

Local Spotlight: **David Wick- Executive Director, Ashland Culture of Peace Commission**
Building a Culture of Peace from the Inside Out, Beginning in Our Own Hearts
By **Jordan Pease** - January 2022 Issue of **Locals Guide Magazine**- Ashland, Oregon



David Wick together with his partner **Irene Kai** have been contributing members to the Ashland community for 19 years. And together with a team, the **Ashland Culture of Peace Commission** was established here in 2015. In this interview, hear about all the remarkable, visionary projects David has accomplished, locally, nationally, and internationally, and the philosophy and heart that drives this passionate, powerhouse 'doer.'

Thank you for sharing about yourself and your work here, David- please tell your "how I got to Ashland" story?

Does "it was meant to be" ring a bell? In September 1999 I saw Irene Kai's short message which she posted on AOL Personals which was up for only 24 hours. I was intrigued by her open hearted, spiritual message and I said hello. This opened a door and three years later when she had finished the manuscript of her book, a memoir titled "**Golden Mountain: Beyond the American Dream**", the question was, does Irene move to the San Francisco Bay Area or do I move to Ashland? I moved for love and joined her and the Ashland community in 2003, a true blessing in my life.

The Ashland Culture of Peace Commission has become a model for peace activism organizations internationally- Bravo! Please share the background of ACPC and how you got started. When I was twenty-one, I had a few experiences which opened my heart and awareness to the unity of all things and that all people in the world are from the same family. Knowing this in my heart, I was deeply inspired to assist the greater well-being of people and communities wherever I lived and worked that was in my sphere of influence. This occurred when I created **Youth Services** in Santa Cruz, CA, and when I worked at **Levi Strauss & Co.**, **Stanford University**, and **Sun Microsystems**. In parallel I learned a great deal about peacebuilding and the Culture of Peace when in 1980 I volunteered as a director with the **United Nations NGO Pathways To Peace**.

When Irene and I met I was in awe of her creative abilities as a world class artist who can see the unseen and bring vision into physical reality. She is also a peacebuilder in her heart. We collaborated with other people in the Ashland community, the mayor and city council, police department, local newspaper, Native American groups, and other non-profit organizations on the vision of what the Culture of Peace could be here. On September 21, 2015, the **UN International Day of Peace**, we launched the **Ashland Culture of Peace Commission (ACPC)** as a non-profit, citizens commission with a great community celebration.

Fundamental to the Culture of Peace is that peace begins within each one of us and every person makes a difference and has a responsibility for the choices we make, every day. This

shows up from how we treat each other in our own families to how we express ourselves in city government and the public square.

ACPC is based on the mission *“To inspire, activate, and model a Culture of Peace in Ashland, Oregon which will serve as a beacon of light for all humanity”* and is a community-wide movement dedicated to transforming our attitudes, behaviors, and institutions into ones that foster harmonious relationships with each other and the natural world. ACPC is founded upon the **UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (A/RES/53/243)**, and its Eight Action Areas. This includes personal, organizational, and systemic evolution and was a local – global initiative from the beginning.



What are some of the achievements of ACPC so far? For a five-year period, we collaborated with the mayor and city council and other community organizations to help us all learn together what it means to become an International City of Peace: • We inspired the **Ashland Police Department** to embrace the **Police2Peace Program** and establish better relationships and communication with our community. • Through an early Peace Ambassador program, we helped create a calmer and safer downtown street environment. • We assisted the establishment and development of the unhoused shelter, initiated a shelter listening program and still serve on the **Options for Helping Residents of Ashland (OHRA) Advisory Council**. • We worked with the **Ashland Chamber of Commerce** to expand their thinking on what a Culture of Peace can be. • We provided community peacebuilding training in Compassionate Listening, Compassionate Speaking, and Implicit Bias Training • We published inspiring articles in the **Ashland Daily Tidings** newspaper every two weeks for six years which included a **Cultural Literacy Campaign** in 2021. • Joined **Rotary** and become the President of the **Rotary EClub of World Peace** for 2021-2022. • We represented ACPC and Ashland at the **World Peace Conference** Dhaka, Bangladesh, December 4-5, 2021.

