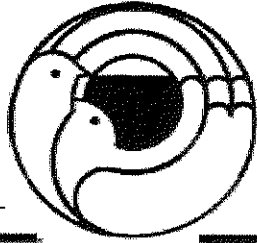


March
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Newsletter of **LEPOCO**
Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

Coming Soon: Spring & Annual Dinner

How does LEPOCO know when Spring is on the way? We know it when we get together for the Annual Dinner and Meeting. Good news – the dinner and meeting are on for March 17th. Again, this year, Wesley United Methodist Church, 2540 Center St., Bethlehem, will be the site, starting at 5 pm, with a time of fellowship and music on the Celtic harp by Grace Adele Spruiell. For reservations, call the LEPOCO office at 610-691-8730, or complete and return the enclosed coupon.

Kathy Kelly will be our speaker. As you may have read in a recent newsletter, Kathy is one of the founding members of Voices in the Wilderness, and currently a co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, based in Chicago. She will provide valuable first-hand insights from war-torn countries and the possibilities of actions for peace. Her topic will be, "Unshackling Ourselves: Lessons from War Zones."

LEPOCO's Annual Dinner includes the completion of the election of the organization's Steering Committee for next year (see ballot in this newsletter for early voting) and, of course, the LEPOCO Peace Singers will enliven the evening. You will be able to purchase items at the LEPOCO Boutique while catching up with friends and acquaintances.

As always, the dinner will be a vegetarian feast that cannot happen without lots of volunteers. Although a caterer will bring us the main course, a Mexican casserole, the rest of the meal will be prepared by our hardworking volunteers. We start early in the day cooking, setting up the furniture, and transforming the hall into a special LEPOCO space. If you can help any time during the day, please call the LEPOCO office.

We look forward to seeing you.

- Janet Ney

Tax Day Cometh Also _____

Many of us and our fellow citizens scramble at the last minute to get our taxes in the mail before the April 15th midnight deadline (in 2018 the date is Tuesday, April 17th). For many years LEPOCO has taken the opportunity to use this date, because more than the usual number of people show up at the post office, to reach out and educate people about how their tax

money is being spent. And we plan to do so again this year.

Every year the War Resisters League (WRL) creates a flyer showing how our tax dollars are being spent. And, unsurprisingly, every year the winner by an incredibly large margin is the military, which absorbs over 50%. The current president believes, however, that the military budget needs to be increased (even though we have more military equipment than the next eight countries combined) and he has even suggested that we begin to develop "smaller" nuclear weapons!!

On tax day LEPOCO posts volunteers at as many post offices in the Lehigh Valley for as many hours as volunteers are willing to hand out flyers. I have done this for many years and always find it to be interesting and worthwhile. At the two post offices in Easton I have had contacts with long-lost acquaintances and friends as well as strangers who are supportive. And, I have spoken as well with curious people and those that strongly agree with the president and believe we need a bigger, more lethal military. Bitter arguments are not encouraged and are not productive. We are there to give those that agree with us support, and those that disagree with us food for thought. We hope that the information on the flyer will have a positive impact. Conversations have on some occasions resulted in new members for LEPOCO.

I urge anyone who has the time and would like to interact with people on the increasingly important issue of military spending to volunteer an hour or two or more outside one of the many post offices in the Lehigh Valley on tax day. Exercising our First Amendment rights feels like the right thing to be doing in this increasingly violent and troubled time. Contact LEPOCO (610-691-8730) if you want to help.

- Susie Ravitz

Peace Camp Party Was FUN!

Saturday, February 3, at First Presbyterian Church in Allentown, with familiar activities and a festive array of party foods, we gathered to celebrate Peace Camp!

It was a morning of fun, that included stories, music, games, international dance, skits and crafts. Not only did the campers have the opportunity to relive some of their favorite activities and see some familiar faces from our summer Peace Camp, they also got to share the experience with some of their favorite adults.

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Remembering Berta Cáceres

Saturday, March 3, marks the second anniversary of the murder of the courageous worker for justice and women's autonomy, Berta Cáceres. She was killed in her home in La Esperanza, Honduras, because of her leadership in the struggle of the Lenca people in defense of their lands, rivers and forests, which were being threatened by the construction of mega hydro-electric dams on the Gualcarque River.

DESA, the Honduran company which was attempting to build the dams, has stopped construction after funders in Finland and the Netherlands withdrew their support. However, the non-governmental organization, Global Witness, has reported that many environmental and human rights activists have continued to be killed as the Honduran government has cracked down on activists.

Global Witness also reported that the Honduran government has passed laws which give immunity to forces which attack citizens protesting threats to the environment. Erika Guevara-Rosas, the Americas Director at Amnesty International, stated: "Berta's tragic murder illustrates the woeful state of human rights in Honduras. The message is clear: if your human rights work disturbs those with power, you will be killed."

