

Peace Gazette

**Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center
Fall 2026**



ATTENTION MEMBERS AND FRIENDS!
PLEASE JOIN US
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14th
ANNUAL PEACE AWARDS DINNER!

Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center

1035 Carol Lane
Lafayette, California 94549

Our purpose is to work for a culture of peace through education, advocacy and community building.

The Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

FOUNDER: Andy Baltzo, circa 1969

PEACE CENTER BOARD:

Amneh Ma'bad Ahmed, Bob Spies, Karen Perkins, Margli Auclair, Thomas Brom, Bob Maxwell, Rick Sterling, Kathleen Barr, Afaf Wahbeh, and Chris Finn

PEACE GAZETTE

Established by Arne Westerback, 1969

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creatingpeacefulschools.weebly.com

The *Peace Gazette* is a project of the Communications Committee of the Peace Center. The views expressed are the opinions of the writers and do not necessarily speak for all members of the Center or its Board of Directors.

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Cover art: Mallory Craig-Karim

Greetings to Peace Center Members and Friends,

Welcome to the Fall 2026 *Peace Gazette*, our annual review of events that the Center has sponsored or endorsed since our Peace Awards Dinner of November 2025.

This year, there has been no shortage of U.S.-involved conflicts to oppose. They include continuing Israeli ethnic cleansing in Palestine, NATO's campaign in Ukraine, the kidnapping of Venezuela's president and seizure of its oil reserves, and an unprovoked war against Iran that has spread across the nations of West Asia.

In April the Center hosted its largest event of the year, "Crisis in the Middle East," a three-hour gathering at the Orinda Community Church that featured seven main speakers either in-person or on video.

As jazz poet and political activist Gil Scott-Heron once noted, "Peace ain't coming this way. Got to work for peace . . . No one can do everything, but everybody can do something."

That sentiment was reflected in the entry prompt to our 2026 Art & Writing Challenge for middle and high school students: "*What does working for a peaceful and just world mean to you?*"

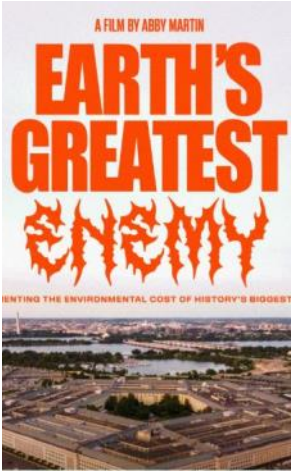
We received nearly 200 entries—submitted as essays, creative writing, poetry, or graphic art. A selection of the winning entries, as well as profiles of the two Youth Activist Awards winners, appears in this issue.

On Saturday, November 14, we will host the annual Peace Awards Dinner in the Main Hall of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette.

Until then, as Gil Scott-Heron urged, "Work for peace."

Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center

PROJECTS SUGGESTED BY OUR BOARD MEMBERS



Karen Perkins is a familiar face at local protests concerning issues of peace, particularly when the environment is involved.

Last October Karen attended the Bay Area premiere of *Earth's Greatest Enemy*, a new documentary by independent filmmakers **Abby Martin** and **Mike Prysner**. As their film makes clear, the U.S. military is the world's single largest institutional polluter—spewing out carbon and contaminated water—and scarring landscapes across the globe.

Karen decided to sponsor a local screening of the film at Rossmoor's Peacock Theatre. She negotiated with the filmmakers for the showing, and handled publicity for an event in May. *Earth's Greatest Enemy* is now available for streaming on Apple TV and Prime Video.

Chris Finn has been assisting a Palestinian family in Gaza for nearly three years. He met the English-speaking father, **Munther Abu Rabee** online through a friend from Lafayette. As a result of the ongoing conflict in Gaza, Munther had lost his home, his job and many of his relatives. After being forced to move 11 times, he is currently living in a tent compound with his parents, wife and two young children alongside the surviving families of two deceased brothers, —19 people of all ages.

Chris connects with Munther twice a week. He sends financial assistance, which Munther uses for rent and food that he often shares with his neighbors. Healthy fruits and vegetables are now sometimes available in the market and are highly valued.

Munther has created short videos to spread the word about the needs of Palestinians in his community. They can be found online at <https://vimeo.com/1224432860>, and <https://chuffed.org/project/189872-supporting-three-families-in-gaza-to-survive>.



