

Peace Gazette

Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center
Summer 2025



when injustice becomes law,
resistance becomes duty.



@farrincreates

@flyers_for_falastin

**ATTENTION MEMBERS AND FRIENDS!
PLEASE JOIN US AT OUR
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON!**

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, Magret Nunes and Chris Finn

PEACE GAZETTE

Established by Arne Westerback, 1969

EDITOR/LAYOUT: Margli Auclair / Thomas Brom

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www.facebook.com/MDPJC
[Instagram: mdpeaceandjustice](https://www.instagram.com/mdpeaceandjustice)

PEACE CENTER WEBSITES:

ourpeacecenter.org
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.

Contact us:

info@ourpeacecenter.org
(925) 933-7850

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Greetings to Peace Center Members and Friends,

We are publishing the Summer 2025 *Peace Gazette* during a particularly difficult period for peace advocates and organizers: Ongoing U.S. government support for genocide and ethnic cleansing in Gaza, and weapons shipments to conflicts in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Ukraine.

Our main focus for the past year has been humanitarian relief efforts for the two million people still living in Gaza. We have hosted Palestinian speakers, helped raise funds for medical relief, and demanded that Congress stop sending weapons to Israel.

In addition, we have urged Peace Center members to seek out information on foreign policy that is rarely published by U.S. mainstream media. Our weekly "Activist Alerts" provide links to experts, analysts, and news sources who offer context and perspective to official government narratives.

Alternative media sources have an additional benefit: They frequently report positive news stories from the Global South, including meetings of the BRICS+ nations, creation of new structures for economic development, and promotion of alliances that could support a more just world order.

In that spirit of optimism, this year's Art & Writing Challenge urged middle school and high school students to propose solutions to a related social justice issue: climate change. We received nearly 200 responses in the form of poetry, short stories, essays, graphic art, music, and film. Some of the winning poems and art pieces appear in this issue.

Our Annual Membership Meeting/Luncheon will be held on Saturday, September 13th, from 11 AM to 1 PM, in the Oakview Room and courtyard at Creekside Commons, 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette. Hope to see you all there!!

Yours in Peace,

Peace Center board members



STOP THE WEAPONS SHIPMENTS!

Since 2023, the **People's Arms Embargo**—led by retired CCSF Professor Wynd Kaufmyn and Toby Blomé of CODE PINK — has organized blockades at the gates to Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield.



The large air base is being used to send weapons to Israel for use in its genocidal war against the Palestinians in Gaza.

Many demonstrators have been arrested at the site in an effort to educate with banners and fliers those air-men and women entering the base.



Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center's

16th ANNUAL PEACE & JUSTICE AWARDS DINNER

NOVEMBER 23rd, 2024



Since its 40th anniversary in 2009, the Peace Center has held an annual gathering to recognize and celebrate the efforts of locally based individuals or organizations that have exhibited outstanding leadership efforts towards the ideals of peace and justice.

This year we chose the founders and current leaders of Middle East Children's Alliance, Veterans for Peace, and Dennis Bernstein.

Held at Creekside Commons, where we have our office space, we had an excellent turnout for the evening, enjoying Palestinian fare, speeches, and live music!

MIDDLE EAST CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE



Founder, **Barbara Lubin** and **Zeiad Abbas Shamrouh**, current Executive Director

MECA has been educating North Americans for decades about the Palestinian cause, as well as providing humanitarian support to people in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Iraq.



Founded in 1988 by **Barbara Lubin**, the organization has been effective both in organizing public events in the Bay Area and initiating projects in Palestine, such as a water treatment facility built in Gaza.

Since Barbara's retirement, MECA has been led by **Zeiad Abbas Shamrouh**, a Palestinian refugee from Dheisheh Refugee Camp near Bethlehem in the West Bank.

Zeiad is co-founder of the Ibdaa Cultural Center in Dheisheh, and has worked as a filmmaker participating in the production of several documentary films.



