

Bridge of Peace ceremony - Follow your heart, something wonderful will happen

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Mayor Maria Davila and Susan Janer

The Bridge of Peace Ceremony is the signature project of the Women's Federation for World Peace. Crossing the Bridge of Peace is an opportunity for those who participate to experience healing and reconciliation. No one is exempt from the need for this.

On May 28th, the almost 200 people who attended the Bridge of Peace Ceremony held in South Gate, California, brought with them the spirit of friendship and love. Many were attending for the first time. The participants who had volunteered to walk the bridge brought with them a spirit of hope for reconciliation and peace in their lives.

Last year, on behalf of WFWP in the Los Angeles area, I organized the first Bridge of Peace Ceremony in South Gate and rented a smaller auditorium. For that event, 120 people attended. This time, I chose a larger venue and it's a good thing I did! Almost 200 women and men came to this year's event.

Mrs. Maria Davila, mayor of the City of South Gate was the emcee again this year. After a prayer by Pastor Nick and a flag salute by Miss Ashley, Mayor Davila gave her heartfelt welcoming remarks. Mr. Edward Trimis, Principal of the Visual and Performing Arts High School in the Legacy High School Complex shared a few words about the school. He then accompanied his student on keyboard as she sang two songs.

The next performers to entertain were Justin Janer, on saxophone and Bryce on guitar playing jazz, as the participants enjoyed authentic Mexican style food.

The Keynote Speaker for the event was Mrs. Sheri Rueter. Mrs Rueter is the Director of Health Services and the Lead School Nurse in San Gabriel Unified School District. She is a former Vice President and Chairwoman of WFWP. She spoke about the history of the Bridge of Peace and explained the simple procedure of bowing to show respect and then meeting someone with the heart of love necessary to bring peace in the world.



High School Principal, Mayor, and student

Mrs. Rueter said, "In women, the intrinsic God-given impulse to nurture and care for the wellbeing of others is part of our feminine divinity. It's our divine right, the original nature that we are born with. It is who we are inside, who we are as women. And this kind of divinity is the fundamental reason that women are not just a part of...but are central to the Peace Process." She quoted WFWP founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon who said, "As women, we have an incredible capacity to love...to care about the world's children...and even to love the children of our enemies. It is the belief of WFWP that in this century women will hold a pivotal role in

leading humankind to harmony and peace."

These words brought tears to many eyes because of the profound feeling it stirred within us.

To give a demonstration of how the Bridge of Peace is done, Mrs. Rueter asked me, as the organizer to cross the bridge with the mayor. Mayor Maria Davila and I have worked together for over 20 years organizing events such as National Parents Day and other community events in the city. She was one the people who helped me organize both this year and last year's Bridge of Peace events. It was very natural for me to cross the bridge with her.

The City of South Gate is located geographically in the center of Los Angeles. South Gate has changed a lot from the community it was during the 1950's when I grew up there. Three years ago I attended an

event where the founder of WFWP, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, spoke in Las Vegas. She looked at me and I felt that she sent a message to my heart. Her message was that I should do something important in my life with the people I know and love. I felt clearly that she trusted me to follow my heart and make something wonderful happen.

I have lived in my community for the last 30 years, raising my children here. I know many people in the community because I joined local service clubs and have participated in city-wide events over the years. I felt that the foundation I have could be applied to the Bridge of Peace event. It was a natural thing for me to introduce the ideas of WFWP to people I know. I have been a member of WFWP since the beginning in 1992. I love the ideas and goals of WFWP. Having a passion is important in life, and being a peacemaker is one of my passions. Creating and crossing bridges is an important way to express that passion.



Food waiting to be served

Women's Federation for World Peace has as its mission: "Women working together to establish a culture of heart in the family, community, nation and world in order to achieve genuine and sustainable peace under God." The Bridge of Peace is a beautiful symbol of hope, love, and forgiveness exemplifying its mission.

The Bridge of Peace was set up in the South Gate Park Auditorium. For safety reasons only the facade of the bridge was used, yet it looked so realistic, it looked like a real bridge! The Bridge was built over 20 years ago to do the Bridge of Peace programs in Los Angeles. We keep this bridge stored in a trailer and can carry it any place we need to set it up. The bridge seems to have magical powers, creating a heavenly atmosphere wherever it is used. It was beautiful to behold. Our hope is to use it more and more in the future.

Katrin McCarthy and Alicia Salazar shared testimonies about their Bridge of Peace experiences. Their stories were heartwarming and sincere. They encouraged participants to make an extra effort to cultivate and continue the relationships that have started on this day.

Towards the end of the program we had a special treat. Magdalene Milsap and Rick

Joswick stepped up to the microphone to sing together. They are both amazing musicians and longtime friends of many of us.

The event could not have happened without those who donated their time, effort and money. I am grateful to those who volunteered to set up the bridge, to man the sound system, decorate, run the registration table, donate raffle gifts, and sell raffle tickets. One of the raffle prizes was a four-hour boat trip for six people.

Once again, my daughter V. Janer was the photographer for the day.

I want to give a big thank you to the City Council of South Gate because they unanimously agreed to support this event. Their support allowed the fee of over \$1200 to use the auditorium, to be waived.

Thank you to all the guests who came and made it a very special day.