

Peace With Our Neighbor: The Topic of UPF-Argentina's Monthly Meeting

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Buenos Aires, Argentina -- Volunteering and service were the main topics of UPF-Argentina's monthly Ambassadors for Peace meeting on June 10, with 43 connections on Zoom. "Peace With Our Neighbor" was the theme under which the following people spoke: Sandra Villalba, coordinator of the inclusive workshop Mensajeros de Francisco; César Sanabria, treasurer of the civil association Los Principitos de Retiro; and Esteban Chalá, president of the Evacuation and First Aid Department -- CEPA Argentina. The focus was one of the eight UPF-Argentina lines of action: Volunteering and Service for Peace. At the end, the viewers could ask questions, moderated by the meeting coordinator, Julio Nardini, member of the UPF-Argentina's Peace Council.

At the webinar's beginning, Emanuel Sayavedra, member of UPF-Argentina's Governing Board, mentioned past activities, and Miguel Werner, secretary general of UPF-Argentina, talked about various upcoming initiatives. We concluded the meeting with an artistic section, with "Honrar la Vida" and "Aprender a Volar" performed by Makenna Zambonini, creator of Noches de Música por la Paz.



Sandra Villalba, coordinator of the inclusive workshop Mensajeros de Francisco:

Sandra Villalba said she had "a new chance to live" after going through five years of chemotherapy. "A way to thank God, since I also had a son," was working with "people who were discriminated against like I was, for not having hair, for being thin..." she confessed. That is how the inclusive workshop Mensajeros de Francisco was born, which seeks to integrate and bring peace to other people. The

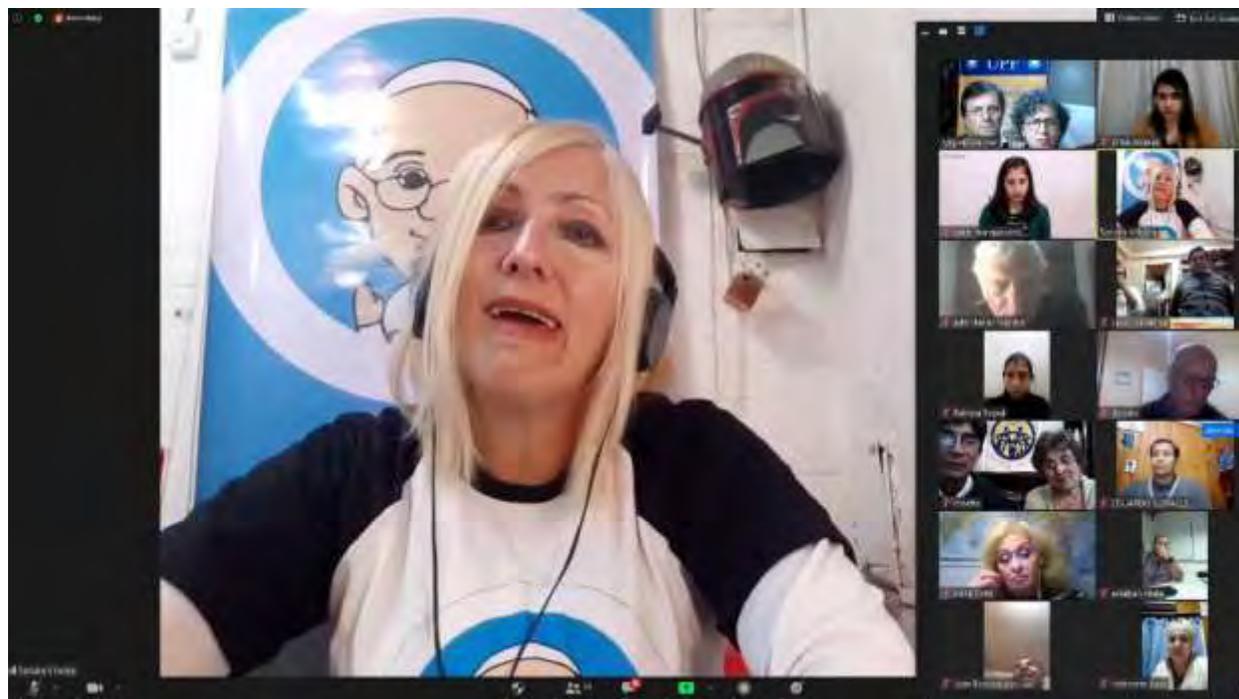
organization includes mainly children with different capabilities, with Down Syndrome, blind people, and so forth. People with different beliefs, including atheists, meet and make crafts to take to hospitals and geriatric wards, to slums and "places no one goes." Sometimes they go with their priest from San Agustín Church, in Parana, Entre Ríos Province.

"We are all equal here," she expressed. "Let us make people know about us, since, after all, we are more similar than different!" is their slogan when they go onto the streets and conduct their awareness campaigns, such as about childhood cancer or blood donation for hospitalized people. They are also making face masks, which everyone creates at home with all the hygiene measures. At the end, she shared a few videos where we saw the work done at the inclusive workshop Mensajeros de Francisco, through which they also seek to encourage other people to display solidarity.



César Sanabria, treasurer of the civil association Los Principitos de Retiro:

César Sanabria was grateful for the invitation and congratulated Sandra Villalba. He explained that the place he lives, traditionally known as "Villa 31" (Slum 31), a few blocks away from the center of Buenos Aires, is by law the Padre Carlos Mugica Neighborhood. Before giving his presentation, he gave the floor to the founder of Los Principitos de Retiro, who is also an Ambassador for Peace: Juan Romero. He emphasized the organization's goal: seeing happy children, as well as teenagers, who are encouraged to be responsible for the well-being of the younger ones. He also highlighted César, who has been connected to the organization since he was 14 years old. The organization also has a radio program through which they have made countless solidarity and entertainment activities, such as a Three Kings' Party or Children's Day.



César Sanabria resumed his speech and talked about the Children's Day celebration, which they have organized on the first weekend of August for 36 years. He confessed that, in the beginning, he was behind the scenes, waiting for a cup of chocolate or a toy, but now he is in charge of planning the party. This is an opportunity for "children and their families to forget about economic problems." He revealed that they created a football school, a soup kitchen, as well as the activities and radio FM, which now is 20 years old. He finally reported about the "virtual embrace of the neighbor," a solidarity campaign that different artists and personalities joined, not only from Argentina, but also from other countries, and it was streamed by the YouTube channel "Club Padre Carlos Mugica."



Esteban Chalá, president of the Evacuation and First Aid Department -- CEPA Argentina

Esteban Chalá was grateful for this opportunity and considered that it was "very important to participate and support all Ambassadors for Peace." He praised the work of Sandra Villalba and César Sanabria for "inclusion and development of society," where CEPA also seeks to contribute. He spoke of the ideal of "leaving this planet with something really substantial in helping the neighbor, trying to create values, cooperation, so everyone has the same opportunities. This is what we are trying to build every day," with first aid and integral humanitarian assistance in all senses and situations. He said that CEPA has nine branches and 250 volunteers serving in communities of different municipalities, assisting in accidents, emergencies, floods, and the current situation due to COVID-19.

He shared that he served in various missions in different countries and agencies of the United Nations in all specialties, emergencies, warzones, and so forth: "Always with this ideal, with this proposal of contributing to the world: to make the world go around a little bit lighter," he said. He specially highlighted the good heart and will of volunteers, who see beyond race or beliefs. In some situations, they even risk their lives to help others, with no distinction; they are always where they are needed, with training, donations, and campaigns. He recognized the team of volunteers, their friends and their families, who do not only give their time, but also their personal resources to help others.