VETERANS FOR PEACE— representatives **Michael Wong, Paul Cox, Helen Jaccard, and Gerry Condon**

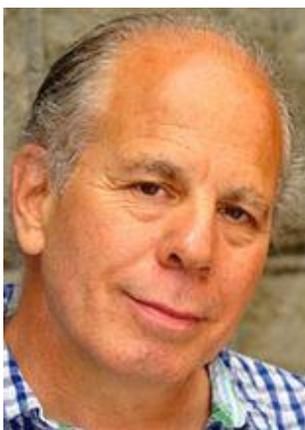
Dedicated to exposing the causes and costs of war, and seeking justice for military veterans and war victims.

Michael Wong, vice president of San Francisco VFP and a Board member of national VFP. Mike co-founded VFP's China Working Group, and leads related efforts challenging the drift toward U.S. war against China.

Paul Cox, former president of San Francisco VFP, and a member of VFP's chapter in Vietnam. Paul has organized annual VFP delegations to Vietnam, raising nearly \$250,000 for projects to remediate protracted damage from the U.S. war: landmine removal, and assistance to families who suffer from disabilities associated with Agent Orange dioxin poisoning.

Helen Jaccard manages a team of activists aboard the *Golden Rule*, a small sailboat that makes stops up and down the West Coast to oppose nuclear weapons and testing. The team provides public education about the growing danger of nuclear war, and urges communities to support the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Gerry Condon, a former VFP national president and current Board member. Gerry offers shore support for the *Golden Rule* sailboat, and represents VFP in several national coalitions of peace and justice activists.



DENNIS BERNSTEIN

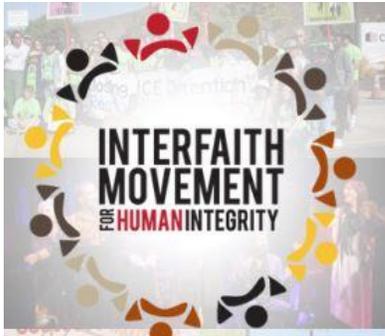
Published poet, host/producer of “Flashpoints” on Pacifica Radio’s KPFA, Berkeley

Starting at WBAI in New York in the early 1980’s, Dennis exposed the “dirty wars” in Central America, including the illegal funding of the Nicaraguan Contras. His program was called “CONTRAGATE/ UNDERCURRENTS”.

His coverage of the First Gulf War in Iraq evolved into “Flashpoints” - since 1992, Dennis’s forum on KPFA for breaking news and critical analyses.



PALESTINE SUPPORT GROUPS: LOCAL CHAPTERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE BY INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS



Based in Oakland, IMHI organizes local vigils and pilgrimages for Gaza while also addressing immigrant rights, deportation, and mass incarceration statewide.
All People are Sacred Across Bars and Borders



A group of Tri-Valley moms who “... didn’t even know each other prior to December 2023. We felt *someone* needed to do *something* about the genocide in Gaza. At some point, we each realized, **we are that someone.**“

The group organizes children’s art exhibits, opportunities for collective grief, speakers, and cultural events to highlight the Palestinian community here and abroad.
We All Are That Someone



Provides excellent speakers and programs designed to bring the challenges in Palestine to the attention of the local Christian Community
A Christian Voice for Palestine



Organized locally by Ilyas Sartawi, *Project Hope for Palestine* distributes water to thousands of families in Gaza who desperately need it.
***This is not only to get them water.
This is for their Sumud (steadfastness)***

Our community groups, coming together!

LOCAL ACTION ITEMS! ENCOURAGING SUPPORT FOR BDS

Bay Area organizations have played a large role in the BDS (Boycott-Divest-Sanction) movement intended to penalize the Israeli government for its actions in Palestine. As an example, the *Voices for Justice in Palestine* group in Rossmore recently hosted speaker Dov Baum, who served in the military and then became one of 50 reservists to denounce Israel's militarization.

Co-founder of *Who Profits from the Occupation* and of the *Coalition of Women for Peace in Israel*, Baum now lives in Oakland and is the director of American Friends Service Committee's Action Center for Corporate Accountability. She suggested the links below to access highly effective international efforts.

