

## WFWP 2016 Year in Review: Giving Back to the Community

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Women's Federation for World Peace USA (WFWP) has had an eventful 2016, filled with upliftment, action, leadership, and the strengthening of bonds and relationships, all in the pursuit of peace. Notable highlights from this year include the development of our educational programs; service and relief work both locally and abroad; and reconciliation through the Bridge of Peace Ceremony.

### 1. Education:

Our theme for 2016 has been "Compassionate, Sustainable Leadership." As a community of women, we are passionate about raising authentic, compassionate, and conscientious leaders who practice what we call "Leadership of the Heart."

To accomplish this, we are developing a Leadership of the Heart educational three-part series; and have featured the first seminar, "Finding the Leader Within," in several states including during our leadership retreat in Tampa this past July. This series highlights the importance of leading by example, and provides insights on the importance of women initiating positive change in their own lives, in their families, communities, and beyond.

This year, WFWP has hosted 14 leadership and women empowerment activities and eight Family Life education seminars, for a total of 22 empowering programs.

### 2. Service:

2016 has most certainly been a year of serving and caring for others and for the community. As our President and Sr. Vice President often say, "Leadership begins with Service."

We held our fourth annual "Day of Service" in the District of Columbia with 40 students participating from surrounding schools. It was a community affair, investing into the future leaders, with the support of the D.C. Mayor and Councilman, the Lieutenant and Officers of the 4th Precinct Police Station, and many local businesses. One of the food donors said, "It is such a joy to see students come out to clean the streets, giving back to the community! As a business owner, it feels good to donate food for these students who are out here. It is all about giving back to our community."

After attending the Day of Service, Dottie Chicquelo of the Maryland chapter explained that community service enhances development in the following areas:

1. Social Development: Service increases interpersonal skills and continued interest in future community participation.
2. Academic Development: Service is a positive hands-on learning experience.

3. Personal Growth: Service increases self-esteem and confidence.
4. Career Development: Service provides the opportunity to develop special skills that support hiring advantage over other candidates.

WFWP Arizona Chairwoman, Rhia Nkulu, initiated a service project this year called "Women Helping Women," in honor of Women's History Month. Participants collected used purses, and filled them with essential items to give to homeless women, shelters, and students. By the time March ended, this project went viral, spreading from Arizona to Seattle, New Jersey, Virginia, and Maryland to name a few. Through this single project, we were able to substantially touch many lives, create personal connections, and gain a deeper sense of gratitude for what we have and may sometimes take for granted.

The director for one of the women's shelters in Arizona responded, "Thank YOU! I just had all the moms pick out the different purses they wanted - and they had a blast! It totally made their night. Thank you so much for your generosity and loving heart. It is beautiful knowing how deeply people of the community care about our moms!"

This year we not only invested in communities around the United States; but also sent substantial love abroad. Thanks to our creative and enthusiastic chapters across the USA, WFWP was able to send \$40,650 to the WFWP established schools in Africa. The Schools of Africa project is WFWP International's signature project to support the education of women and children throughout the world.

In addition, throughout the year we collected and sent relief to those hit by natural disasters such as in Haiti with Hurricane Matthew, Ecuador with their 7.8 magnitude earthquake, and more. This year through our 1% Love Share Program, WFWP USA collected over \$4,500 to support children in North Korea with coats and sweaters after the extensive flooding that took place this winter season. This program targets the needs of women, children, and those in poverty throughout the world, and is an international project of WFWP.

This year WFWP USA held 17 local service projects, and 16 projects supporting those overseas, for a total of 33 service activities.

### **3. Reconciliation: Bridge of Peace**

The 20th Anniversary Bridge of Peace that took place at the 2015 National Assembly reignited the flame of realizing reconciliation throughout the country in 2016, from the nation's capital to Texas, California, Florida, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Oregon, and New Jersey. Unique this year was the "Black Lives Matter" Bridge in Pennsylvania; and the "Mothers of Healing and Forgiveness" Bridge Ceremony that featured mothers who have forgiven "unforgivable" cruelty against their own children; and now live as a substantial example of ending the cycle of retaliation and revenge. In 2016, WFWP USA held 10 Bridges of Peace ceremonies, and a total of 27 peace, intercultural, and health and healing programs.

#### **National Assembly and Blessing**

The three major components of WFWP: education, service, and reconciliation; came together to create an integrative experience at this year's 24th Annual National Assembly. This Assembly featured amazing Global Women Peace Network Panelists, a music-filled Schools of Africa Gala Fundraiser, and a Bridge of Peace to honor our nation's veterans on Veterans Day. Then, as the closing celebration of the Assembly, WFWP USA honored strong and healthy marriages and families as the cornerstone of peace with a Celebration of Marriage program. The Assembly certainly was the perfect way to close this eventful and impactful year.

Here is one comment on the 2016 Assembly: "The theme of the Assembly was perfect for the climate of our nation, and it was carried throughout the event and beyond. The new guests, young and old, were very inspired and each of the speakers expressed their viewpoints dynamically."