



## Seeing with 2020 vision

by Irene Kai and David Wick, Monday, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

When a person has 20/20 vision, it means he or she has clear vision, everything is seen in focus with clear definition.

Metaphorically, the year of 2020 brings us clarity, the COVID-19 pandemic exposes the inequality of our economic standing, racial injustice, climate catastrophe and political dysfunction. Everyone is affected by the disruption and forced to confront what is in front of us and learn a new way of being.

With shelter-in-place and work from home guidelines early in March of this year, Ashland Culture of Peace Commission moved out of its Ashland downtown offices and changed its mode of operations. Having established a strong local presence and trusted relationships with the United Nations, Rotary and other organizations, we began to walk both known and new roads of peace-building. We learned quickly to stay connected and work with our partners on Zoom. This new technology benefits our instant and continuous connections with local and global organizations, cutting out travel time and expenses.

ACPC is now in its fourth year as a community partner of Options for Helping Residents of Ashland, providing funding support for the Ashland winter shelter program. This year the need has been diversity, equity and inclusion training for volunteers and staff. We established the Police2Peace program with the Ashland Police Department in April of 2019 and since then we introduced APD's leadership in Police2Peace to other cities, including Portland and Seattle.

A small group of people in a very small town in America had a vision to implement the United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on the Culture of Peace, adopted by consensus Sept. 13, 1999, by the United Nations General Assembly as Resolution A/RES/53/243. ACPC was launched Sept. 21, 2015, in the Elks Lodge in

Ashland. The initiative focus was personal and systemic change on both local and global levels.

In a little over five years, ACPC developed programs to demonstrate the expression of the Culture of Peace. One of these actions was to install the World Peace Flame and engage the students in Ashland Middle School to express their vision of peace. The program attracted the ambassador of the United Nations, the co-creator of the resolution, to come to Ashland to witness the manifestation of his intention.

Since the Ashland Global Peace Conference in September 2019, ACPC continued to be engaged with the United Nations and the Rotary EClub of World Peace. Our work in Ashland has become deeply influential on the global level. Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury from the United Nations was drawn to Ashland by the World Peace Flame and saw the opportunity to implement the methodology of the Culture of Peace by partnering with Rotary. David Wick is the president-elect 2021-2022 of the Rotary EClub of World Peace. In a real sense, without the disruption of the pandemic, it would have been impossible to meet with influential people from all over the country and different parts of the world in the same meeting. Disaster also comes with opportunities. With vision, passion, intention and focus, together we can change the world.

On March 26, 2019, Irene Kai was invited to provide the Oregon Senate with an invocation at the beginning of its session in Salem. Here is the invocation:

“Seven sacred flames from five continents were flown live to Wales, united and became the World Peace Flame. ... I brought the World Peace Flame to Ashland, and it was installed on the Southern Oregon University campus.

“I am the flame keeper of the World Peace Flame in Ashland. I am the flame. I now ignite the sacred flame in your heart to be inspired to treat others with compassion, equity, justice and respect. I trust you to be an integral part of our community to cultivate the culture of peace by adhering to your moral compass, transcending social and economic class, race and religion, and to ensure a safe and sustainable world for the next seven generations and beyond.

“You are the flame, a beacon to guide your family to lead our community and therefore the world to cultivate the culture of peace.”

*Irene Kai is co-founder of the Ashland Culture of Peace Commission, and David Wick is the co-founder and executive director. See [ashlandcpc.org](http://ashlandcpc.org).*