



## Donna Gilchrist

**Board Chair**

**Topeka Center for Peace & Justice (TCPJ) Mission:** *To promote justice and peace through education and action for social change by working with individuals and organizations in Topeka.*

One of my favorite weeks in summer is the elementary school level Peace Camp sponsored by the Topeka Center for Peace & Justice (TCPJ). Kit Pittier, from West Side Christian Church, was our director this year and deserves plenty of kudos. Planning begins weeks ahead of time so that the children can participate in engaging activities that reach multiple learning styles. The theme for Peace Camp 2023 was diversity, and the camp of about 30 kids certainly reflected a diverse population in their backgrounds, ethnicity, neurodiversity, interests, and ages.

One way that diversity was approached was through the use of animals. Lucy, the Ball Python, was a big hit with the kids as they learned her unique qualities and talents. Chance, the therapy dog, charmed the children with his friendly openness and wet, sloppy, kisses. Appealing group games taught that each child has something special to contribute. On a field trip to the Children's Discovery Center pairs or triads worked together to construct a "highway" with hills. The goal was to get a small ball to travel the hills and continue on the track to the other side of the room. Each group was highly successful!

Through art activities, music, and books kids learned about themselves, each other, and ways that they could get along with someone different from themselves.



Above: Rock painting was an art project for Peace Camp.

### Topeka Center for Peace & Justice Board Members

Rev. Donna Gilchrist, West Side Christian Church, *Board Chair*

Rev. Clarence Newton, New Life Baptist Church, *Vice Chair*

Carol Christensen, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, *Secretary*

Dr. Lou Saadi, Islamic Center of Topeka, *Treasurer*

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Major Jana Harden, Topeka Police Department

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Dr. Beryl New, Faith Temple Church

Jonathon Noble, Esquire

Pastor Gabriel Pennington, Southern Hills Mennonite Church

Davin Potts, student board member

Peace Circles, a tier one restorative practice, have become an integral part of Peace Camp. Small group circle time offers each child an equal opportunity to be heard as a talking stick is passed around the circle. This year the kids got an opportunity to learn more about diversity and why each of them are important, as well as a chance to practice friendship and inclusivity.

The joy of Peace Camp is watching kids who are tentative and unsure strangers on the first day become kind and caring friends during the week, including each other in decisions and activities. In a world which can be highly divided, Peace Camp gives me hope for our children and the future.

P.S. I am super excited that in 2023, for the first time, TCPJ sponsored a Middle School Peace Camp. Read more about it in Regina Platt's article below.



Top right: Kids get to meet Lucy, the ball python.

Above: Peace Circle

Bottom right: Peace Camp 2023 t-shirts that the kids got to decorate.

### TCPJ SUMMER DATA June—August

Peace Camp Volunteer Circle: 8

Peace Camp participants served: 10 (middle & volunteer high school students)

