

## Staffan and Jane Berg's Peace Starts With Me and My Family in Chandler, AZ

Rhia Luz and Natascha Phillips  
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Initially conceived by Revs. Staffan and Jane Berg of the Family Federation for World Peace (FFWP), 'Peace Starts With Me and My Family' is a collaborative event that exemplifies the great results achieved through cooperation between Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) and partner organizations FFWP and Universal Peace Federation (UPF) in Arizona.

Earlier this year, on March 9th, 2019, an outdoor family-friendly event that focused on the theme of "Peace Starts With Me and My Family" was held in Tempe, Arizona (read about the March event [here](#)) and right after its successful conclusion, the organizers were encouraged to hold another one in May, this time taking on the format of a conference.

With little time to prepare, the date was set for May 18th and the Hilton Hotel in Chandler, Arizona, was booked as the venue. Through a mutual connection, the WFWP Arizona chapter was able to invite the Mayor of Chandler and his wife to speak at the event, which once again revolved around the topics of peace and family.

The lively morning program began with an entertaining interpretative dance by Asia Espiritu Dising, a strong and young supporter of WFWP, and the 70 guests in attendance were welcomed by emcee Romina Poska.

Dr Susan Taffer, founder of the World Connections Foundation and part of the national committee for the GWPN, was on her way back from Taipei at the time of the event and thus unable to attend in person. Instead, she sent a three-minute video message of her experiences with WFWP at local and international events, sharing about the impact WFWP has around the globe.

Speaking at the event as Dr. Taffer's representative was Kim M. Evans, a board member of the World Connections Foundation and the founder and CEO of Your Wings. Ms. Evans had previously attended the GWPN launch in Los Angeles on April 6th and was already familiar with WFWP.

As a long-time volunteer and preserver of national parks in the United States, Ms. Evans shared her enthusiasm for WFWP and its worthwhile mission and vision: "This is an incredible organization and I invite everyone to become involved in the support of their worthwhile mission, which is to create world peace and unity." She challenged the audience to think of daily acts of kindness they can do for themselves, for their families and for their communities.



*Mayor and his wife receiving Ambassador for Peace certificates*

Then Rhia Luz, chairwoman of WFWP Arizona, introduced Kevin Hartke, the Mayor of Chandler, which is currently the second fastest growing city in Arizona and a business hub. The mayor welcomed everyone to the city of Chandler and used the Bible to talk about peace: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). As children of God, Mayor Hartke reasoned, being a peacemaker is in our "spiritual genes." Then he introduced his wife, whom he's been married to for almost 38 years, spoke about how they first met, and testified to her strong character as a cancer survivor, author and mentor.

When Lynne Hartke took center stage, she immediately captivated the audience with her storytelling and spoke from her heart. Beginning her talk by singing the Lion King song "Hakuna Matata," she addressed the issue she had with the lyrics, as we do not live in a worry-free and problem-free world.



Using vivid examples from her own life, she shared about the family tradition of making Easter baskets for her grandchildren and the conflict that arose when one relative's child did not receive a basket and wasn't included in the 'inner circle' of her family. She quickly decided to rectify the situation and use it as an example to teach her grandchildren the importance of allowing others into your circle and being a part of the solution to a problem rather than avoiding them altogether: "Peace is not living a problem-free existence. Peace is being a solution to injustice when we see it and it's about inviting others to step closer and not pushing them away."

After describing how she was able to finally bring one of her cousins into her inner circle and see her own heart in the heart of her cousin, she came to this gripping conclusion: "That's why we teach peace at home. Not to live a problem-free life but to step closer and not step back when confronted with prejudice or injustice or when we see someone without a basket at the table. We demonstrate by our own example, so we and our children and grandchildren learn to swing wide the door of the circle to those who are different and in doing so, we discover they aren't different at all. They're as close as our own skin."

The final speakers of the day were Staffan and Jane Berg, who introduced the Cornerstone for Happiness curriculum of WFWP. Rev. Berg described the theoretical side and delved into the content being taught, while his wife went into the practical application of it and demonstrated listening exercises for the audience.

It ended then with lunch, but people stayed an hour longer until 2pm because they greatly enjoyed their time together. All in all it was a tremendous success, with a great turn out despite Chandler being a far drive for many people. Many of the participants were newly introduced to WFWP and felt inspired to bring the content they had heard back to their families. One of the guests, who is running for councilwoman (and would become the first black councilwoman in Chandler) expressed interest in going to the GWPN conference in Las Vegas in June.



Here's what one of the guests said about the event:

"Thank you so much for inviting me! I loved the messages and look forward to volunteering my time whenever needed."

Sharing her thoughts after the event, Kim Evans wrote:

"Thank you so much Rhia, Gary, Maria, Romina, Glenda Lambert and everyone who created this wonderful event - Peace Starts with Me and My Family. It was an honor to be a guest speaker with the esteemed Mayor Kevin Hartke and his First Lady, Lynne Hartke of Chandler, AZ who gave a very inspiring message. Dr Susan Taffer, Jane Berg and Rev. Staffan Berg who also

shared their powerful messages, are valued leaders in their support of the Women's Federation of World Peace. This is an incredible organization and I invite everyone to become involved in the support of their worthwhile mission, which is to create world peace and unity."

The next follow up event for Peace Starts With Me and My Family will be in September.