On September 21, 2018, we installed the **World Peace Flame** on the **Southern Oregon University** campus. The students at the **Ashland Middle School** are the World Peace Flame Flame Keepers and keep it clean and refueled every Friday. These young students continue to feel pride that they contribute to world peace and learn how they can create peace in their own families and school.

UN Ambassador **Anwarul K. Chowdhury**, Founder of the Global Movement for the Culture of Peace, came to Ashland to meet the student Flame Keepers and learn first-hand how ACPC partners with the city, and community organizations. Ambassador Chowdhury also came to be the keynote speaker at the **ACPC Global Peace Conference** on September 21, 2019.



What is your vision for future projects and goals? No matter how you look at it, our community and the rest of the world have a tough and challenging future ahead of us. We all need to step up and engage in greater self-care and community care and well-being and back off the opinionated, divisive behavior that is setting us all back. We have plans in the works to assist more positive community relationships.

What are the qualities of the Ashland community you appreciate most? Due to the impact of the Covid pandemic and the changed leadership in city government, I am not so sure about the current qualities of Ashland. However, embracing the highest and best in each other, inviting unity rather than division, and co-creating the Culture of Peace will serve us well as we move forward.

Please tell a story about a life-changing incident or can you recall a life-changing epiphany? For me this occurred at the death of my daughter Lissa when she was 2 ½ years old. My life changed in so many ways and I learned many lessons. I now understand that life in this physical world of duality is a great schoolhouse, and sometimes of hard knocks. If you are alive, you are here learning, continually. We ultimately are learning who we are at our core and being of service to each other is a high value. All traditions point the way through an expression of the "Golden Rule," which leads to our personal and collective well-being. This is a choice.

What's a thing people would never guess about you? That on January 14, 1969, I was 10 seconds from being killed on the US Navy aircraft carrier **USS Enterprise**. I had just gotten off my duty station and was standing on a catwalk next to the flight deck watching bombs and rockets being loaded onto the F4 Phantom fighter jets. I then stepped through a porthole into the head and within seconds, I was flat on my back from an explosion right above me. It was a naval disaster and twenty-nine men died. It wasn't my time.

What has been a 'silver lining' outcome for you during the pandemic? Believe it or not, sheltering in place with my partner Irene and learning to function and thrive on Zoom. Being in a high-risk group with Covid we have followed all the health protocols and vaccinations and I have received wonderful health care through the VA. We have developed a rhythm of living and working that supports us well. Through Zoom I am very engaged and productive locally and globally in my work with ACPC and being the President of the **Rotary EClub of World Peace**. I am grateful.

Do you have a story about a paranormal experience? When my youngest brother died in San Jose, CA, I was with him. At that moment I received a call on my mobile phone from a friend in another part of the country who can be attuned to people who passed over. She said, "David, Scott is here and he insists on talking with you." Scott had appeared to her, and I was now in communication with him via my phone, as I stood next to his cooling body.

Please tell about a hero or mentor who's influenced you? Mr. **Ray Griggs** was my Cub Scout den leader which I had joined shortly after moving with my family from Minneapolis, Minnesota to San Francisco. Some years later I continued as a Boy Scout, and he had become the Camp Master of **Camp Lilienthal** in Fairfax CA. For three years I was invited to be on staff with increasing responsibility and freedom to be creative. He had taken me under his wing, and I learned a great deal.

Please fill-in-the-blank; I'm having the time of my life when I'm [Blank]? Dancing freely with hard driving music or hiking and exploring the wonders of Mother Nature.

What's your best talent- silly and serious? Hmmm, holding on to stuff "just in case," and showing up with compassion and dedication.

What advice do you have for the young people in our community? Get educated, don't just react, don't rely on everything you get on social media as it is both helpful and a poison, let it go, trust yourself. Be inclusive, learn and live "the Golden Rule". Become strong and resilient physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Learn to listen, be compassionate, open your heart, and speak your truth with clarity and conviction. Learn patience yet be bold when needed. Create community locally and globally and bring it together with trusted relationships.

How are you doing on your bucket list? I have been fortunate and have had many life experiences and traveled to many countries and cultures around the world. I have a brief list now. That is to live a peaceful life with Irene, enjoy and support the evolving lives of my two sons and two granddaughters, fulfill my peacebuilding mission, and make greater progress on my inward spiritual journey.

LEARN MORE: www.AshlandCPC.org

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