YMCA Summer Camp Staff trained: 9

YMCA Campers served (ages 11-14): 20

Keeping It Real Youth Summit (ages 14-18 and parents): 22

Restorative Kansas conference participants served: 138

Restorative Kansas Debrief participants served: 12



# Topeka Center FOR Peace & Justice



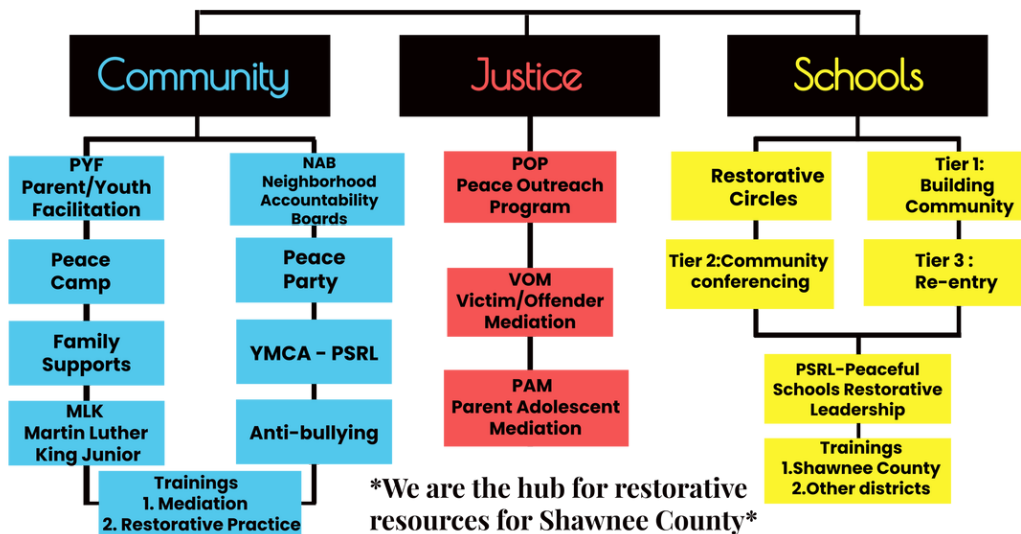
**Carl Frazier**  
*Executive Director*

WOW! This has been a summer to remember with personal and professional changes:

- Thriving through two back surgeries and recovery
- Hiring two employees
- Purchasing a server to keep track of our data and enabling staff to connect offsite
- Consulting with a programmer
- Receiving approval for over \$300,000 in grant funding from the state of Kansas
- Continuing to be connected to the community while partnering with organizations

Even with all the changes, there is one thing that remains the same - we cannot do everything by ourselves. I love how our staff continues to explore how we can be most effective in the community. We do this by not only continuing to hone our processes, but to share them with you. As a reminder, here is a map of our community points of connection. We continue to be the hub of restorative resources for Shawnee County.

## Topeka Center For Peace & Justice *Restorative Resources*



At Topeka Center for Peace & Justice, we are continuing to be a connector for our community.

# Topeka Center FOR Peace & Justice

## WELCOME ONBOARD!



My name is Haven Jarrett. I am 19 years old and after this summer I will be starting my second year at Allen County Community College. Once I get my prerequisite classes complete, I hope to further my education at a different college. Right now, I am studying dental hygiene but I may change my major to something in the medical field.

I enjoy a lot of different activities as well. I love listening to music, driving around, seeing my family and friends, fishing, watching movies, etc. I recently started working at the Topeka Center for Peace and Justice doing administrative work. I want to thank Amanda Saylor for offering me this job and Carl Frazier for hiring me. So far, I love the job and working with everyone else in the office! I am excited to be involved and help out as much as I can.

Hello, my name is Glenda Brown. I am the coordinator for the Peace Outreach Project (POP) for the Topeka Center for Peace & Justice. I have been a part of the Topeka community from a very young age. I attended Topeka Public Schools and graduated from Washburn University. I am excited to be a part of the Topeka Center for Peace & Justice and look forward to building new relationships and making our Topeka community a healthy, safe, and just community to live in.



Get ready!! This year our Annual Peace Party will be taking place at Grace Cathedral. On October 26, 2023, we will be meeting at 5:30pm. This year we are happy to announce that our evening will once again be hosted by WIBW's Melissa Bruner. Planning is going on as we speak, so watch your email for Save the Date Information along with ticket purchase information. Grace Cathedral is located at 701 SW 8th Ave here in Topeka. We hope to see you there!

Photo from the 2022 Peace Party

From left to right: Donna Gilchrist, Nancy Kelley, Megan Waltner, Carol Christensen, Clarence Newton, Esther Potts, Rebecca Morrisey, Lou Saadi, Carl Frazier and Amanda Saylor.



## **Nancy Kelley**

***Interim Program Manager***

***Restorative Justice & Mediation Coordinator***

### **Growing Restorative Communities Cultivating Change by Tending Our Roots Honoring Our Past**

We acknowledge that the Indigenous peoples of our land have brought us an understanding of peacemaking and living in alignment with what was a city in the state of Kansas. We acknowledge that Topeka, Kansas is located on the traditional, ancestral, contemporary lands of Indigenous people. We reside on the land that was cared for and called home by the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kansa, Kiowa, Osage, and Pawnee. The land holds great historical, spiritual, and personal significance for its original stewards, the Native nations and the peoples of this region.

Restorative Justice practices have been given to us by the Peoples who inhabited the lands of Kansas before the white settlers appeared. We acknowledge those Nations with gratitude: Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kansa, Kiowa, Osage, Pawnee, and Wichita. The first Restorative Kansas Conference was hosted by KIPCOR (Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution) on April 19-20, 2018, at Bethel College in North Newton. At that time a plan was developed to hold the State conference every other year, with the off year being the National Conference. Plans were well underway for the 2020 conference to be held at Haskell Nations University, but COVID put those plans on hold. Last winter a new planning committee convened and began to move forward with a conference to be held at Haskell University on June 8-9, 2023.

Approximately 150 people from Kansas, Missouri, North Dakota, and elsewhere attended the conference held at Haskell Indian Nations University. The Keynote Speaker was Chief Justice Emeritus Robert Yazzie of Navajo Nation. Other Peace Makers from Tribal Nations were Cheryl Demmert Fairbanks, Esq, (Tlingit-Tsimshian, Ketchikan, Alaska) Ka'illjuus (Lisa Lang), Esq (Northern Alaska Haida), Rainey Enjady (Mescalero Apache Tribe). The Topeka Center for Peace & Justice (TCPJ) played an integral part in the planning and successful production of the State/Regional Conference. As a team, all of the staff at the time served on the planning committee. TCPJ was a major financial contributor as well. Regina Platt developed the youth programming and was an emcee for several conference events. Amanda Saylor took control of the social media disbursement of information and made sure that our website and Facebook page contained conference information. Nancy Kelley served on a panel that discussed the importance of Neighborhood Accountability Boards.

Conference sessions included Indigenous Peacemaking, Restorative Justice in Schools, Community-based efforts and Law Enforcement/Judicial Restorative Justice. The Featured Presentation was The Return, a commissioned performance piece created by Stage (S)Truck Restorative Justice Street and Plains Production presentation featuring Marc Chibitty and local Kansas University Indigenous student talent. The Return was directed by Ric Averill, a well known Lawrence theater talent.

A conference is not successful unless people are well fed. The conference was catered by Native Chef, LLC, (jasonthenativechef.com) who served delicious, Native based, educational meals such as Ute Mountain Blue Corn Cakes with Wojape (blueberry sauce) and wild rice meatballs.

The next Restorative Kansas Conference will be held in 2025 with the location yet to be determined. The National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ) conference will be in Washington DC July 7-10, 2024.





## Regina Platt

*Restorative Justice and Mediation Coordinator*

This summer, the Topeka Center for Peace & Justice has been allotted to share space throughout Topeka. Through Peace Camp, we embarked on a journey of creativity, learning, and laughter; planting seeds of love, relationships, and voice for youth and volunteers within our community. The restorative circle process connected participants of various backgrounds. We facilitated weekly Restorative Leadership Circles in partnership with our local YMCA. The middle school students were open weekly to receive and practice mastery of the lessons. Through dialog and community-building circles, students brainstormed and spoke about what would be impactful for their generation. Key sessions focused on developing Social Emotional Learning skills, and self-advocacy while building community. We networked in the community supporting Robinson Middle School to serve students, staff, and community agencies participating in the first local Challenge Day. This summer proved that relationships are the foundational currency of humanity, as we united with other organizations throughout Topeka to give out school supplies. Students chose pencils with affirmations to inspire them to step into the 2023-24 school year inspired. It is an honor to serve beside greatness as we equip students to step courageously toward their destinies.



YMCA summer campers were invited to write down values on Jenga blocks after, the Jenga pieces were used as talking pieces in a community building circle.

Students and adult volunteers planted seeds on Peace on Earth Day at the first Middle School Peace Camp. In this picture, after planting sunflower seeds students wrote down things that they wanted to release and after burning what was written down, they buried it.