed out information gleaned from such sessions is unreliable at best, and often, completely fabricated. Hers was a call to return to a more moral way of handling prisoners: "It may be that a democracy must fight with one hand tied behind its back, but at least that is the upper hand." Afterwards Ms. Harbury took questions and comments from the



Photo by Stephanie Fetter.

Addison Bross, Janet Ney, Jennifer Harbury, Nancy Tate and Robert Daniels II, gather before the Annual Dinner program.

audience. 94-year-old pacifist and LEPOCO member Eleanor Hay was the last to speak. She shared the story of how she and her husband offered sanctuary to many who fled war-torn Central America, including union organizers from El Salvador and torture survivors from Guatemala. The thread of connections thick, the legacy of care and concern alive, those close to the podium could maybe see Jennifer pull back a tear when she extended a thank you to Eleanor. The event could not have ended on a better note.

Thanks go out to Jennifer Harbury for sharing her story with us, and thanks too, to the pre-dinner pianist, Ben Kraft, LEPOCO Peace Singers, the cooks, set-up and clean-up crews, the Cathedral Church, the dishwashers, the Art Raffle donors, and all the other volunteers and attendees who made this year's dinner a grand success.

The complete video of Jennifer Harbury's talk can be found in a playlist at LEPOCO's home on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/rhubarbdoom](http://www.youtube.com/rhubarbdoom)

- Robert Daniels II

## Help Make Holidays Fairer

Maybe it was last Mother's Day, I can't quite remember. I can't say that I buy flowers very often, but one day I was strolling through Wegman's and I asked my daughter, "Should we buy Mommy some flowers?" Of course, she's wayyy smarter than I am, at age two, and she answered, "Yea!" The first bouquet I picked up looked nice, so I turned it around to check the price, and more importantly, country of origin. Product of Colombia. Yikes! What about the next bouquet? Colombia. And the next? Colombia. What does made in Colombia mean? I wasn't sure, so I bought some fair trade chocolate instead.

At the next meeting of the Americas Solidarity Group, I brought up the issue, and proceeded to look into it a little further. A few clicks later, what I learned was not encouraging. There is a lot of information available, including an easy to read article at [www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org) (search under Colombia for "Colombia Trade Deal Threatens U.S. Flower Growers"). The article is aimed at protecting U.S. flower growers, but also documents the dangers posed to Colombian workers, which are severe. In addition, it details the recent history of flower imports, and its impact on U.S. agriculture.

O.K. So now I know a little something, but what should I do about it? I have to say that the conclusion of the article is incomplete to say the least. The only recourse suggested is to contact the congressional switchboard, which doesn't solve the problem.

There are alternatives! A quick visit to [www.transfairusa.org](http://www.transfairusa.org) gives a list of fair trade certified flower sellers, many of which are close by...and you can always order them online. Buying locally grown flowers is also an excellent option when possible. (Trauger's Market, on Rt. 611 south of Riegelsville, has beautiful bouquets of their fresh flowers during the growing season.) What surprises me is that the price of fair trade flowers (at the online seller I just chose) isn't more expensive.

I'll gladly give up in spontaneity what I gain in fairness. Not only do the people you buy from deserve it, the people you give to deserve it as well.

- Chris Spohn

## Acting to Stop War & Terror

**Afghanistan** - As the war in Afghanistan quickly becomes the war in Pakistan and Afghanistan, there are even more issues we need to understand. One is that (according to Tom Hayden speaking in a United For Peace & Justice conference call in early April) the growth of 50-60% of the children in Pakistan is stunted or extremely stunted now. He said that taking war to Pakistan can only result in increased suffering in a place that is already among the most traumatized and suffering places on earth.

UFPJ has sample letters and lots of background information at their web site [www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org) (go to the section on National Action For Peace in Afghanistan). Letters and calls to Congress are crucial now to oppose the escalation of the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan and to oppose the proposed supplemental spending bill of \$75.5 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan.

A statement by the War Resisters League on "Beyond Afghanistan: Choosing Nonviolence" is avail-

able at [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org) dated 4/2/09.