- **BDS Movement** (<https://BDSMovement.net>) established 20 years ago. Includes academic boycott (<https://www.bdsmovement.net/academic-boycott>)
- **American Friends Service Committee, AFSC** (<https://AFSC.org/divest>) for Palestinian Rights.
- **AFSC Boycott Chevron!** (<https://BoycottChevron.info>)
- **AFSC Investigate** (<https://investigate.info>) Permits users to search a database of companies, scan mutual fund holdings, and monitor all companies that profit from Israeli occupation of Palestine.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESSING BDS

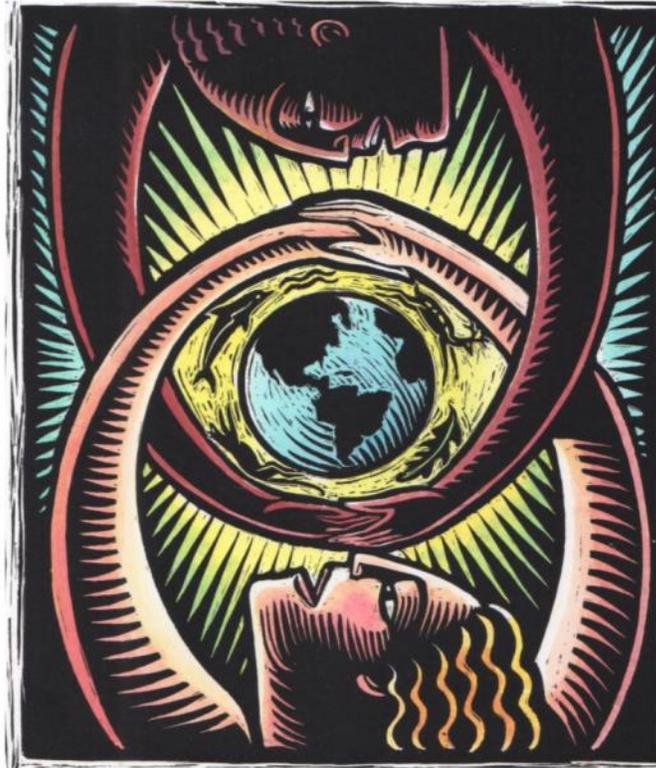


The No Thanks App, created by Palestinian app developer Ahmed Bashbash, uses product barcodes to help consumers boycott brands capitalizing on Palestinian genocide.



**Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center's 27th Annual
ART & WRITING CHALLENGE and YOUTH ACTIVIST GRANT AWARDS!**
TO ENCOURAGE LOCAL YOUTH TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF PEACE AND
SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH THE ARTS, WRITTEN WORD, AND ACTIVISM!

TOPIC FOR 2025:
"CLIMATE CHANGE:
YOUR THOUGHTS,
FEELINGS, AND
IDEAS"



**YOUTH ACTIVIST
AWARDS**
We recognize youth
who show leadership
and dedication on
issues of peace and
social justice.

Art by Jennifer Hewitson

AND THE ART & WRITING WINNERS ARE.....

MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Alana Doherty Art: 1st Place
- Lucy Szela Art: 2nd Place
- Elinor Bajuniemi Art: 3rd Place
- Natalie Zhen Creative Writing: 1st Place
- Saachi Choradia Creative Writing: 2nd Place
- Diane Wu Creative Writing: 3rd Place
- Marie Chen Essay: 1st Place
- Chloe Horowitz Essay: 2nd Place
- Nathan Lee Essay: 3rd Place

HIGH SCHOOL

- Surabhi Verma Art: 1st Place
- Francella Ugarte Art: 2nd Place
- Kamea Hsiung Art (music): 3rd Place
- Suhani Goyal Creative Writing: 1st Place
- Arthur Kim Creative Writing: 2nd Place
- Axon Bennewitz Creative Writing: 3rd Place
- Maryam Kermani Essay: 1st Place
- Jasmine Ye Essay: 2nd Place
- Kamea Hsiung Essay: 3rd Place