Margli Auclair, who gathers news sources for the Center's Activist Alerts each week, stumbled across the Palestine-related posts of **Morgan Cooper** on Instagram. Cooper, a native Californian, had married a Palestinian Christian, and they were living with their two young children in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Cooper's passion and unique perspective made it immediately apparent why she has gained a large social media following. Several years ago she and her husband developed **Mashjar Juthour**, a non-profit arboretum /land trust (<http://juthour.org>) and **Handmade Palestine** (<https://handmadepalestine.com>), a collective for local artisans created to provide them a source of income.



This past summer Cooper toured the West Coast to share her stories on the challenges of living in Palestine and to offer artisanal Palestinian goods for sale. The Peace Center scheduled one of those events, which attracted a great turnout and was well received.

Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center's

17th ANNUAL PEACE & JUSTICE AWARDS DINNER

was held on NOVEMBER 22nd, 2025



Since 2009, the Center has held an annual Awards Dinner to recognize locally based individuals or organizations for their efforts to achieve the ideals of peace and justice.

The 2025 event, held in the main hall of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette, attracted more than 100 guests. They enjoyed an evening of Palestinian food catered by Amalfi Mediterranean Fusion Restaurant in Dublin, live music provided by the La Peña Chorus in Berkeley, and acceptance speeches from those recognized and honored at the dinner.



THE AWARDEES WERE . . .

CONTRA COSTA IMMIGRATION RIGHTS ALLIANCE (CCIRA)



Sergio Jaime Lopez

Sergio Jaime López accepted the award on behalf of CCIRA, a coalition of community, faith-based, advocacy and immigrant-led organizations formed in 2017.

Lopez leads CCIRA's Welcome Navigator program, which provides trained community volunteers to orient immigrant families prior to appearances before the Concord Immigration Court. The program offers personal accompaniment, referrals, and hands-on assistance with filing asylum applications.

CCIRA seeks to create a dignified, welcoming environment for families at their court appearances, and to strengthen community participation in immigrant support networks.



CARLA SCHICK

Math instructor Carla Schick taught in the Hayward Unified School District for many years, advocating for a broad pedagogy of liberation. Carla also served on the local executive board of the California Teachers Association, and was a delegate on the CTA's state committee on civil rights and education.



Working with students, Carla started one of the first gay-straight alliances in the Bay Area, seeking to include sexual orientation and gender expression protections in the California Education Code.

In retirement, Carla worked with the Hayward ethnic studies working group to implement California's new ethnic studies requirement. Carla sought to include teaching about Palestine within a framework of a liberated ethnic studies program.

JULIE TANG

During her 23 years in the judiciary, retired San Francisco Superior Court Judge Julie Tang has received numerous accolades and awards. We honored Tang for her work in the Asian community, where she has been a true proponent of peace with justice.



Tang was an early staff member of Chinese for Affirmative Action, and co-founder of Wah Mei Bilingual School, the Rape of Nanjing Redress Coalition, and the "Comfort Women" Justice Coalition. She is also a co-founder of the Pivot to Peace Campaign.

These organizations have pushed back against promoters of American jingoism and national superiority. In recent years Tang has also led numerous visitor delegations to China, including those for judges and for youth.



MUSIC BY THE CHORUS!



Middle East in Crisis

A half-day conference

April 25th, 2026

Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center hosted the event at Orinda Community Church

The conference addressed urgent issues concerning U.S. and Israeli Wars on Iran, Palestine, and Lebanon, as well as threats to international law and the United Nations.

Several local organizations endorsed the well-attended event including:

- NorCal Sabeel;
- Veterans for Peace;
- US Peace Council;
- Voices for Justice
in Palestine (Rossmoor);
- Just World Educational;
- Soul of My Soul Exhibit; and
- Alameda Green Party.



A variety of topics were addressed
by seven well-known experts.