Bertha Zúniga Cáceres, oldest of Berta Cáceres' four daughters, has replaced her mother as coordinator of COPINH, the organization which Berta co-founded. She survived an assassination attempt by three men wielding machetes in July 2017. Last December, the vehicle in which she was riding was stopped by military officers. The COPINH members were on their way to protest electoral fraud. Bertha was detained and the other riders were removed from the vehicle and ordered to walk away. Bertha was eventually released.

Now, Berta's daughter, Bertha Zúniga Cáceres, is also running for election to the Honduran National Congress, representing the Intibucá department, one of the poorest and most heavily indigenous areas in Honduras. If elected, she will become the first indigenous - and the youngest - woman elected from Intibucá.

Join the citizens and groups, including 70 members of Congress, who support the Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act (HR-1299). Raise your voice about the ongoing violence against environmental and human rights workers and ordinary citizens in Honduras. We need to hold our government responsible for failure to act in response to these atrocities, especially since the deeply flawed November election in Honduras.

- Bob Riggs

Editor's Note: You may have seen one of the flyers posted by members of the Americas Solidarity Group to mark the second anniversary of the assassination of Berta Cáceres. The flyer features a lovely drawing of Berta and a call for people to support the Berta Cáceres Human Rights in Honduras Act (HR-1299). Please urge Rep. Charlie Dent to sign onto this bill as a co-sponsor.

First Tuesday Book Group

As this newsletter is being prepared the First Tuesday Book Group will be discussing "The Sellout: A Novel" by Paul Beatty, on March 6. The group will meet next after that on April 3, to discuss, "Horsemen of the Trumpocalypse: A Field Guide to the Most Dangerous People in America" by John Nichols, of *The Nation*. John Nichols captures the essence of the Trump Administration by providing assessments of key officials wielding power outside the purview of most U.S. citizens. The Book Group meets at the home of Carmen and Bob Riggs in Bethlehem. Call Mimi Lang (group convener) at 610-866-2407 or LEPOCO (610-691-8730) for directions or more information.

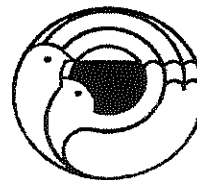
Peace Camp Party Was FUN

(continued from page 1)

We started the morning with crafts, a greeting, a story, an adorable knit giraffe (Sluhu) and songs. The group was divided into three smaller groups and led by volunteers into their respective planned activities, with a break for a healthy snack after the second activity. After the final activity, we gathered again in Fellowship Hall, to PARTY! A closing story, more singing and a line dance to the goodie table, took us to the end of this sweet celebration, complete with cupcakes and smiles!

Thanks to everyone who helped plan and implement this event. It was a winter morning filled with all of the warmth, joy and positivity that Peace Camp delivers every summer. Young people and volunteers can sign up now for Peace Camp 2018 (July 23-27). Call LEPOCO (610-691-8730) for the forms.

- Amanda Zaniesienko



Newsletter of LEPOCO
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The *LEPOCO Newsletter* is published eight 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	\$10
Household Membership	\$45
Supporting Member	\$75

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

Newsletter Staff: Tom Stinnett, Nancy Tate, Martin Boksenbaum, Amanda Zaniesienko.

Thanks to all the people who collate and prepare the newsletter for mailing each month.

LEPOCO Steering Committee: Carol Baylor, Mick Baylor, Terry Briscoe, Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer), Nancy Johnston, Christine Loch, Dan Miller, Janet Ney, Jim Orben, Scott Slingerland, Tom Stinnett (co-treasurer), Nancy Tate (ex-officio), and Amanda Zaniesienko (ex-officio).

Potluck/Popcorn & Politics

Friday, March 9th, 7 pm

(Rescheduled from March 2nd due to the snow that day.)

"Living Downstream"

A Popcorn & Politics Film projected on the big screen
at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4th St., (south) Bethlehem.

"An eloquent and cinematic documentary film" based on the acclaimed book by ecologist and cancer survivor Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D. The film follows Steingraber as she travels across North America, working to break the silence about cancer and its environmental links. Producer & director: Chanda Chevannes. Producer & editor: Nathan Shields. 85 minutes. 2010.

Please bring a snack or beverage to share.

Friday, April 6th, 7 pm

"Smoke Signals"

A Popcorn & Politics Film projected on the big screen
at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4th St., (south) Bethlehem.

The screenplay for this independent film was written by Sherman Alexie, based on a short story from his book, "The Lone Ranger & Tonto Fistfight in Heaven." The film is unique as an all-Native American production: producers, director, screenwriter, actors and technicians.

Directed & co-produced by Chris Eyre. 89 minutes. 1998.

Please bring a snack or beverage to share.

Sunday, April 8th, 6 pm

(Rescheduled from February 11th.)

Sam Benchehib

*"What's it like to paddle down the most polluted river
in the world in a kayak made of plastic bottles?"*

A Potluck & Politics event
at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4th St., (south) Bethlehem.