YOUTH ACTIVISTS:
Alana Osivwemu Brentwood Youth Commission / Justice event organizer
Helen Li Promotes the benefits of music to the health of the community

**SCENES FROM THE AWARDS LUNCHEON—MAY 10, 2025
and a sample of WINNING SUBMISSIONS!**



2025 ART & WRITING CHALLENGE WINNERS



Lucy Szela, *In Greed We Trust*



Maryam Kermani accepting her prize, second year in a row!



YOUTH ACTIVIST AWARD WINNER

ALANA OSIVWEMU is the youngest appointed commissioner on the Brentwood Youth Commission and the only middle schooler. The Commission works to organize events focused on youth involvement in the community. Alana also participates in activities such as the Brentwood USD's Black History Month Oratorical event and volunteers at The Father's House Oakland in the children's church. She performs in competitive dance and chooses to use that platform to select messages that matter to her and her community. This year Alana's solo song is "Rise Up" by Andra Day to remind people that they can make a difference in their community today and every day.

Secondhand Smoke by Suhani Goyal

*we never lit the match
and yet somehow
we're breathing in the ash
it curls beneath our doorframes
seeps into our skin
settles in the silence
between dinner conversations
finds its home
in the gap between heartbeats*

*dad says the summers feel angry now
like a cruel mirage bestowed upon us
by the very light that once held warmth
mom counts hurricanes instead of birthdays
my cousin stopped jogging by the bay
the water climbed too high
the air too thick to hold*

*and me?
i scroll past statistics
with a guilt i can't name
i write poetry till my hands fall apart
while the planet falls into chasms
a silent departure; felt more than seen
like a secret we all knew
but dared not say aloud*

*the sky doesn't blush anymore
it bruises*

*our cities are tired
our lungs borrowed
farmers bury their hopes next to dry roots
while billionaires build bunkers
with money that still won't buy
a second earth*

*they say it's political
i say it's personal*

*because climate change isn't a headline.
it's my friend's medication costs rising.
it's my uncle's job lost to a dried-out field.
it's the fear that the future
won't know green
the way we did.*

*but still
i believe in healing
in hands planting more
than they destroy
in change that comes
not in silence
but in song*

*we are the generation
that inhales smoke
and exhales resistance*



Alana Doherty, *Human Destruction*



Arthur Kim accepting his award from
Board member Magret Nunes

***Cantus Vitae* by Natalie Zhen**

The concert hall had no walls, no ceiling, no floor; just endless black stretching out in all directions. But it wasn't empty. The orchestra played.

It had always played.

The song, called Cantus Vitae, had no beginning and no end. It sounded like rivers flowing, trees swaying, the Earth breathing. It was life, in its purest form.

At the center stood Maestro Terra, baton in hand. His coat shimmered with the colors of the world, deep green like forests, blue like the ocean, gold like sunlit sand. His hands were steady. They always had been. He had led this music for as long as time had existed, guiding every note with care and grace.

The players had never failed him. Until now.

It started small. A single missing note from the violins, a moment of quiet that almost slipped by unnoticed. Then another violin dropped out. And another. The morning birdsong in the melody...was gone.

Maestro Terra paused, his baton hovering midair. He turned to the players. One violinist sat frozen, bow raised, hands shaking, face heavy with sorrow. Slowly, they set the violin in their lap. Their part had ended. A quiet ripple of worry moved through the orchestra. Eyes met, uncertain. Still, the music went on. The cellos swelled, trying to fill the gap, their voices deeper, fuller, but just for now.

The Maestro swallowed, lifted his baton again. The music had to go on.

But silence had started to spread.

One by one, the instruments faltered. The flutes struggled, breath coming short and choked, the air thickening, the melody smothered. The brass stumbled, their once bold voices drowned beneath rising tides. The cellos cracked, their deep wooden bodies splintering as forests burned, their voices lost to ash. The pianos hesitated, uncertain of what had the melody once sounded like? They no longer remembered.