TOPICS & SPEAKERS



Jack Rasmus
author & economics
professor,
St. Mary's College

***COST &
CONSEQUENCES***



George Bisharat
law professor,
author, and musician

***LAW, POWER,
AND THE
EMPIRE OF
IMPUNITY***



Gerry Condon
former national
president of Veterans
for Peace

***RESISTING
ILLEGAL
ORDERS AND
WARS***

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***HORMUZ AT THE HINGE  
OF HUMAN HISTORY***

**Helena Cobban,**  
author and President,  
Just World Educational

***US WAR ON  
INTERNATIONAL LAW***

**Marjorie Cohn,**  
Dean of the People's Academy of  
International Law

***WAR ON IRAN & DECLINE  
OF US HEGEMONY***

**Bahman Azad,**  
Iranian American  
professor & president of  
US Peace Council

***CHINA: THREAT  
OR LIFELINE?***

**Julie Tang,**  
former Superior Court Judge,  
San Francisco

Videos of all presentations are available on the Center's website  
<https://ourpeacecenter.org/middle-east-in-crisis-conference-videos/>

# ART & WRITING CHALLENGE and YOUTH ACTIVIST GRANT AWARDS!

Open to middle and high school students  
in Contra Costa County

Prompt for 2026:  
“What does working for a peaceful and  
just world mean to you?”



## AND THE WINNERS WERE.....

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

|                 |                             |                             |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Kaylin Kok      | Adams Middle School         | Art: 1st Place              |
| Chenlu Ning     | Walnut Creek Intermediate   | Art: 2nd Place              |
| Annie Tsubota   | Pleasant Hill Middle School | Art: 3rd Place              |
| Anya Arora      | Dorris-Eaton                | Creative Writing: 1st Place |
| Vibha Viyas     | Pine Valley Middle School   | Creative Writing: 2nd Place |
| Veer Jain       | Dorris-Eaton                | Creative Writing: 3rd Place |
| Vibha Viyas     | Pine Valley Middle School   | Essay: 1st Place            |
| Domenico Vierra | Dorris-Eaton                | Essay: 2nd Place            |
| Haley Seet      | Hercules Middle School      | Essay: 3rd Place            |

### HIGH SCHOOL

|                     |                              |                             |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Naomi Clements      | College Park High School     | Art: 1st Place              |
| Lucy Szela          | Carondelet High School       | Art: 2nd Place              |
| Shilynn Ba-Farlough | Middle College High School   | Art: 3rd Place              |
| Suhani Goyal        | Dougherty Valley High School | Creative Writing: 1st Place |
| Naomi Clements      | College Park High School     | Creative Writing: 2nd Place |
| Jasmine Ye          | Quarry Lane School           | Creative Writing: 3rd Place |
| Suhani Goyal        | Dougherty Valley High School | Essay: 1st Place            |
| Suhani Goyal        | Dougherty Valley High School | Essay: 2nd Place            |
| Jasmine Ye          | Quarry Lane School           | Essay: 3rd Place            |

Find winning submissions here: <https://creatingpeacefulschools.weebly.com/>

## SCENES FROM THE AWARDS RECEPTION—MAY 17, 2026 and a sample of WINNING SUBMISSIONS!

### 2026 ART & WRITING CHALLENGE WINNERS



#### ***What Does It Mean to Work Towards a Peaceful World? By Jasmine Ye***

*It means choosing, again and again, to care.*

*Not loudly, not perfectly—  
but in the quiet places where  
no one is watching.*

*It's holding the door open  
for someone whose name you'll  
never know,  
and holding space  
for someone whose pain you'll  
never fully understand.*

*It means noticing  
the way anger spreads like  
wildfire—  
and deciding to be water  
instead.*

*A peaceful and just world  
is not built in speeches alone,  
but in the small rebellions:  
listening when it's easier to ar-  
gue,  
sharing when it's easier to keep,  
standing up when it's safer to sit  
down.*

*It means asking hard questions—  
Who is unheard?  
Who is unseen?  
And what can I do, right here,  
right now?*

*Sometimes it looks like marching.  
Sometimes it looks like forgiving.  
Sometimes it looks like learning  
that you were wrong—  
and choosing to grow anyway.*

*Peace is not silence.  
Justice is not revenge.  
Together, they are a steady  
heartbeat—  
a promise that every person  
deserves dignity, safety, and a  
voice.  
Working for that world  
means becoming the kind of  
person  
who builds it, piece by piece,  
even on the days  
when it feels impossibly far  
away.*

*And still—  
you try.*

---

## *The Palm of Peace* by Veer Jain

Hands can be a way of displaying how much work one does for peace. They tell a story, hands help all of us today walk closer to a more just world. Before I fully understood what peace meant, I noticed my grandmother's hands. They were always moving, always reaching for instead of pushing away peace. My grandmother always chose to hurt and not heal, by using her hands for peace. Hands, may be small, but they can do wonders for our world and community.