Sam Benchehib, a junior at Lehigh University, joined his brother, Gary, (a film maker) in a highly successful environmental protection action in their home country, Indonesia, in August 2017. They used plastic (a kayak made of plastic bottles) and an adventure down the most-polluted river in the world, to teach lessons about how plastic pollutes our world.

Please bring food to share for the Potluck Dinner at 6 pm.

Discussion will start around 6:30 pm.



Save the Date

The official start of summer, Memorial Day Weekend, will be here before we expect it. How will you be celebrating the beginning of summer? Will you have an outdoor picnic using flag motif paper products, listen to patriotic speeches at a war memorial, or just wait for the parade to pass by?

How about considering an outdoor event that helps promote peace without the mention of war? The annual LEPOCO Peace-A-Thon for bikers and walkers is held each year on Memorial Day weekend and this year it will take place on Saturday, May 26th. The

monies raised by this event will help continue the local work for peace and this year it will also help the work being done in the Lehigh Valley to assist refugees and fight deportations.

We will be gathering near Sand Island in Bethlehem around 8:30 am, for light refreshments and leave around 9 am, for the walk or ride. Both walkers and bikers should be done by 1 pm.

Further information, along with pledge sheets will be given in the next LEPOCO Newsletter.

- David Rose

Igniting Power & Connection?

Calamitous things go by fast and furious these days. It's hard to remember let alone react to them. Steve Martin put it this way: *This is my thesis – the public has a short memory and, like – How many people remember, a couple of years ago, when the Earth blew up? How many people? See? So few people remember. And you would think that something like that, people would remember. But NOOO! You don't remember that? The Earth blew up and was completely destroyed? And we escaped to this planet on the giant Space Ark? Where have you people been?"*

Making it a laughing matter is one way to raise consciousness.

A flier handed out at the Daring Democracy Fourth Friday Film event on January 19, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley, had an annotated list of, "Nine Steps to Ignite Power and Connection," from a book written by Frances Moore Lappé and Adam Eichen. Taking the "think positive" approach, the list included such items as:

- ♦ Become a hub for multiplying power and building community,
- ♦ Organize highly visible citizen deliberations to choose the best long-term strategies, priorities, and immediate actions, and
- ♦ Create new public spaces for community talk, 'People's Corners.'

Good ideas. Excellent ideas. We'd like to think we're doing that kind of stuff. But doing only the positive work that needs to be done is missing something of major import, the proverbial elephant in the room: the military-industrial-agribusiness-pharmaceutical-fantasyland-corporate-capitalist-governmental system that is both, carrying out massive acts of calamitous mayhem as well as detouring and blocking the positive stuff we'd like to be doing.

In our deliberations, we need, it would seem, to deal with all that nasty, negative stuff. Here's a sample basket of deplorable actions taking off like rockets into the night sky:

• *Alerted by Prison Radio, information from rashidmod.com:* Kevin Rashid Johnson, one of the most brilliant artists and writers behind bars, wrote an article about the Florida prison strike, published online on January 9. Warden Barry Reddish then ordered that Johnson be given a disciplinary infraction for "inciting a riot," and had him thrown in a cold cell, with a broken toilet, no heating, and with a window that will not fully close, allowing the cold wind in. "We have not heard anything from Kevin since January 19th." Warden Barry Reddish must be held accountable for illegal retaliation and, now, the torture of Kevin "Rashid" Johnson.

• *From Earthjustice, 2/8/18:* Take Action! Protect our oceans and coasts from offshore drilling. Imagine

offshore oil rigs lining the entire U.S. coast, threatening our coastal communities, beaches and wildlife with dirty oil spills. Under the new offshore drilling program proposed by the Trump administration, this nightmarish scenario could become reality. Tell the Trump administration that you reject the new offshore drilling proposal by submitting a comment today!

• *From LEPOCO, 2/8/18:* Extend the Olympic Truce. No War on North Korea. While the President and our Pentagon threaten war against North Korea (and they do the same in return) it is important to know there are peace activists in South Korea working very hard to prevent war. And, S. Korea's leaders seem to want talks not war. The people of the world through the United Nations have called for the historic Olympic Truce and the two Koreas marched into the games together. Please join in acting to see this Truce extended. We will be witnessing for peace not war with N. Korea.

• *From Organic Consumers Association, 2/6/18:* Vermonters are, literally, swimming in a toxic soup of glyphosate (Monsanto's Roundup weedkiller), atrazine, 2,4-D and other pesticides. According to Michael Colby, co-founder of Regeneration Vermont, the "toxic stew" of pesticides polluting Vermont's waterways includes 34 different products. In 2016, the most heavily used was glyphosate – 62,458 pounds. That's more than double the amount used in 2014. It makes for one "dirty dairy" industry. And Ben & Jerry's – owned by the international consumer products conglomerate, Unilever – is one of, if not *the* biggest player in that industry. TAKE ACTION: Tell Ben & Jerry's to go 100% Organic!