Many of you heard Peter Lems speak locally about Afghanistan in February. He gave a similar talk for Pacem in Terris in Wilmington, Delaware, later that month. They printed the text of his talk in their recent newsletter. If you would like a copy, please contact LEPOCO.

**Militarism** - The Brandywine Peace Community has been taking the message of peace to Lockheed Martin, the world's largest weapons contractor with several facilities in and near Philadelphia, for 15 years. On Good Friday, 16 people were arrested in a Brandywine demonstration (including Art Landis of Perkasio and Tim Chadwick of Bethlehem) at the Lockheed Martin facility in King of Prussia. Brandywine was holding a Stations of the Cross witness, "Beyond War, Beyond Lockheed Martin: Another Economy Is Possible."

We are invited to join Brandywine as they take a peace message to Lockheed Martin's Annual Shareholder's Meeting in Philadelphia on Thursday, April 23. The protest vigil begins at 8:30 am. See [www.brandywinepeace.com](http://www.brandywinepeace.com) for more info.

On April 4<sup>th</sup> 10,000 people marched on Wall Street, NYC, in a UFPJ organized demonstration protesting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and to see "Beyond War" that an economy that serves people's needs is possible. April 4<sup>th</sup> was the anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech in New York, 1967, and the anniversary of his assassination on April 4<sup>th</sup> the next year.

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, American Friends Service Committee alerted us that there are 1000 days until the promised removal of all U.S. troops from Iraq at the end of 2011. They are of course calling for a much speedier withdrawal timeline because for every day that that conflict continues, U.S. troops and Iraqis die and our government spends another \$720 million on the occupation of Iraq. For more about AFSC's 1000 days countdown see [www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org).

**Guantánamo** - On April 30, Witness Against Torture will end their 100 Days to Close Guantánamo and End Torture actions in Washington, DC, with a final demonstration through the streets of the U.S. capital. They are seeking 60 people willing to risk arrest at this gathering to represent the 60 people still being held at Guantánamo, even though they have been cleared for release. The organizers hope to have a total of 241 people in orange jump suits like those worn by Guantánamo's prisoners, to represent the total number of men still being held. For more information see [www.100dayscampaign.org](http://www.100dayscampaign.org).

**Do you want to understand more about the economic crisis?** Here are some good sources from recent weeks: Paul Krugman's frequent columns in *The New York Times*, James K. Galbraith writing for *The Washington Monthly*, 3/19/09; Matt Taibbi, "The Global Economic Crisis Isn't About Money," *Rolling Stone*, 3/19/09; Joseph Stiglitz many columns in *The New York Times* and elsewhere; William Greider's frequent columns in *The Nation*; (many of these also appear at [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)); and Bills Moyers interview with William K. Black on 4/3/09, audio or transcript available at [www.pbs.org/moyers](http://www.pbs.org/moyers). Finally, there is a new activist effort about which you can find information at [www.anewwayforward.org](http://www.anewwayforward.org).

# The Death Penalty as Torture

Last month on St. Patrick's Day several members of LV-CASK (Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing) and a group of Lehigh University students gathered to hear Rev. Joe Ingle speak about his experience with death row and the criminal justice system. Rev. Ingle has an extensive résumé in criminal justice. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize twice, in 1988 and again in 1989. In 1990 he published his book, *Last Rights: Thirteen Fatal Encounters with the State's Justice*, in which he chronicles some of his experiences on death row. In 1991 he was a Harvard fellow and later during the 1990s he worked as the executive director of the Nashville-based Neighborhood Justice Center, an alternative conflict management center dedicated to restorative justice. Lastly Joe Ingle founded TCASK (Tennessee Citizens Against State Killing) which inspired the creation of our own LV-CASK.

Rev. Ingle's talk focused on the death penalty as torture. Many people assume the three-step lethal injection procedure is similar to euthanasia for sick or unwanted animals. However, after the testimony of veterinarians the state of Tennessee declared one of the three drugs from the lethal injection cocktail illegal to use on animals because it was too cruel. Despite finding the lethal injection process too cruel to use on animals, Tennessee's courts have moved forward with executions, including an execution last month where a man turned blue while taking almost thirty minutes to die. Experts agree that if administered correctly, the process should take less than five minutes and the victims should not die of suffocation.