At times, my grandma has rigid hands. Her hands have a tint of red clay. Her fingers are like earth-stained jewels. The dirt underneath her fingernails represent earth's presents within her hands. As you can see, her hands have borne all kinds of weather, from winter's frost to summer's heat. The edge of her hand are lined with small calluses. They may look dirty, but they serve a clean purpose.

Whenever I asked her why her hands were so dirty, she would say, "Don't you mind these stains. This isn't dirt; it's just the earth shaking hands with me before I come inside."

My grandma gardens. She plants and raises food in her small garden in the back of her humble cabin. She does this for others. She hands out freshly cut fruits and vegetables, at the end of spring, for those who are not in the financial position to buy their own. On the surface, this looks like a simple act. The red-tint come from all the time she spent crafting homemade pots, to serve as a home to these plants. The dirt underneath her fingernails come from the hours she spends digging holes for seeds, or picking onions and carrots buried within the soil. The calluses come from holding a shovel, to dig up the ground, for food for young children. However, underneath all this, even though her hands are earth-stained. The simple hand, can act as a jewel for many. Instead of doing this as a task, my grandma would do this with love.

People would always ask, "Why are you doing this, why are you working so hard for others?"

And she would respond, "You can't eat peace, honey, but you can surely taste it in a carrot that was grown with the intention of helping. I plant the seeds, but the real harvest is seeing a family sit down and forget their troubles for a while".

Hidden behind harsh times, lay meaningful stories. Similar to how underneath my grandmothers rough hands lay a purpose, which brings peace to many.

At times, my grandma's hands are very neat. Her nails are always perfectly cut, smooth and even, and her palms are always soft, carrying a gentle warmth. Her fingers lack any cuticles, appearing carefully tended over the years. However, on this perfect canvas, there are small creases, delicate lines that trace across her skin like faint maps of time. Her hands are weathered by the turning of countless tales, each page leaving behind an invisible imprint of stories

told and retold. Her hands have small smudges of ink, in a blue color, similar to the waves on the endless ocean, like quiet traces of her imagination. My grandma spends her extra time reading books to children in the library across her lonely street, always carrying stories to share. Her warm, comforting voice, and willingness to help, act as a bridge, transporting her knowledge and care to the children. The creases are from the books she holds for hours upon hours, and the smudges of ink come from the time she spends crafting incredible stories for her next session at the library. All of these small acts can lead up to the peace of a child, creating moments of calm and wonder that stay with them long after the stories have ended.

When she came back from a library reading today, she came to me and said, "The world is a noisy place for a child. I use my voice to build a fence around them, just for an hour, so they can feel safe and still."

By observing my grandmother, I found that working toward peace and justice can be simple. It doesn't mean working day in and day out. Rather, it means that if you find the heart to help others, it counts as real peace. A helping hand comes in many different shapes, color, and condition. Sometimes, real peace lays in the simple hand of another.



**Veer Jain**

reading his winning entry

***The Puzzle,***  
by Shilynn Ba-Farlough  
3rd Place  
Middle College High School



***Peace Unlocked***  
by Chenlu Ning  
2nd Place  
Walnut Creek Intermediate



Third place winner **Annie Tsubota**, of Pleasant Hill Middle School had to miss the awards presentations, but she arrived in time to get her picture taken with her painting, ***Balance***

## YOUTH ACTIVIST AWARD WINNERS



**ZOYA DESAI** turned a passion for cooking into Barakah Bowlz, a youth-led non-profit addressing food insecurity. Guided by the principle, “The best of people are those who are most beneficial to others”, it builds on the idea that sharing food multiplies its value through “barakah” or blessing. During Ramadan, she worked with a local Islamic Center to identify food insecure families, collected funds, organized volunteers, prepared and distributed over 100 meals. Through barakah she’s built a movement to empower youth, create lasting change.



**NAOMI CLEMENTS** was nominated by two teachers: “one of the best students I have ever had the pleasure of working with . . .”. Her focus, to shine a light on injustice against people of color dealing with the daily reality of violence, especially in her own community. As a TA she demonstrated leadership and was recognized for her artistic and writing skills, and an understanding beyond her years on many issues of social justice. “Her positive attitude and commitment to progressive causes has been truly inspiring to me, and the rest of the student body. . . “ “. . . Naomi will indeed make this world a better place, one page and one piece of art at a time.”