In the darkness, the audience watched.

Some whispered nervously. Some looked away. Others crossed their arms, pretending nothing had changed.

But the silence kept growing.

Maestro Terra pushed forward, swinging his baton through the dark, trying to hold the music together with what was left. The drums stumbled, the beat unsteady. The Earth's rhythm was slipping. Play," he whispered, his voice rough. "Play. Damn you."

But a violinist stood and left, eyes down. Then a flutist. A cellist. One after another, they laid down their instruments. Some bowed their heads. Some whispered apologies. Some just vanished into the shadows.

Still, the Maestro refused to stop. The song wasn't over. It couldn't be.

But the hall was quiet now. Silence swallowed everything. For the first time since the beginning, his baton didn't move. His hands, once sure, now shook. His coat had lost its shine. His breath came shallow, unsure.

He lowered his arms.

Then,

A single viola.

Soft, shaky—barely there. But still there.

A young violinist played alone, fingers steady with quiet determination. The tune was new, a bit uncertain, a little broken, but alive.

A clarinet joined. Then a harp. A lone drumbeat followed. Slowly, gently, a new song began. Not the old song, never the old song. That one was gone but this was something new. Maestro Terra raised his baton again. This time, he didn't try to bring back what was lost. He let the music grow into something new.

And somewhere in the dark, a note still hung in the air waiting.

Not for an audience.

Not for the Maestro.

For you.

If you still carry the sound, even the faintest thread of it; then maybe the song isn't over.

And maybe, that's enough to begin again. The ending hasn't been written yet.



Elinor Bajuniemi, *The End Was Just the Beginning*

Echoes of our fractured home by Saachi Choradia

*blue skies used to shine bright but are now
torn
earth trembles and cries with despair; the oceans rise
no wind, we breathe air brimming with heat
and scorn
as smoke and ash stuffs our bright skies
souls are fragile, hearts are weak, as regrets
come to peak
this magical world is now teeming with lies*

*the forests burn while leaders actions delay
and illness spreads through poisoned air
fields lie barren where children play
while profits bloom, the poor despair
our labor lost beneath the sun, no shelter left
when day is done
and justice fades for everyone*

*homes are sinking, scorched, or swept
whole lives erased in one horrendous night
and still, the ones who barely slept
are told their struggle isn't right
the wealthy flee while others stay, to face the
storms day after day*

*the sick grow sicker, heat won't cease
hospitals fill while crops turn dry
the cost of food and care increase
while silent forests slowly die
each breath we take feels not our own, beneath a sky
we've overthrown*

*the jobs we knew have slipped away
machines replace the farmer's hand
the sea now swallows docks and bays
and hunger spreads across the land
no work, no wage, no place to live—how much more
must this planet give?*

*we check the news, we watch, we pray,
each season, now a guessing game.
we've lost the ease of yesterday,
but still we fight, though not the same.
for every tear the Earth has cried, we carry hope and
wounded pride.*

*the seasons harsh, we shiver still,
cuddled close, wrapped tight in fear.
we wait in blankets, hearts to fill,
as nature's fury draws too near.
our warmth is lost, our comfort gone, but hope
survives though it feels long.*

*But still, there's hope if we can see,
A chance to change, to set things right
We must protect what's wild and free,
And join in struggle, join the fight
To heal the Earth and break the chains, and
turn the tide to clear the rain*

*We mend the Earth by planting trees,
By walking light, by using less.
We trade the smoke for solar breeze,
And lift up those in deep distress.
With justice first and greed behind, we heal with hands,
with heart, with mind.*

*Let youth be heard and truth be shown,
Let policy protect the poor.
Let care, not power, shape the tone
Of every law, on every shore.
Together we can shift the tide—if we
unite, not run or hide.*

Francella Ugarte's piece entitled ***Ocean of Waste*** is a watercolor/collage of underwater creatures surrounded by bits of collected trash. It was a unique and highly effective statement.