The lack of medically trained personnel at executions (the American Medical Association does not allow its members to kill) leads to poorly trained and possibly mentally unstable prison employees undertaking the complex procedures of dosing and operating syringes.

Rev. Ingle described in great detail how the state understands these issues, but continues to implement this punishment. As a spiritual advisor and vocal friend of death row inmates Rev. Joe Ingle will unfortunately probably continue to witness this glaring failure in our criminal justice system.

- Luke Miller

## An Ordinary Man

When the 1994 Rwandan genocide survivor Paul Rusesabagina spoke in the Zoellner Arts Center at Lehigh University, this past February, the hushed house was inspired by the wit and bravery of a hero that considers himself but "an ordinary man."

Paul Rusesabagina, the inspirational main character dramatized in the movie "Hotel Rwanda," highlighted the spirit of active nonviolence in a land drenched in war. In his lecture entitled "Hotel Rwanda: A Story Yet Untold," he opened with a gentle reminder that the beginning of peace is a strong com-

munity. Rusesabagina explained that the mass killing of over 800,000 Tutsi's and Hutu moderates didn't just begin then, that a weakened society allowed this to happen.

Rusesabagina was the assistant manager of the Hôtel des Mille Collines, but on April 6, 1994, he became the "manager" of over 1200 Tutsi refugees by sheltering them, within the luxury hotel, from the Hutu militia. Despite the desperate pleas he made to influential world leaders who turned their backs, he saved the refugees with what he calls "the power of words." "I was never so scared in my life," he explains, "but I learned to deal with evil." He encouraged the audience to "believe in the power of words, they can be the weapons in our arsenal as human beings." He continued, "Find a way to open up that window of dialog. I have decided never to fight with guns when I have my words." This couldn't be truer for Rusesabagina as he, through his clever communication, dodged the bullets and saved so many lives in those two horrific months of slaughter outside the walls of Hôtel des Mille Collines.

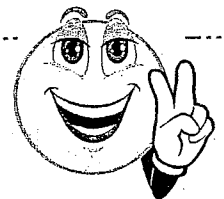
Paul now lives in Belgium, is the author of a book, *An Ordinary Man*, and is the founder the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation, which provides financial assistance to children and women affected by the genocides in Rwanda and other African nations. As an international speaker he gives a message of hope from a heavy heart: "People need to sit, look at each other and talk and say, 'Why is this happening?' They must think about their history, their shared past and then go forward and plan a better future."

Rusesabagina ended his lecture with questions from the audience. When he was asked what, if anything, in his past prepared him to deal with such a violent situation with only his wit, he humbly responded, "I found that the best way to deal with such situations is to be yourself. I was the manager of a hotel, so I kept on doing my best as manager."

He continues to encourage the lives he touches with this message: "Tomorrow is yours. The future is yours. You are the only ones that can shape the world. Stand up for the truth. Stand up for the world. Your task is heavy, but I am convinced that you are up for it!"

- Ruth Karpinski

Help the Peace Movement  
from the Comfort  
of Your Own Home!!!



LEPOCO has some items from previous yard sales that have not found their place in this world. We are looking for someone who could place some of these items on websites like craigslist, ebay or others. Don't be scared, minimal computer knowledge is needed to work these websites. And, we would like to have people ready to take items from the yard sale this coming fall and make listings as well. Please call the LEPOCO office at 610 691-8730 for more details.

# The Struggle Shared

*"I bring you blessings of love and gratitude for our earth, for its beauty, its fierceness and its mystery. And I take from you the blessing of your strength and commitment to creating a better future. May we go from this place of worship in Peace. May we walk gently upon the Earth. Amen.*

- From Greta Browne's benediction at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Houston, before she began her Walk for the Grandchildren.

## WALK FOR THE GRAND-

CHILDREN - Lehigh Valley Greens activist and LEPOCO member Greta Browne has spent part of the month of March on foot along Route 11 in Mississippi to raise awareness of the climate change crisis. She began walking in New Orleans on March 14<sup>th</sup>. She plans to end her walk in Rouses Point, New York, near the Canadian Border. As of April 6<sup>th</sup>, she has walked a total of 180 miles.

