

Make Your Own Peace

By Jessica Bowman On February 15, 2019

Save



COURTESY PHOTO: JESS BOWMAN

There are some people who just want to see the world in peace. Barbara Lopez-Mayhew, Professor of Spanish and Filiz Ruhm, Professor of Political Science and International Studies are some such people. Professors Lopez-Mayhew and Ruhm aren't the only ones, however. As a part of the clusters projects, one of the first in fact, PSU's Dean Cynthia Vascak became inspired by a mosaic piece of artwork and decided to do something similar in Plymouth State University with a message of peace.

In an interview with Professor Lopez-Mayhew and Professor Ruhm tell the story of the Peace Wall on display in the HUB Pawsway. Starting three years ago in a meeting with Dean Cynthia Vascak and professors from many other departments as well as involved faculty and staff, the idea of the Peace Wall was explained.

The main focus was and still is, to promote peace inside our community by inviting students, faculty, and staff alike to paint something they feel represents peace to them. Looking at the Peace Wall it's not apparent just how many tiles there are, however, as the interview yielded in conversation there was about 500 students, faculty and staff, even some outside members of our community, who painted a tile. Making this project the largest activity students participated in.

"Some students who were seniors," said Professor Lopez-Mayhew about the PSU students who painted a tile for the Peace Wall. "I felt this project allowed them to leave a bit of themselves behind." Likewise, for the freshmen that were involved, Professor Lopez-Mayhew and Ruhm claim that the freshmen good about how they had just joined campus and were already part of the community.

Professor Lopez-Mayhew also regaled how the first painting of the tiles on the Peace Wall was a good way for students to relax during finals week. “They weren’t graded on it,” she said, “They were just reminded, maybe, of a time where they could just paint and they didn’t have as much responsibilities.”

This was only the first phase of the Peace Wall project that was revealed last April 2018. Professor Lopez-Mayhew and Ruhm seemed eager to move forward with phase two of the project as they explained what it means to them.

In brief terms, the Peace Wall is a beginning. Phase two of the project will bring about a bigger included audience. Plymouth State University and those involved in the making of the Peace Wall Project have been corresponding with different middle and high schools all around New Hampshire. The point of this phase, as was the point with the last, is to invite community members to paint a picture of what peace means to them.

“Our focus this time, is including our community at large, not just PSU,” Professor Ruhm says. The tiles that are painted in the next phase will also be added to the Peace Wall but there is a bigger aspect of the Peace Wall that Professor Lopez-Mayhew explained with enthusiasm.

“If you look, the tiles are on a board...so that if this HUB--if the Pawsway--is ever renovated the Peace Wall stays intact and can be moved around. So the art is sustainable.” In addition, during phase two, which includes community members from other schools in our area, PSU wishes to bring the Peace Wall to them.

Students from the various high school and middle schools that PSU reached out to will paint two tiles, one for PSU’s Peace Wall and another to bring back to their school for their own version of the Peace Wall.

“We are hoping people pass the baton and more represent what peace means to them,” Professor Ruhm explained.

“If anyone wants to take it on,” said Professor Lopez-Mayhew.

“We are happy to guide,” Professor Ruhm added.

Professor Lopez-Mayhew nodded approvingly and continued, “Yes guide, not lead.”

Overall both professor’s showed their commitment to this project and their excitement for it. The Peace Wall has a bigger message of bringing peace to other communities and promoting the kinds of things that bring peace through keynote speakers and events.

This is all without mentioning the Museum of White Mountains contribution to the Peace Wall. During phase one and moving on with phase two, the museum on Highland Street provided and still provides a space for the creation of the peace tiles. Director of the Museum of the White Mountains, Cynthia Robinson, is in charge of this part of the project. “ I have/continue to provide the peace tile making workshop process,” Robinson said, “and teaching for PSU and community groups. The peace tiles are being stored downstairs at the Museum until the next installation.”

The Museum of the White Mountains, as well as everyone involved, plays an important role in making the Peace Project as large and widespread as it has come to be. Moving forward Professor Lopez-Mayhew and Ruhm hope to see more participation and growth of the Peace Wall, not just in PSU but in other schools around the community for many years to come.

Coming up sooner than that is a workshop with peace tiles. This workshop, titled "Find Your Own Peace" will be held on May 20th beginning at 9 AM in the HUB Hage Room with a guest speaker and PSU alumnus, Will Hopkins, with a discussion to follow a talk on peace. From there, students will have the opportunity to head over to the Museum of the White Mountains and paint their own tile. This workshop will largely just be students from various middle and high schools, as most of PSU will be gone for the summer.

Prior to this, however, anyone can contact Cynthia Robinson at the Museum of the White Mountains and inquire about making their own peace tile for the event. Overall the Peace Project is headed by a passionate team that is open to the entire community and wish, not just to spread a general message of peace but promote critical thinking in participants about what peace means to them and how they can spread this message forward.

If you're interested in participating contact Cynthia Robinson, Professor Barbara Lopez-Mayhew or Professor Filiz Ruhm about events going on and how to make your own peace tile.