• *From U.S. PIRG, 2/10/18:* We just found out that under interim director Mick Mulvaney, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau may be pulling back on its investigation into Equifax. Equifax's negligence allowed hackers to steal personal information for 145 million U.S. citizens – the same personal information those hackers could use to steal your identity, open credit cards, or take out loans in your name. Tell Mulvaney: Don't let Equifax off the hook. Conduct a complete investigation. As President Trump's interim director, Mick Mulvaney has repeatedly undermined the agency he's supposed to be leading, rather than holding companies like Equifax accountable. He requested \$0 in funding to run the agency, and has stripped key departments of their enforcement powers.

How are we to deal with these, and the many, many other affronts to people and planet? As Johnny Mercer wrote in 1944, don't we need to come together in both eliminating the negative as well as accentuating the positive – if we are to ignite power and connection?

- Martin Boksenbaum

Steering Committee Nominations & Ballot

LEPOCO's Steering Committee plans and provides leadership for the Action Meetings, held the second Monday of the month (these meetings are open to all members and friends of the organization). The Committee makes decisions between monthly meetings and handles finances, personnel, and other organizational issues. The election for this year's Steering Committee will be completed at the Annual Dinner. (See balloting instructions below.)

Carol & Mick Baylor, Christine Loch, Dan Miller, Scott Slingerland, and Julius Iwantsch (co-treasurer) will continue serving their two-year Steering Committee terms that began in 2016. Thank you to Olivia Arena-Miller for serving on the Steering Committee before her move to Europe.

We are grateful to all these LEPOCO members who, as Sheila Clever once said, are the "best people on the planet" convening once a month at the Peace Center to "strategize how to nonviolently build a sane and just world." The nominees for 2018 appear below.

Please note that two couples are choosing to serve as a team filling one position on the committee. That will have advantages for all concerned.

Terry Briscoe of Bethlehem is a long time member of LEPOCO and was a leader in the L.V. Peace Coalition when it was active, 2002 to 2010. Retired from Bethlehem Steel, he and Sylvia have four children and nine grandchildren. In his three terms on the Steering Committee, he has been active in dealing with staff issues, steering committee functioning, organizing delegations to meet with elected representatives, and speaking out on military spending.

Sharlee DiMenichi of Allentown, has been active in LEPOCO since the age of 14. She convened the Disarmament Working Group and coordinated the 1992 Hiroshima/Nagasaki observance. At graduation she was awarded the Baker Peace Prize by Juniata College. She currently works as a writer (having published a book on the Peace Corps) and as a pre-school teacher. She previously served on the Steering Committee as co-treasurer and would share a seat on the committee with her husband Stefan Rogers.

Nancy Johnston of Easton arrived in the Lehigh Valley from West Virginia in the 1970s. She is a Quaker and has been involved in Peace Camp for over 25 years. She participates in the Peace Pilgrimage and has been

with the Peace Singers for seven years. She is a retired nurse and is seeking a second term on the Steering Committee.

Janet Ney of Allentown has served on the Steering Committee member for over ten years. She has facilitated the Annual Dinner for many years, and sings with the LEPOCO Peace Singers as she is able. She previously served on the National Committee of the War Resisters League for several years. Janet is retired from the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, having worked for the organization for over 33 years. She is an active member of the First Presbyterian Church of Allentown and volunteers for the Presbytery of Lehigh.

Jim Orben of Springtown has been a LEPCOO member since the Vietnam era. He is retired from his work in the environmental field on pollution control and testing. A Quaker, he has been active with the L.V. Friends Meeting for three decades. He has been active with the Cooks Creek Watershed Association for 40 years. He lives with Debbie on their rural homestead (with garden and orchard). He is an avid biker, skier, runner, hiker, golfer. In his two terms on the Steering Committee he has been especially helpful in LEPOCO's opposition to the Penn East Pipeline and other environmental efforts. He is a regular helper at Peace Camp and with the Annual Dinner.

Stefan Rogers of Allentown grew up in Indiana where his parents taught at Manchester College. His interest in peace and justice issues was influenced by the Peace Studies Program at the college and by his activities as a youth in the Church of the Brethren. He attended Juniata College and graduated from Manchester College. He moved to the Lehigh Valley after college. He served on the Steering Committee from 2010 to 2014 and has been helpful with various LEPOCO projects. He works in the booming warehouse industry. He would share a seat with his wife, Sharlee DiMenichi.

Tom Stinnett of Riegelsville would continue serving as co-treasurer, a role he has filled recently since 2009, and which he also filled as solo treasurer from 1974-1983. A mechanical engineer, he is mostly retired from his work in the biotechnology equipment field, but still does some consulting work. He has served as president of Riegelsville Borough Council for many years and is married to LEPOCO staff-person, Nancy Tate. He has been active in many aspects of LEPOCO's work since the early 1970s.