Beginning symbolically with a ritual sounding on a beach in Galveston, Texas, the island community that has been hard-hit by hurricanes, she then travelled to New Orleans and from there, has walked stretches of the highway that Katrina followed in September 2005 when it left New Orleans. For the first week she was accompanied by her husband, Guy Grey, and her Gypsy Wagon, a converted 1982 motor home.

For safety and logistical reasons, she doesn't walk every stretch of the road, but has touched a significant part of the Mississippi countryside. She is talking to "Climate Refugees" and life-long residents along the way about the impact on their homes and lives of the storms triggered by global warming. Sometimes people give her rides back to her Gypsy Wagon. Sometimes she stays in their homes, or what's left of them. And there's always a conversation about what they are willing to do to avert climate disaster. In a roadside tavern one night it went like this: "Become a vegetarian?" "Never." "Instead of driving?" "Probably not." "Turn the lights out earlier?" "Hmmm." "Change light bulbs, recycle that beer can?" "OK, that I can do."

Leaving Mississippi, Greta observed that the communities along Rt. 11 were probably declining long before they were torn apart by storms. "Nothing can withstand the inexorable advance of the culture of oil-

based locomotion: cars and trucks in hundreds of shapes and sizes... No one walks. There are no sidewalks, no benches to sit on or shaded places to rest. No public restrooms or even water fountains. Bridges have no lanes for pedestrians, but still it's worth while to walk."

Greta's blog and the many links to her walk to confront climate change, are an inspiring example of how internet technology can be effectively used to communicate powerful ideas. In addition to her observations, logged frequently, and accompanied by stunning photographs, there is now a map of her progress, and links to websites with a veritable encyclopedia of information about climate change, energy alternatives, and the like. On the web, go to [www.climatewalk.homestead.com](http://www.climatewalk.homestead.com), or [www.forallthegrandchildren.blogspot.com](http://www.forallthegrandchildren.blogspot.com). You can add your comments to those of her other followers. Greta appreciates the encouragement.

PEACE IS BLOSSOMING - The property adjacent to Jordan United Church of Christ, off Walbert Ave. in South Whitehall, has been dedicated to the Prince of Peace, Peacemakers and Peacemaking. Over the past three years, the congregation has planted a 2.5-acre plot with over fourteen flower beds in different light and soil conditions, and different terrains to accommodate a diversity of plant species and human functions. It includes an inspiration trail, boulders, swings and bridges, birdfeeders and birdhouses, altars and memorials, a gazebo, a peace pole, and several natural amphitheatres with log seating for community gatherings.

In the process of clearing and preparing the land, an old plow was unearthed, which became incorporated in a peace sculpture with swords and an anvil. Visitors frequently stroll in the garden, walk dogs, meet friends

for a picnic lunch or a counseling session, or sit on a log in meditation. All who visit leave with a look of serenity. The church plans to use the space for community events and celebrations, beginning with a summer solstice gathering and a Blessing of Pets service in July. By the time you read this, daffodils, crocuses and other early spring blooms will be abundant.

For more information, call Bill Wehr, whose vision and inspiration has been a driving force for the Jordan Peace Garden, at 610-395-1604.

## HEALTH CRISIS IN THE GRAPE

FIELDS - Even as our nation faces the promise of a serious debate on universal health care, a living wage, and workplace safety, those very basic rights which should be guaranteed to every working person in the United States, are being callously ignored for agricultural workers in the fields of the most powerful grower of table grapes in the U.S.

According to the President of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), pickers for Giumarra Vineyards of California, have been left to die, have been poisoned, and their children have been forced to play in unsanitary, overcrowded camps.

When 53 year-old Asuncion Valdivia collapsed in 105-degree heat, his son called 911. When the ambulance arrived the Giumarra foreman sent them away. Asuncion died as his son drove him to the hospital. In another instance, when a woman went to the company doctor (after being released from a hospital where she had been sent after passing out when the field she was working in was sprayed with pesticides) the doctor told her she had a vaginal infection and it was a personal problem, not job-related.

