

# PEACE & WORLD HARMONY

## *(How We All See Peace in Such Different Ways)*

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In 2013, when I was elected president of the Tri-Counties Chapter of the United Nations Association (UNA), we started our adventure to re-landscape the Chapter. We understood that being part of a very powerful organization such as the United Nations, in a world that was changing dramatically right in

front of us, required much more of us.

It was clear that a whole new approach to our UNA-USA goals, responsibilities, actions, and outreach to the rest of mankind locally and globally was needed.

Our first realization was that, even though we were part of one of the most important organizations on the planet, we were not the only game in town. There was a vast population of other unique organizations out there that were just as powerful and in some ways more effective than the UN and the UNA. We came to realize that our responsibility lay in a neutral approach, which is the UN way, bringing together other like-minded NGOs in a collaborative and cooperative process where differences could be blended into powerful solutions and 2 plus 2 could easily become 5+.


Our second realization was to understand that to help change the world one

step at a time, we needed to change. To become a more evolved UNA-USA Chapter, we needed to turn the lights on and see ourselves in that light in new ways—more empowering ways.

Our next shift was to honor what we learned from our first planning retreat, a process directed and guided by our longtime UNA member Douglas Gilles. At the core of the retreat was the UN spirit of neutrality and a focus on creativity where all ideas were explored. This learning process turned into a strategic windfall as we distilled our future accomplishments into three essential themes:

- Promote peace, harmony, and worldwide well-being. This would be our local and global mission.
- Develop strong relationships with other NGOs using a collaborative approach. This would be our driving platform.
- Foster personal development and growth by acknowledging each of our unique skills and abilities to give back. This would be our interpersonal mission.





The flow of global information started in our first month with our luncheon speaker, UN Assistant Secretary General Dr. Robert Orr. The media attended and picked up Dr. Orr's request to our UNA to never underestimate what one chapter of the UNA could do; in other words, "be bold when tackling world issues."

Our UNA Board meetings were attended by like-minded NGOs, and we soon realized that others were hungering for a collaborative interaction as well. It became clear that people who give back, whether for world peace, the protection of the planet's ecosystem, stopping human trafficking, women's rights, the quality and availability of water, the education of children, SEE International's crusade for the worldwide treatment of cataracts, a Year Without War, et cetera, all have peace as their foundation. Peace seems to equate to a better world, and a better world can come from so many different directions.

What started out as a mission to connect to other NGOs turned into a learning process that seems to continue. Each NGO that we have encountered has its own unique ingredient for peace. Listening to those dedicated to a Year Without War offers a whole different way to think about the reality of world peace. Saving people's eyesight opens up lives to a new prosperity and an ability to contribute and to live more fully. Finding environmentally sound sources of energy and power can lead to a more conscious approach to business and the management of worldwide resources. More effective and less competitive ways of managing and saving water could reduce destructive competitive practices and events and may save the world from potential wars over water. And so on.

At each Board meeting we invite an NGO to present a 15-minute overview of its goals, strategies, and successes. A special part of the conversation is how we, as peace-focused organizations, can synergize with each other to help advance our missions to make the world a better place. A key ingredient in keeping our conversations vibrant and collaborative is the neutrality of our UN-like approach. Our goal is not to decide whose mission or approach is best or better. We see our goal as helping everyone see, find, and maximize their own and our contribution to this great puzzle called peace.

This exploratory approach, a learning model with a neutral bent, has also helped us to be more assertive. Our first major endeavor was to support and sponsor Sharon Stone's movie *Femme: Women Healing the World*, which seeks to raise consciousness about the rapidly expanding importance and necessity of women's contribution to this ever-changing world. We continued that process with our *Femme Film* event on March 23, 2014, and others are in the works.

Our second major step forward was our UN Day event focused on the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and its increasing threat to the world and importantly to our own West Coast. A special town meeting with a wide group of speakers and facilitator-led breakout groups opened up the discussion, with everyone in the audience participating. This one day of many minds meeting ultimately created the Santa Barbara Protocol ([www.unasb.org](http://www.unasb.org)), which focused on what cities can do to help protect themselves as this challenge moves closer and closer to our beaches.

Three characteristics seem to be solidifying in our approach:

- Neutrality with an openness and curiosity to learn more about how other NGOs contribute to peace.
- Empowerment and support of other peace-oriented groups that are synergistic with us and our approach to peace.
- Collaboration and cooperation that go beyond just shaking hands to embracing challenges to make change a reality by doing it together.

As we move into the second year of our UNA Chapter's evolution, we are pleased with our development and accomplishments. We are walking our talk and we are better at understanding our purpose and collaborating more effectively with other NGOs. We plan to host a second Fukushima event in June and two or more *Femme* screenings. We hope to develop a platform for UN Day on October 24, 2014 with representatives from NGOs and others who are actively making peace a reality.

We thank all of you who have helped with our successes, and we look forward to your continued support and to meeting new members who also would like to demonstrate how they, too, can make their unique contributions to peace a reality.