Election Ballot

At-Large Steering Committee Members (vote for five people/positions):

Co-Treasurer (vote for one):

Terry Briscoe ____
(2-year term)

Sharlee Dimenichi & Stefan Rogers ____
(2-year term)

Tom Stinnett ____
(2-year term)

Nancy Johnston ____
(2-year term)

Janet Ney ____
(2-year term)

Jim Orben ____
(2-year term)

***Please note here if you or anyone you know would be interested in serving on the Steering Committee:

This ballot can be cast at the Annual Dinner on Saturday, March 17, 2018, by 6:15 pm, or by mail to arrive at the LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4th St., Bethlehem, PA 18015, by Thursday, March 15, 2018.

Words from a "Prisoner of Hope"

Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland, who also served as High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations, spoke to a large audience at Lehigh University, February 6. As a life-time advocate for human rights and a grandmother with both empathy and experience she is a strong voice for climate justice that includes and empowers all people.

She envisions a future where the poorest and most vulnerable people on the planet are treated with dignity and no one is left behind. She believes we need to change our minds and hearts to not only transition to a clean energy future, but to include those suffering the most in that future. She sees the need for urgent action to reduce the effects of climate change. Our present pathway leads to an unlivable world. Science tells us over and over again that we cannot continue to use fossil fuels if we want to live in a more peaceful and prosperous world.

Mary Robinson claims that leaving fossil fuels in the ground may be the easiest step we take toward climate justice. Bringing people out of poverty and providing them with clean affordable alternative energy is the difficult challenge. She suggests we share the stories of climate refugees and people who are showing courage and resiliency in the face of climate change. There is shared sorrow in hearing the story of Islanders who have to move away from "the bones of their ancestors" and the farmers in Africa who keep waiting for rain, not knowing when to plant because "the seasons have changed." She hopes these stories have the power to change the minds and hearts of even the skeptics.

Universities have a unique role to play Mary Robinson told the audience. They are the sources of innovation and technology, science and learning that can help lead in this radical transition she called the Green Revolution. She challenged the students and all of us to get into a mindset that puts climate change at the top of our political activism. We must think about our personal lives and actions and seek solutions based on empathy and fairness. She says that Climate Justice is a unifying goal that all people in the world can share. We live in a transformative time of human solidarity, 195 countries signed the Paris Accord and when the U.S. refused to do so, numerous states, cities, towns, and individuals spoke out and said, "We're Still In!"

Mary Robinson ended her talk with a quote from Desmond Tutu, "I am not an optimist but I am a prisoner of hope." May that hope continue as we work together for Climate Justice, namely a healthy, secure, and sustainable future for all people.

- Debbie Orben

Truth about Palestinian Christians

Dr. Sa'ed Atshan spoke February 2nd, at Muhlenberg College, as part of the "Troubling Truth" series. His topic was "Palestinian Christians: Past, Present &

Future." Dr. Atshan has received recognition from peace and justice groups around the world. He teaches peace and conflict studies at Swarthmore College.

His brief history of Palestine/Israel began with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, leading to 70 years of the Palestinian diaspora living in refugee camps, in countries all over the world, and in an oppressed and shrinking nation of Palestine now surrounded and nearly absorbed by Israel. The largest settlement of Palestinian refugees (outside the Arab world) is in Chile, where 300,000 refugees and immigrants are well integrated into all aspects of life in Chile. Most of them are Christian.

Dr. Atshan illustrated all of the ways that Palestinians -- 20% of Israelis -- are second-class citizens in their former homeland. Written into Israeli law are 50 specific rights denied to Palestinians.

Gaza is to the point where the UN has estimated that by 2020 it will be uninhabitable, largely because of the lack of water. Up to 30% of the entire economy of Gaza is dependent on the production of olives. The olive trees, which are being destroyed, are descendants of the original trees planted generations ago by the "original Christian" communities.

Dr. Atshan gave many examples of his and most Palestinian's pain over seeing the land built over and people's right trampled. His talk included photos of the checkpoints, which sometimes look like wire cages where people must sometimes wait hours for clearance to move through parts of the country. He showed photographs of the many walls (3X the height of the Berlin Wall) dividing Jerusalem and separating Palestinians from Israelis in the West Bank and all over the country. By 2003, the West Bank was completely built up as Israeli settlements expanded. Even roads are segregated, with different colored plates signifying where people can drive. The Israeli government controls all water and Palestinians must purchase water from them.

Dr. Atshan was very clear about his observations and commentary stemming from his Quaker background, believing in and practicing nonviolence while speaking truth to power. He showed photographs of examples of nonviolent resistance by the Palestinian people, and listed many partners in nonviolent resistance.

A program called "Christ at the Checkpoint" is bringing hundreds of U.S. Evangelicals, often blindly sympathetic to Israel, to see the occupation first hand and it is changing views among those Christians to be more sympathetic to the situation of Palestinians. He provided the audience, largely Muhlenberg students, with many websites supporting his views. He asserted that if we hold Palestinians to ethical behavior, we should hold Israel to the same standards. Also, he believes that if we love Israel we cannot give them a blank check to bolster the security narrative.