This is a critical time to support the UFW ([www.ufw.org](http://www.ufw.org)) in their struggle to protect the rights and lives of some of our most vulnerable workers. Write to the company president to protest the conditions at Giumarra Vineyards. Write to your legislators to urge action on universal healthcare, a living wage, and workplace safety.

- Jeff Vitelli

# Bits & Pieces

☯ We want to give another big "Thank You," to the artists who created the beautiful prizes for LEPOCO's **Art Raffle**. The drawing was held at the Annual Dinner in March. The winners were as follows: wooden bowl by Lee Buck - winner Alice Ann Miller; watercolor print by Gene Mater - winner Louise Legun; hand-crocheted afghan by Anna Reczek - winner Jo Devlin; pottery canisters by Monica & Ray Sommerville - winner Craig Weber; neo-primitive mixed media construction by Frank Sabatino - winner Diane Petro; raku cup by Deb Slahta - Ursula Wuerth. Thank you also to all who made a donation by buy chances.

☯ On April 10, a ten-day vigil ended outside Creech Air Force Base in Nevada, when 14 people (including John Dear, SJ, and Kathy Kelly, both speakers locally on recent occasions) walked through the main gate. The goal of their vigil had been to raise public awareness about the increasing use of **unmanned drones** in the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Personnel at Creech AFB pilot these drones remotely. The 14 vigilers walked onto the base seeking dialogue with the pilots.

The urgent need for our immediate protest of the use of drones seems apparent when we read that as many as one-million people have fled their homes in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan (*The Sunday Times*, 4/5/09) to escape attacks by the drones and by their own army. And, a

recent radio report said as few as 6% of those killed by the drones were militants; over 90% being civilians. A banner held outside Creech AFB read: *Ground the Drones...Lest You Reap the Whirlwind.*

☯ *Why do the sufferings of the poor and the downwardly mobile class matter more than the tiny deprivations of the rich? Leaving aside all the soft-hearted socialist, Christian-type arguments, it's because poverty and the squeeze on the middle class are a big part of what got us into this mess in the first place. Only one thing kept the sub-rich spending in the '00s - and hence kept the economy going - and that was debt: credit card debt, home equity loans, car loans, college loans, and of course the now famously "toxic" subprime mortgages, which were bundled and sliced into "securities" and marketed to the rich as high-interest investments throughout the world. The gross inequality of American society wasn't just unfair or aesthetically displeasing; it created a perilously unstable situation.*

- Barbara Ehrenreich,  
*The Progressive*, March 2009

☯ Prof. **Faramarz Farbod** of Moravian College's Political Science Dept. will speak for that college's Amnesty International group about "**Israel and Palestine: What's Behind the News?**" on Tues., April 21, at 7 pm in the UBC Rm. of the Hauptert Union Bldg., at the college.

## Veterans For Peace Report —

(continued from page 2)

hire public relations experts to be effective in countering the professionals employed by the pro-war elements.

On her February 25<sup>th</sup> radio program Ms. Legun's guest was John Grant who entered the Army in 1965 and is a Vietnam veteran. He is also a past, long-time president of the Philadelphia Chapter VFP. That radio program focused on

the U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan which Mr. Grant views to be "a slippery slope to a quagmire." He also expressed a belief that part of the U.S. interest in being in Afghanistan is due to oil and oil pipelines, while having little interest in the welfare of the Afghan peoples. Mr. Grant further stressed that, as U.S. citizens, we need to question the military culture into which we are locked at the present.

March 19<sup>th</sup> the chapter joined the Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition at the Federal Building in Allentown to observe the sixth anniversary of the U.S. military involvement in Iraq. The chapter meets every second Thursday (May's meeting will be on the 14<sup>th</sup>) at the LEPOCO Peace Center in Bethlehem.

- Paul Fichter

## Weekly Peace Vigils

*Our wars continue. Can you join the much-needed witnessing for peace?*

### Bethlehem:

4-5 pm, Second Thursdays

3<sup>rd</sup> & Wyandotte Sts., south Bethlehem

Contact: Vince Stravino 610-216-8103

Allentown: Noon-1 pm, Fridays

Federal Courthouse, 5<sup>th</sup> & Hamilton Sts.