***Essential not Disposable, by Lucy Szela***

*My artwork is an ofrenda of overlooked people, specifically Latinos and Hispanics in our community and country. An ofrenda is an amazing Mexican tradition used to honor those who passed. It keeps them present in your home and your hearts during Dia de Los Muertos celebrations. So for this artwork I put these overlooked people — the hardest working group of people I can think of — into the frames that would be for those who passed, showing us, and helping us to remember and appreciate them.*

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## *Porcelain Ribcage* by Suhani Goyal

The porcelain is not white. Under a jeweler's loupe, it is a map of tectonic failures. Hairline fractures stained by sixty years of boiled chicory and mutton fat. I sit in the sideboard, a four-ounce measure with a chipped lip, holding the stagnant air of a house that has forgotten how to weep.

### *The First Hand: The Scarcity*

In 1947, the grandmother didn't use me to bake. She used me to negotiate with her own ribcage. The family remembers her as a woman of "simple means," a phrase that sanitizes the truth: she was starving.

Her wedding ring—thinned to a gold wire—clinked against my rim as she leveled sawdust-heavy flour. A rhythmic, desperate percussion. She lived in decimals, knowing how many grains of sugar kept a child from crying, how much water turned milk the blue tint of a lie. She possessed the terrifying precision of someone who knew that half an ounce meant a week of hunger.

### *The Second Hand: The Performance*

The son handled me like a live coal. By the 1980s, the hunger was paved over by linoleum and laminate, but the shame remained in the musculature. He used me during holidays, a performative ritual of "tradition" that felt more like an autopsy.

He gripped my handle with white-knuckled tension, eyes fixed on the recipe as if it were a legal defense. He poured bleached sugar into my belly, movements jagged and haunted. Once, he fumbled. I struck the counter with a sickening clack, and the air left the room. He didn't curse. He stared at the spilled white granules, his breath a beat of mourning. Terrified of the ghost of the grandmother's knife, always levelling the cup, he wiped the counter until the wood was raw.

### *The Third Hand: The Aesthetic*

The granddaughter moves with a terrifying lightness. She has never known a month with five weeks in it. She lifted me from the dust of the attic, ran her manicured finger over the chip in my rim, and

called it charming. She measures salt for a roast, tossing the excess into the sink with a flick of her wrist that would have stopped her grandmother's heart.

Yesterday, as the dying sun hit the yellowing curtains, she stopped. She rested her thumb in the shallow, worn groove on my handle, carved into the clay by thirty years of her grandmother's desperate grip. For a second, her shoulders slumped into the exact, weary curve of a woman she had never met. She shivered as the ceramic's cold traveled into bone, a weight that had nothing to do with the salt.

### *The Residue*

They think they are separate lives. They are wrong.



Several awards went to Suhani Goyal

My pores hold layers: the alkaline dust of drought, the sugar of frantic ambition, the floral oils of a girl playing at poverty. They are all drinking from the same cup of ghosts, unaware that this porcelain is the only thing keeping the house from collapsing into the silence it was built upon.

But yesterday, when the granddaughter felt my cold, the silence cracked.

To work for a peaceful world is to feel that chill and not pull away. It is the heavy, manual labor of remembering that a measure is never just a measure. It is a choice. For sixty years, I have been a weapon of math, used to calculate how much a human can do without. Now, as she keeps me on the counter instead of the sideboard, I feel a shift in the air.

Justice is the steadying of the hand. It is the moment she looks at the chip in my lip and sees not a "charming" flaw, but a debt. She is beginning to understand that peace is not the absence of the grandmother's hunger, but the active filling of the cups that remain empty next door.

She washes me now with a strange, deliberate reverence. She is scouring away the blue tint of the lie. We are no longer negotiating with ribcages; we are learning the weight of enough.

## FRIENDS OF MT. DIABLO PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER

An official club of the Rossmoor retirement community, it provides an additional venue for participation and activism. Monthly events are always currently relevant and open to the public. Below is a sample from this past year.



September 24, 2025

### **Charlie Kirk's Assassination: Context and Consequences?**

*A discussion and review of videos from both left and right-wing media commentators.*

October 22, 2025

### **Fear and Response to ICE in the Contra Costa Latino Community** with **Raul Arana**, United Latino Voices. Educating the community on local ICE activities.



