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VETERANS FOR PEACE

Veterans For Peace members, colleagues, comrades,

The other day I received an email from Doug Hostetter, long time peace activist: Colleagues I did not hear from Amgad today, and then I got the message from Joanna Hiebert Bergan who works for MCC Canada and is also a friend of Amgad.

Here was Joanna's message from a few minutes ago.

"Hey Doug. I'm on with Amgad. They are bombing Al mawasi. Next to him. I'm needing to tell someone. He asked that we pray...is there more we can do?"

It is very bad.

He got a flyer telling him to leave.

But he isn't going to.

Where to go?"

I don't know what to say

Please keep Amgad and his family in your prayers

It was a reminder once again that the work of Veterans for Peace encompasses the individual suffering and pain of the genocide in Gaza and the urgency of our collective organizing.

Welcome to the Veterans For Peace annual Business Meeting of 2024. It is a pleasure to witness the growth of VFP members in the organization and your extraordinary activism on behalf of peace, justice, democracy. At the national level we continue our work to assist in the formation of national projects and chapters, assist local work as needed, send out communications via enews about local, national, and international activism, respond to local concerns, and assist in resolving issues as they come along. This past year the national board has continued to accept additional responsibilities and moved along board committees including Communications with Gerry Condon as chair and Transformative Justice with Kelly Wadsworth, reforming issues and priorities throughout this past year.

Veterans For Peace strives through the collective efforts of members, chapters, national projects, working groups to build a culture of peace from our experiences of war and destruction. We inform the public of the causes and costs of war. Our work includes advocating for a dismantling of the war economy and continuous work to end all wars. We affirm our responsibility to work for world peace and abolish war as an instrument of national policy. Our members actively work to prevent the spread of militarism in our society, change U.S. foreign policy from endless war to diplomacy and to help our national leaders have a long-term vision of peace and justice. Our members believe one of the most important components to ending war is to work for peace.

We live in the most unsettling, disturbing, destructive times and, yet despite all obstacles, our organization Veterans For Peace continues to move along dynamically because of the dedication and determination of our members. You show the proud veteran voice for peace in our country, in our world through national projects that depict the deleterious impact on climate from US militarism and the war industrial complex, you show your courage and determination for the values of VFP through work for peace in Gaza, Ukraine; the Golden Rule travels through the Northwest US bringing messages of solidarity and peace; you show it through your hard work to save the VA for veteran's care and prevent privatization through corporate interest; you show it through your activism in the streets for peace.

In 2023 Mike Ferner was selected by the VFP Board to be the Interim Director as we reorganized staff roles and responsibilities to ensure our building a path toward a strong and vibrant veteran voice for peace. Mike worked with us as National Director until May, 2024 and then requested that we hire an Executive Director so that he could continue as Director of Special Projects. Until we hire an Executive Director, those responsibilities have been allocated to national staff and members of the Board. In January 2024 we hired a Membership Coordinator-Casey Steinmetz whom many of you will remember worked with us a number of years ago. During the spring and early summer, we continued to reorganize the national office, defining staff roles and responsibilities, hired a full time Communications Director, and brought in volunteers. Despite our small staff, the office produces VFP enews of chapter and project actions and announcements. We continue to hold open and public monthly board meetings that encourage attendance of members, listen to members' concerns, and maintains transparency of our proceedings. In February, 2022 when the Executive Committee reviewed our national bank account we were just able to meet payroll for the national staff for the following two weeks. We called on you, our members, supporters, and donors to contribute and keep us functioning and developed a financial plan to move us through 2022. One of our active board members raised money through a substantial grant to help put money back into our savings account [Board minutes April, May 2022). As a result of a review of the budget, and the recommendations of the Finance Committee, the board made major changes to the budget that were accepted and will be discussed by Mike Tork.

Today we consistently track our finances and have over \$180,000 in operating, savings, and restricted accounts. We have transferred our money-checking and savings to Amalgamated Bank-founded by the Amalgamated Clothing workers of America nearly 100 years ago. It is considered the bank for the working people; the SEIU remains the largest shareholder. Requests from other organizations for endorsements go through Josh Shurley and, when necessary, through the ExComm and full board. We have issued VFP Statements on: Aaron Bushnell, support student protests, denounce allegations of foreign funding of progressive organizations, an open letter to Kamala Harris to "Ceasefire Now!" in Gaza, peace negotiations and stopping the sale of arms to Israel and Ukraine. Our VFP Statement of Purpose is clear: we are against war. We support war resisters.

This past year VFP Chapter 160 organized and led a delegation to Viet Nam headed by Paul Cox and Chuck Searcy. There were 13 people on the tour this year—our ninth and the first since 2019. Vietnam has recovered quite well from covid, and tourism is in full swing. The tour was inexpensive, except that each person also donated \$1,000 to Vietnamese organizations that are addressing the dual legacies of AO and UXOs. Including the additional \$7,000 from Chapter 160, we donated \$20,000 to: Vietnam Friendship Village, Project Renew, Blind Center Incense Factory, TuDu Hospital Peace Center, Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange, and an AO-affected family. Gerry Condon participated in a Gaza Delegation that attempted to deliver humanitarian supplies to Gaza.

Veterans For Peace has entered a partnership with Kindred on a World View Literacy Project, a self-directed, community learning program, exploring rebalancing life on earth through individual learning and group work. Four Arrows introduced this project at the opening session for this convention: <https://worldviewliteracy.org/>

A reminder to those of you who are interested in the issues and deliberations of the national VFP board: the monthly meetings are open, and we welcome your attendance, ideas, concerns. The meetings are in zoom-regular meeting format, so all participants are seen if they wish. They are the third Saturday of the month at 12:40pm ET. The zoom link is posted on the VFP website and in the enews. There are five board of director positions open this election cycle. You have until seven days following the close of the annual Business Meeting to submit an application to run for the board.

Thank you all for the work you do to save the planet and all living things.

Peace Walk: 2024: Dedicated to Daniel Ellsberg and all peacemakers, Ellen Davidson and Tarak Kauff organized a national project to walk from Maine to Washington, DC with VFP members joining along the way. Its purpose: Walking for the well being of all people, for peace and an end to the threat of nuclear war and all wars, and for an environment that supports all life.