Contact: Rev. John C. Fowler 746-5013

4:30-5:30 pm, Fridays

PA National Guard Armory, 15<sup>th</sup> & Allen Sts.

Easton: 10-11 am, Saturdays

Centre Square

Contact: Reggie Regrut 908-859-5632

## SUPPORT LEPOCO!

\_\_\_ Enclosed are my yearly LEPOCO dues of \$\_\_\_\_\_. (\$35 individual; \$45 hh; \$75 supporter; \$5 lim. income)

\_\_\_ I am also enclosing an extra donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_ I would like to support LEPOCO's work with a \_\_\_ monthly/ \_\_\_ quarterly pledge of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_ I'm most interested in working on the following issues:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4<sup>th</sup> St., Bethlehem, PA 18015.

## Events at Kirkridge

### Retreat & Study Center, near Bangor:

April 24-26: "Gandhi, King, Day and Merton - Peacemaking Ancestors" with John Dear

May 1-3: "Everyone Can Sing for Peace" with Sara Thomsen. Sara Thomsen is a peace activist, an award-winning singer-songwriter, and artistic director for The Echoes of Peace Choir in Minnesota. For this weekend Kirkridge is offering LEPOCO members a 10% discount.

May 27-31: Creating a Culture of Peace Training of Trainers with Janet Chisholm.

For more information see [www.kirkridge.org](http://www.kirkridge.org) or call 610-588-1793.



# Bits & Pieces

☪ The Americas Solidarity Group will meet on **Tues., April 28**, at 7 pm, at the Peace Center. Among other business the committee will hear brief reports from Joe DeRaymond on his recent months in El Salvador working with the election observers (we hope to make plans for a longer report from Joe) and from Don MacRae on the successful April 3-5, Witness For Peace Mid-Atlantic Retreat, held near Wilkes-Barre.

The new president of El Salvador, Mauricio Funes said in his acceptance speech, "This presidency will be dedicated to Bishop Oscar Romero." Wow!

☪ LEPOCO will take our peace boutique and literature table to **Jim Thorpe's Earth Days Festival**, Sat. and Sun., **April 18-19**. If you would like to help with staffing please contact Robert Daniels II at LEPOCO. Also, this is a good time to express interest in helping to staff LEPOCO tables/booths at any of the several summer festivals and/or suggest festivals where we should have a LEPOCO presence.

☪ The Arts Luminarium, a multicultural arts center in Allentown, is sponsoring a **Peace Parade** on Sun., **May 17**. We don't have a lot of details yet, but it is certainly a catchy idea and hopefully LEPOCO can participate in some way. Contact the Office if you would like to help with that participation.

☪ The wonderful magazine, **The Progressive**, that carries regular columns by Howard Zinn, Barbara Ehrenreich and Eduardo Galeano, among others, will hold their 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, **May 1 & 2**, in Madison, Wisconsin. They have an amazing line-up of

Check out the LEPOCO website at [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org) for a regularly updated Calendar of Events, Newsletter Archive, Videos, and More. and Sign up for regular LEPOCO e-mail updates by calling 610-691-8730 or by sending a message to [lepoco@fast.net](mailto:lepoco@fast.net)

speakers planned. They're trying to sustain their publication for the future, so the cost is \$295. If you would like more info. please see [www.progressive.org/conference](http://www.progressive.org/conference).

☪ The L.V. Gay Men's Chorus will perform their 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concerts, **April 25 and 26**. The Sat. concert will be at 8 pm at Wesley United Methodist Church, 2540 Center St., Bethlehem, and the Sun. concert will be at 4 pm, at Grace Episcopal Church, 108 N. 5<sup>th</sup> St., Allentown. Tickets are \$15. For more info. see [www.lvgmc.org](http://www.lvgmc.org) or call 800-348-2813.