February 20, 2026

### **International Law vs. Gangsterism, The Cases of Venezuela, Colombia, Iran, Syria, and Palestine**

*with Dan Kovalik, Author and Human Rights Attorney representing former Colombian President Gustavo Petro and a Colombian family in a legal complaint for U.S. extrajudicial killings at sea.*



December 12, 2025

### **The Monk and the Gun** documentary film presentation Co-sponsored with the End Gun Violence Club



May 27, 2026

### **What is happening in Cuba?**

*with Valerie Landau, an educator with rich knowledge of Cuba, recently participated in a Nuestra America Convoy with a group of 600, bringing economic aid to the blockaded island-nation*

August 26, 2026

### **How the "Movement to Break the Blockade of Gaza" Began and Continues** with **Greta Berlin**, co-founder of the "Free Gaza" movement and a veteran organizer/participant in the effort to provide humanitarian and economic aid to Palestine.



September 23, 2026

### **Reflections on 25 Years in Resilient & Sovereign Nicaragua**

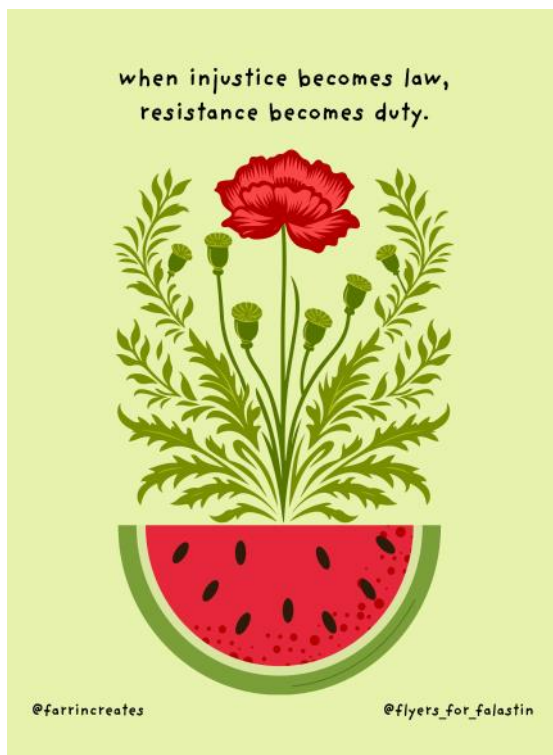
*with Becca Renk, of Casa Ben Linder, an activist with the Nicaragua Solidarity Coalition who worked in sustainable community development in Nicaragua.*



## ACTIVISM = EMPOWERMENT!

Your talents are needed!  
info@ourpeacecenter.org

- Photographers/  
videographers
- Partiers/foodies
- Musicians/artists
- Teachers
- Free Thinkers
- Activism/protesters
- Writers/readers
- Mailing Crew
- Organizers



## NEW MEMBERSHIP SOFTWARE!

We're using a NEW software system  
to better communicate with our  
members.

We now have 3 categories of  
"MEMBERSHIP":

- Low Income @ \$20 /year
- Individual @ \$50/year
- Family (household) @ \$100/year

And a simple "DONATION" in any  
amount is always welcome.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Questions or suggestions:  
membership@ourpeacecenter.org  
(925) 933-7850

## WHY BECOME A MEMBER OF THE PEACE CENTER???

- Meet other activists and discuss common concerns.
- Enjoy discounts on Center Events; receive special publications, and suggest future activities.
- The greater our numbers, the greater our impact!
- Memberships/Donations are tax-deductible. We are a 501 (c)(3). ID#: 75-3177720

TO JOIN OR RENEW ONLINE GO TO:  
**<https://ourpeacecenter.org/membership/>**

### MT. DIABLO PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER Membership Application / Renewal / General Donation Form (this form to be used for mailed-in payments by check)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

New Membership \_\_\_\_ / Renewal \_\_\_\_ / General Donation \_\_\_\_

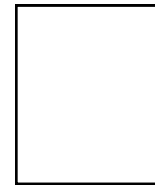
Annual Fees: Individual \_\_\_\_ (\$50) / Family Membership \_\_\_\_ (\$100) / Low Income \_\_\_\_ (\$20)

General donation or additional donation beyond annual membership \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **TOTAL: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ payable to: "Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center"  
Mailing Address: 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette, CA 94549 **THANK YOU!!!**



Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center  
1035 Carol Lane  
Lafayette, CA 94549



**JOIN US AT THE PEACE CENTER!**



**ATTENTION MEMBERS AND FRIENDS!**  
**SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR 18th ANNUAL**  
**PEACE & JUSTICE AWARDS DINNER!**  
**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14th**  
**1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette**