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Small actions add up to big change over time

By Sharon K. Sobotta



Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

An intergenerational crowd of nearly 100 people—including mothers, children, and community elders, came together recently to share art and stories, and connect with each other at the Soul of my Soul Exhibit sponsored by the Mount Diablo Peace and Justice Center in Lafayette mid-March.?

Margli Auclair is a member of the Mount Diablo Peace and Justice Center and an organizer of the event. "We bring awareness to issues like war and social justice," Auclair said about the nonpartisan organization that hosted the event. The courtyard was filled with artwork, shoes, and photographs. Because many people were fasting for Ramadan, people stopped short of breaking bread together. Instead they enjoyed music, story time with books by Palestinian authors, and time to connect with one another.

"I think it was important for kids to have a chance to hear voices, writing, and stories about Palestinian children, because it gives them a fresh perspective," Auclair said. "Stories humanize people. It's important for children to see themselves and each other represented and to know that they matter because they're part of the community."??

Yosra Abdelaziz said the work of MDPJC exemplifies the power of community. "Our organization is apolitical and

independent. It's made up of moms from different nationalities, religions, and backgrounds that care about human beings and felt compelled to do something" Abdelaziz said. "As moms, we felt the voices of children highlighted a perspective to consider."

Abdelaziz told participants who might feel overwhelmed, discouraged, and unheard by political leaders, to remember that small things really do matter. "I know that sometimes the problems of the world seem much bigger than us as individuals. And that leaves us [asking ourselves] `what's the point? Will anything I do matter?'" Abdelaziz said. "I'm here to tell you that actions do matter. Everyone has a role. Together, even if we all play a small part, it all adds up."?

The Mount Diablo Peace and Justice Center has launched its 26th annual Art & Writing Challenge and Youth Activist Grant Awards with submissions due on April 20 and a luncheon on May 11. For more information about the center or the contest, visit www.ourpeacecenter.org.

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