☪ The National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee will hold their next Gathering & Meeting, **May 1-3**, in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The special topic for this gathering will be perspectives on Peace Tax Fund Legislation and the program will also offer a mix of presentations, open discussion, organizing topics, time for personal war tax resistance questions, basic WTR workshops, and good food and fun. For more info. see [nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org](mailto:nwtrcc@nwtrcc.org).

☪ Ken Kreider, Professor Emeritus, Elizabethtown College, will speak on "Historic Alternatives to Military Service," for the Hi Neighbors! group at 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church (Fellowship Hall), Bethlehem, on Mon., April 20, at 11 am. The church is located at 2344 Center St.

☪ "Sludge Diet," a documentary film about the environmental problems linked to using sludges as "fertilizer," is being shown locally in April and May. Upcoming showings include, Sat., April 18, at 7 pm, Boehm Hall, Rm. 105, Kutztown Univ.; Fri., April 24, at 7 pm, Maulfair Medical Center, 403 N. Main St., Topton; and Sun., May 3, 12:30 pm, Goggleworks, 201 Washington St., Reading. For more info., call 610-823-8258.

☪ "Trouble the Water," a documentary film focusing on one New Orleans families' home video footage of Hurricane Katrina and the aftermath, will be shown on Thurs., **April 16**, at 7 pm, at Cedar Crest College (Alumni Hall), Allentown. The film won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, was nominated for an Academy Award, and is described as both horrifying and exhilarating.

☪ CODEPINK, the activist women's peace organization, is planning a series of events **May 9-10**, as part of a 24-hour vigil outside the White House for Mother's Day. They will be gathering to honor all women who have been affected by war and economic devastation. They will hold a quilting bee, a "pink talent show," and will deliver roses to mothers visiting their children at Walter Reed Hospital. For more info. see [www.codepinkalert.org](http://www.codepinkalert.org) or call 202-290-1301

## MEETINGS... MEETINGS... MEETINGS... MEETINGS... ETC.

**Mondays, April 13, May 11, June 8, 7 pm:** LEPOCO Monthly Action Meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center. All members and friends are welcome at this monthly business meeting where the organization's activities are reviewed.

**Thurs., April 23, 7 pm:** Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Sun., April 26, 7 pm:** LEPOCO Peace Singers rehearse at the home of Bob & Carmen Riggs, Bethlehem. Call 610-691-8730 for directions.

**Mon., April 27, 12:30-3 pm:** Peace Camp 2009 Planning Committee working meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Tues., April 28, 7 pm:** Americas Solidarity Group meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Tues., May 5, 1 pm:** Fundraising Committee meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Thurs., May 7, 6 pm:** 2009 Bike/Walkathon Planning Committee work meeting and calling night at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Tues., May 12, 8:30 am:** Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing meeting at LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Thursdays, May 14 & June 11, 7 pm:** Lehigh Valley Chapter of Veterans for Peace meets at the LEPOCO Peace Center.

**Wed., May 20, 6 pm:** Nuclear Abolition Sisters meeting at the Olive Branch Restaurant, 355 Broadway, south Bethlehem.

*Please join in the meetings and work of these groups as you are able. If you want more information about any of these meetings or want to know the next meeting of the Newsletter Planning Committee or the Youth & Militarism Truth in Recruiting Committee, please call the Peace Center at 610-691-8730. For a regularly updated calendar of events and a schedule of meetings please see [www.lepoco.org](http://www.lepoco.org).*



# LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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*Photo by Judy Woodruff*

Susie Ravitz, Ursula Wuerth, Bob Riggs, Anna Maria Caldara and Doug Kopf hold banners as part of the demonstration for peace outside the Federal Building in Allentown on March 19, the sixth anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq. (The Spanish banner is roughly translated: "War Hurts Us All." We had an English banner with the same message.) Over 40 people participated on a very rainy day. Songs were sung, bells tolled, leaflets distributed to passers-by, and a letter signed by those present was delivered to the offices of Sen. Arlen Specter, Sen. Bob Casey and Rep. Charlie Dent. The gathering was organized by the Lehigh Valley Peace Coalition. The Coalition will meet on Thursday, April 23, at 7 pm, at the LEPOCO Peace Center. Everyone concerned about the escalating wars is invited to attend.