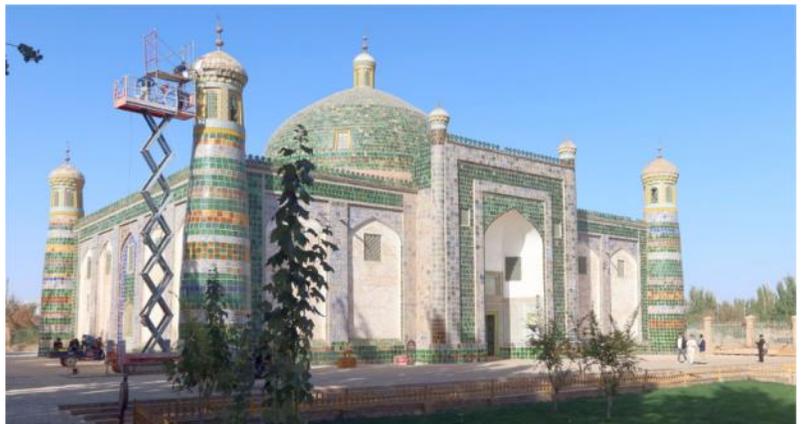
FROM SHANGHAI TO XINJIANG



Last October, the Peace Center’s Rick Sterling and Elicha Gastelumendi joined a small delegation of visitors to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, in the far west of China.

The group, organized by retired San Francisco Judge Julie Tang, visited the cities of Urumqi and Kashgar, schools and mosques, and several rural communities.

According to Sterling, “It was evident throughout our visit that Uyghur culture and language are not only respected, but also promoted in Xinjiang. That was an eye-opening experience, given the U.S. State Department’s allegations of anti-Uyghur human rights abuses.”



PEACE CENTER FRIENDS IN THE COMMUNITY DOING THE GOOD WORK OF ACTIVISM!



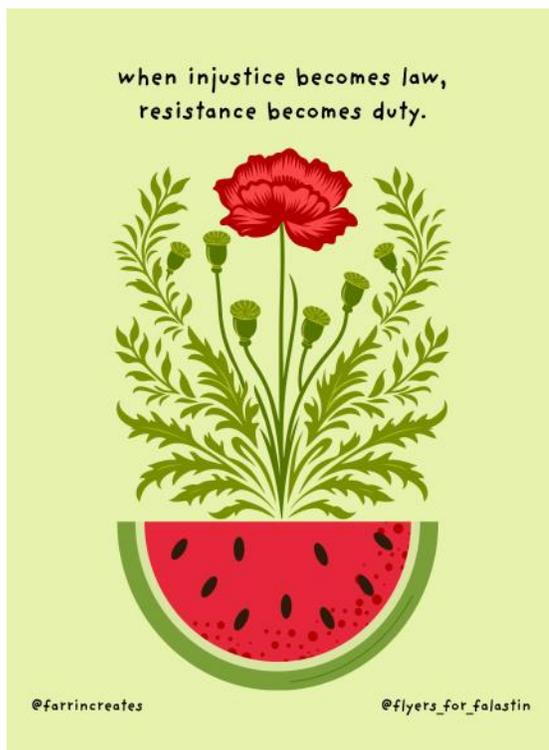
Lamorinda Peace & Justice Committee



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 ___

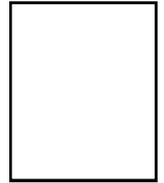
Annual Fees: Individual ___ (\$50) / Family Membership ___ (\$100) / Low Income ___ (\$20)

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



~ WELCOME TO THE PEACE CENTER! ~



JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE OUR 56th YEAR!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON!

POTLUCK, FAMILY-FRIENDLY, GET-TOGETHER!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13th from 11 am — 1 pm
Creekside Commons at Our Savior's Lutheran Church,
Courtyard and Oakview Room

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Please contact the office at (925) 933-7850 or info@ourpeacecenter.org
to let us know how many will be in your party