In conclusion, he said of himself that his compass is always set to the humanity of all human beings and in obedience to international law.

Peace Vigilers: Continue the Truce

Holding signs high, 12 people came out on Winter Olympic Games opening night, to urge continuation of the truce between North and South Korea. Local peace activists stood vigil outside the PPL Center in Allentown prior to a Phantoms hockey game. The two countries made peace during the days approaching the historically world-unifying sports contests in Pyeong-Chang, South Korea.

LEPOCO members and friends carried signs saying, "Extend Olympic Truce: Diplomacy Not War with North Korea," "Abolish Nuclear Weapons," and other peace refrains. (Our friends gathered in Princeton, Philadelphia, and other regional cities with similar messages, organized by the Coalition for Peace Action in New Jersey.)

Desperate to avoid a possible military conflict, South Korea's president, Moon Jae-in, used the Games as an opportunity to craft what some called an "Olympic Truce."

In November, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution, "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic Ideal." UN General Assembly president Miroslav Lajčák said: "The Olympic Games and the United Nations aspire to the same ideal. This is an ideal based on humanity. It says that, no matter what is going on in state capitals around the world, people will always have a space in which to engage and connect."

During the past year, South Korea has faced increased threats and aggression by the North, and the U.S. has upped its rhetoric and military maneuvers hostile to North Korea. The UN resolution called for peace and safe passage for all athletes for a week before the Games, during and a few days after the Paralympic Games that end March 18.

Mr. Moon's challenge now is to not only participate in talks with North Korea, but to appease the U.S. in its belligerent stance against the North.

- Brenda Havens

"If I Were President"

(from the pencil of a young peace camper)

Chris Compton has been a Peace Camper for several years. His mother shared the following piece that he wrote for school.

If I was president I would end wars. Too many people are getting killed in wars. It is not fair that people lose their families in wars. Innocents are getting killed in bombings.

Another thing I would change is gun violence. People are going to start gangs. Not safe for cops for people who have guns. Also kids can find guns and hurt themselves.

Lastly, I would change animal cruelty. Animals get shot from hunting season. Animals should be treated the same as us. Animals die every day. I think if I was president I would stop hunting season, wars, gun violence.

I am Christopher Compton and I approve this message.

Hearing Re: Fracking Activities

I attended the fifth Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) Draft Hydraulic Fracturing Regulations Public Hearing on February 22nd, at Lehigh-Carbon Community College. I presented in person the resolution passed by Riegelsville Borough Council which was already submitted to the DRBC in writing.

There were approximately 32 presenters at the hearing. Of those 32, there were 12 LEPOCO members (or friends) who made presentation against allowing any fracking activities within the Delaware River Basin. The present regulations proposed by the DRBC staff will ban fracking, but would allow the fracking industry to use Delaware River water and would also allow the industry to dispose of fracking water within the Delaware River Basin. Of the 32 speakers only three spoke in favor of all fracking activities being allowed in the Basin. They said fracking would not hurt water supplies. (I guess they had not hear about Dimock.)

Several of the people who spoke at the hearing had traveled from New York City to participate. One of them said there are now 33 million people getting their water from the Delaware River and Basin, and he said their water should not be put at risk of contamination by fracking activities. One speaker said there are 352 chemicals identified in the fracking water injected into fracking wells and even more coming back up from the earth as part of this process, including radioactive elements.

Written comments are still being accepted by the DRBC through March 30, about the Draft Hydraulic Fracturing Regulations.

- Tom Stinnett

Support LEPOCO!

___ Enclosed are my yearly LEPOCO dues of \$_____
(\$35 individual; \$45 household; \$75 supporter; \$10 limited income)

___ I would like to support LEPOCO's work with a
___ monthly / ___ quarterly pledge of \$_____.
___ I'm interested in the following issues: _____

Name	Phone #	e-mail
Address	City	Zip
Mail to: LEPOCO Peace Center, 313 W. 4 th St., Bethlehem, PA 18015 / Donate through PayPal: go to "membership" page at www.lepoco.org .		

Bits & Pieces

☪ April 4th is the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The National Council of Churches is organizing a A.C.T. Now to End Racism Rally in Washington, DC, on that date, and the Lehigh Conference of Churches is organizing a bus to travel from Allentown to DC for the Rally. (A.C.T. is Awaken, Confront, Transform.) Bus seats are \$60 with meals on your own. They are hoping to have enough reservations by March 15 to assure the bus. Contact the Rev. Larry Pickens at 610-433-6421 with questions or to sign up.

