

WFWP holds its Third Annual Bridge of Peace Ceremony in South Gate, California

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The Bridge of Peace Ceremony is the signature project of WFWP, and crossing is an opportunity for those who participate to experience healing and reconciliation. No one is exempt from the need for this.

I have been a member of WFWP since the beginning in 1992. I love the ideas and goals of WFWP. Being a peacemaker is one of my passions, and creating and crossing bridges is an important way to express that passion. WFWP 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 this mission.

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 that day, and I felt she sent a message to my heart. Her message was that I should do something important with the people I know and love. I felt clearly that she trusted me to follow my heart and make something wonderful happen. This was the beginning point for organizing Bridges of Peace in my community.



Sheri Reuter, Susan Felsenthal Janer, and Maria Davila, the Mayor of South Gate, CA

I have lived in the city of South Gate in southern California for over 40 years of my life, altogether. Over that span of time I have come to know many people in the community through service clubs and city-wide

programs. This also made it natural for me to share about WFWP, and to find powerful allies to assist in our efforts.



On May 26, 2018, we held our Third Annual Bridge of Peace Ceremony in South Gate, California. The event was held at the Girls Club House, with almost 150 people in attendance. Three council members were able to join, including our present mayor, a councilman and his wife, and our keynote speaker and former mayor, Councilwoman Maria Davila, whom I have known for over 20 years.

Participants of the Third Annual Bridge of Peace brought with them the spirit of friendship and love. Some were attending for the first time, and many had been to all three Bridge of Peace events. Those who volunteered to walk across the bridge carried hope for reconciliation and peace in their lives.

The event started with a welcome by WFWP member Carol Takhar, followed by a prayer and flag salute led by another member, Susan Munsell. Guests were entertained with live jazz music, performed by Justin Janer on saxophone and his friends, Brice on guitar and Blake on bass. Further entertainment was brought to us by Art Dance Academy in South Gate. It was such a treat to see the young ballet dancers!



Introducing the Bridge of Peace Ceremony was Mrs. Sheri Rueter, a former Vice President and Chairwoman of WFWP USA. Mrs. Rueter explained the history of the creation of the Bridge of Peace and how the simple procedure of bowing to show respect and then meeting someone with the heart of love is necessary to reconcile differences.

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."

To show the participants a demonstration of how the Bridge of Peace Ceremony is done, I crossed the bridge with my dear friend, Kazuko Walton.

For the first two Bridge of Peace events in South Gate, the then Mayor of the city, Maria Davila, helped with this project by being the emcee for the event. However, this year I realized she wanted to give more of her heart to this project and I asked her to be the Keynote speaker with the topic, "Peace Starts with Me." At the end of her speech, Sheri Rueter and I awarded her a crystal trophy with the words: "Thank you for being a shining example of Living by the Logic of Love, by sharing your inspiration and wisdom and making the Bridge of Peace a reality."

I'd like to thank all those who worked behind the scenes: Vanesa Janer for being our photographer; Jamille Borer for preparing coffee and water; Katrin McCarthy for helping with many things; Magda, Naomi, and Kelly Ozono for staffing the registration table and raffle; Shigeko Lograsso for providing the flowers; Roberto and Amy for helping to set up the bridge; and Pastor George Kazakos for operating the sound system.

A big thank you to the donors: Nova Storage, Starbucks Coffee, and the Central Basin Water District. Thank you also to Janet Torres, Executive Director of the South Gate Chamber of Commerce, for all the help! She was the co-sponsor of the event and waived the fee on the auditorium this year, loaned me the camera, helped with fundraising, and donated the cake! The cherry on top is that she is offering me membership to her chamber which includes a meeting room once a month, where I plan to hold WFWP meetings.

Because of all the volunteers, donors, and the wonderful guests who attended, the Bridge of Peace Ceremony was a successful and happy event where we could really feel that "Peace Starts with Me!"