☪ While the Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision for Pennsylvania Congressional districts has solved some of the gerrymandering problems, Fair Districts PA maintains that the state still needs "an independent redistricting commission with real opportunities for public input and strong safeguards for transparency." HB-722 and SB-22 are the bills that, if passed, would establish such a commission. Fair Districts is organizing a "Reclaiming Our Democracy Rally to End Gerrymandering" for Monday, April 16, in Harrisburg. You can find more information at www.fairdistrictspa.com. You can sign up to attend the rally and check the box to be on a list for bus transportation.

☪ In a letter to President Donald Trump on February 6, the General Assembly of the National Board of Directors of the Japan Council against A and H Bombs (Gensuikyo) wrote in part: *We, the people of Japan... strongly protest against your nuclear policy formulated in the newly released "Nuclear Posture Review," which brings the U.S. much closer to the actual use of nuclear weapons by modernizing your nuclear arsenals and developing new nuclear weapons...*

As the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki caused by the A-bombings of the USA showed, any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

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The world opinion determined not to allow this calamity to be ever repeated, led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in the United Nations last year. The policies laid down by the Nuclear Posture Review run counter to this worldwide development in favor of a world without nuclear weapons.

The redeployment of SLBMs (submarine-launched ballistic missiles) will increase the danger of nuclear weapons being brought into the territory of this A-bombed country. We resolutely oppose the bringing of nuclear weapons into Japan in any form...

☪ On Saturday, April 28, 9:30 am to 1 pm, the Justice & Advocacy Committee of The Lehigh Conference of Churches and Grupo de Apoyo e Integración Hispanoamericano, will hold a workshop, "Immigrants: I'd like to help out, but... Here's How!" The program for individuals and congregations in the Lehigh Valley will be held at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 417 N. 7th St., Allentown. Among the topics to be addressed: "What does it mean to be an immigrant ally?" and "Immigration Policy & Legislative Action." For more information see www.sanctuaryppjr.org.

☪ After the Oscars on March 4, Medea Benjamin of CODEPINK wrote, "Jeez, we have a lot of work to do!! Oscars this year were all about activism, confronting racism, sexism, homophobia, supporting immigrants. That was wonderful. Then they did a

tribute to war, starting with thanks for service in Vietnam??? Why aren't anti-war activists part of the tribute to activism? What do we have to do to change that?"

☪ Gordon Adams wrote about the defense budget for 2018 and 2019 in "Foreign Policy" on 2/15/18, "...The congressional deal set new levels for defense, agreeing to \$700 billion for national defense in 2018 and \$716 billion in 2019. That's nearly \$165 billion more than the military had anticipated prior to this year. The U.S. is back to defense spending, in constant dollars, that is higher than the peak spending levels under Ronald Reagan. Only in 2010, at the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, was defense spending higher. "

Hello LEPOCO People,

I am looking for models for my current project of photographing people doing the most ordinary tasks of everyday life -- things like washing a glass, putting on a shoe, turning a key in a lock, brushing their hair, putting something in the recycle bin, shoveling snow, washing the car, anything like that which is the stuff of our lives beneath the radar so to speak. I want to find how beautiful it is, as I know this to be true. Some people don't want their face in a picture and some do. I would consider that.

I am looking for folks who would let me photograph them. I use a big wooden 8x10 camera on a tripod and work rather slowly.

I would donate \$20 to LEPOCO for each person who would let me photograph them. I would come to your place or you could come to mine if that is more convenient. I think we would need an hour to get it right. Whoever is interested could call me at 610-248-5139, and we could discuss what we might do together. I think it will be interesting to see what we discover.

Some of you may know my work from the small red book, "Protest the War," featuring LEPOCO members. Thanks for giving it some thought. I look forward to hearing from you.

- Judith Joy Ross

P.S. If someone was to photograph me, it would be me looking for my keys or my phone two hours per day.

Check out the LEPOCO website at www.lepoco.org for a Calendar of Events, Newsletter Archive, & More.

Sign up for LEPOCO e-mail weekly updates by calling 610-691-8730, or by writing to lepoco@fast.net.

Follow LEPOCO on Facebook and Twitter. Please "like" and "share," often.

Bits & Pieces

☪ Save the Children reported in early February that at least 357 million children (or one in six worldwide) live in conflict zones. This number is up 75% from the early 1990s. (Source: "Democracy Now!" 2/15/18)

☪ On February 16, thirteen young plaintiffs filed a lawsuit against the state of Washington, saying the state had deprived them of their rights to a healthful and pleasant environment, and their rights to life, liberty and property, by failing to take meaningful action on the climate crisis. The thirteen range in age from seven to 17. The plaintiffs say Gov. Jay Inslee and several state agencies have created and propped up fossil fuel-based energy and transportation systems, thereby fueling greenhouse gas emissions and the climate crisis. (Source: commondreams.org, 2/16/18. For more information see ourchildrenstrust.org.)

☪ The last week of March there will be at least two opportunities to participate in local, regional, national actions against guns. On Wednesday, March 21, there will be a march and rally in Philadelphia, focused on Sen. Pat Toomey. The event, "Demand the Ban," is asking that semi-automatic assault weapons be made illegal nationwide. L.V. Friends of CeaseFire PA is organizing a car pool to travel to Philadelphia for this action. There will be nonviolent civil disobedience as part of the action and those who want to risk arrest need to attend training on March 18. Call Terry Rumsey of Delaware County United for Sensible Gun Policy (484-326-1370) to sign up for training.

On Saturday, March 24, L.V. Friends of CeaseFire PA are organizing bus transportation to the March For Our Lives in Washington, DC., that was called by the students from Parkland, Florida. There will be local marches/rallies in many cities, including Allentown, Easton, Doylestown and Reading. The Allentown march will gather at the IBEW Union Hall, 7th & Walnut Sts., for a procession to a rally at 7th & Hamilton Sts.

For more information on the local events contact Fritz Walker at 610-442-5104. For more information about the national March 24th events see www.marchforourlives.com.

☪ POWER NE has formed a new working group to help "End Mass Incarceration." Their next meeting will be Thursday, March 29, at 6 pm, at the Resurrected Life Church Hall, 916 Turner St., Allentown. Among other efforts, they are researching legislation and criminal justice policy, especially regarding the elimination of cash bail and the need to end mandatory minimum sentences. They are also working to learn more about local reentry support for people leaving prison. If you are interested in working on these issues you are invited to attend their meetings.

☪ On Saturday, April 7, Bread for the World, Second Harvest Food Bank, and the Justice & Advocacy Committee of the Lehigh Conference of Churches are sponsoring a day-long program, "For Such a Time as This." Margaret Tran of Bread for the World will speak and workshops will be conducted on topics like the Farm Bill and the Poor People's Campaign. For more information contact the

Conference of Churches at 610-433-6421.

☪ Democracy Now! reported on 2/21/18, that the gunman at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz, was a member of the Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program there, before he was expelled. He was wearing his JROTC shirt when he carried out the massacre. He had been part of a four-person JROTC marksmanship team.

Rick Jahnkow of Project YANO, San Diego, reports that the Chicago Public Schools superintendent terminated JROTC's marksmanship training in 1999, after the Columbine massacre. In 2009, 11 JROTC shooting ranges were shut down in the San Diego City Schools following a campaign waged by students, teachers, parents and community allies. That effort led to one San Diego high school removing a Marine Corps JROTC unit.

San Diego's Unified school board unanimously approved a resolution calling for an assault weapon ban and stricter gun control laws on the state and federal level on 2/27/18.

MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...MEETINGS...ETC.

Sunday, March 11, 6 pm: LEPOCO Peace Singers Rehearsal. Location to be announced. Call 610-691-8730.

Mondays, March 12 & April 9, 7 pm: LEPOCO Monthly Action Meetings at the LEPOCO Peace Center. All members & friends are welcome at this business meeting where the organization's activities are discussed.

Monday, March 26, 9:30 am: Peace Camp Planning Meeting at the LEPOCO Peace Center, Bethlehem.

Tuesday, March 27, 11 am: Stop the Wars Committee meeting at the Quadrant Book Mart & Coffee House, 20 N. 3rd St., Easton.

Tuesdays, April 3 & May 1, 6 pm: LEPOCO Book Group meets at home of Bob & Carmen Riggs, 1113 Prospect Ave., Bethlehem. See page 2 of this newsletter or the complete reading list for 2018 published in the January-February newsletter.

Thursdays, April 5 & May 3, 12:30 pm: Americas Solidarity Group meetings at the LEPOCO Peace Center, Bethlehem.

Thursday, May 3, 4 pm: LEPOCO Peace-A-Thon Planning Committee working/calling meeting at the Peace Center.

Please join in the meetings and work of these groups as you are able. If you want more information about these meetings or the Newsletter Planning Meetings, the Lehigh Valley Committee Against State Killing, or any other committees, please call LEPOCO at 610-691-8730.

For a regularly updated calendar of events and meetings, see www.lepoco.org.



LEPOCO

Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern

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Bits & Pieces

Monthly Peace Vigil

(Second Thursdays)

April 12 & May 10

4:30-5:30 pm

*Our wars & bombings continue.
Help witness for peace.*

2nd & Wyanadette St.

Saturday, March 17

LEPOCO Annual Dinner

Featured Speaker:

Kathy Kelly

from Voices for Creative Nonviolence

**"Unshackling Ourselves:
Lessons from War Zones"**

For more information see page 1 & inserted flyer.

Stand Up & Speak Out!

March 31 & April 28
(Saturdays) 12 - 2 pm

Protest:

Horsham Drone Command Center
(Rt. 611, Horsham)

Call 610-691-8730 for information
about car pooling & other details.

TAX DAY

Tuesday, April 17th

Sign up now to help with leafleting at
local post offices (call 610-691-8730).

See page 1 for more information.