Students support neighborhood revitalization project
Patrick Kennelly  
Director,  
Center for Peacemaking

“Every transformational experience made possible because of your generosity helps another student develop confidence and catch courage.”

With every new student who walks through the doors of the Center for Peacemaking we are reminded of our promise to provide them with the courage and confidence to live out their faith and work nonviolently for the promotion of peace and justice.  

As we hear from students who visit the Center for Peacemaking, the Center really is a unique place. It encourages curiosity and learning about social justice issues. It encourages the willingness to study and experiment with nonviolent peacemaking. It encourages laughter and living with a spirit of joy.  

But these three things alone are not enough for students to develop courage and confidence. This is where you come in.  

Because of you, students are able to pursue peacemaking fellowships, they are able to study nonviolence, and they are able to work with faculty and staff on community peacemaking initiatives.  

Every transformational experience made possible because of your generosity helps another student develop confidence and catch courage. And it is contagious.  

In the following pages you will hear about Araceli who was inspired by a previous peacemaking fellow to create a project of her own. You will hear about Miguel who used the confidence he gained teaching Milwaukee youth about conflict resolution to create a program in Mexico. You will also hear about Max who contributed to a community violence prevention initiative under the guidance of faculty and staff.  

Every time a student’s eyes light up from newfound confidence and courage, I think of you.  

And as our graduates tell us, the light you give them—the courage and confidence—never burns out.

Patrick Kennelly

The Center for Peacemaking Team

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Together We Are Stronger  
Your gifts are spreading confidence and courage
Araceli Pantoja

After reading a survey about domestic violence rates, I was inspired to act. My fellowship consisted of supporting survivors of domestic violence on their journey to find peace within themselves and with their abusers.

story by Lexie Athanasourelis-Athis

Araceli has known about the Center for Peacemaking’s summer fellowships since she started working here her freshman year. After learning about some of the projects previous fellows created, she knew that she wanted to apply. She just wasn’t sure about the focus of her project yet.

That all changed while she was studying abroad in Madrid, Spain. She read a survey indicating that 10.8 percent of women in Spain experience domestic violence. Compelled to act, Araceli immediately started writing two applications.

The first application was for an unpaid internship with Mujeres Unidas Contra el Maltrato (MUM), a resource center for domestic violence victims in Spain. The second application was for a summer peacemaking fellowship – which is available because of donors like you – to cover the expenses she would incur during the internship with MUM.

A few weeks later, Araceli started her fellowship project as an intern at MUM. There she was tasked with leading weekly prevention programs and women’s circles. Each of these programs works to provide women with tools for building healthy, peaceful relationships.

For Araceli, the most powerful moment of the fellowship occurred during a women’s circle she facilitated. The women wrote their stories of abuse or pieces of advice on a slip of paper, crumpled it up into a “snowball” and threw it into the middle of the circle. Then they each pulled someone else’s “snowball” from the center and proceeded one-by-one to read each story out loud. The stories were so different, yet many had similar aspects.

As Araceli facilitated the conversation around this activity, several of the women explained how listening to the other women’s stories sparked an epiphany in which they realized they are not alone in their struggles.

After returning from Spain, Araceli put the skills she gained during her fellowship to use in Milwaukee. For the rest of the summer and throughout the school year she volunteered at the Sojourner Family Peace Center, a resource center similar to MUM. As a result, Araceli continues to grow as an advocate for women who have been impacted by domestic violence.

Because of you, Araceli has been able to walk with these women as they work to transform their lives and relationships.

Because of you, Araceli has been able to walk with these women in Spain and Milwaukee as they work to transform their lives and relationships. She said, “Although many of the women who come to these shelters are faced with awful circumstances, I’ve seen first-hand that prevention programs and circle activities can help them transform their situations.”
The Center for Peacemaking has been at the forefront of the three year Promoting Assets and Reducing Crime (PARC) initiative since it was launched. At its core, the PARC initiative is a peacemaking project focused on building a stronger Near West Side community where all people’s basic needs are met and violence is not a major concern.

PARC is the first project of the Near West Side Partners, a non-profit organization created by Aurora Health Care, Harley-Davidson, Marquette University, MillerCoors, and Potawatomi Business Development Corporation. These five anchor institutions in the neighborhood came together with a shared recognition of both the neighborhood’s challenges as well as how much potential there is in Milwaukee’s Near West Side.

To realize this potential, PARC has four key focus areas: safety, housing, commercial corridor development, and neighborhood identity and branding. Patrick Kennelly, director of the Center for Peacemaking and principal investigator of PARC, said, “It is so encouraging because PARC has brought together residents and community partners to identify and develop strategies to address various challenges in the neighborhoods.”

The Center for Peacemaking was tapped to lead this initiative because of our strong track record of community based participatory research that addresses violence. The PARC initiative builds upon the Center for Peacemaking’s violence prevention efforts including Peace Works and partnerships with CRS in Ethiopia and the Afghan Peace Volunteers.

Kennelly added, “By engaging Marquette students and faculty in each step – identifying challenges, developing strategies, and implementing solutions – we are demonstrating how the university is using its knowledge and resources to create change in its own backyard.”

In the first year of PARC, 120 students and 9 faculty have gained experience in applied peacemaking or community-based research. Recent graduate Max Bertellotti (Arts & Sciences ’16) is one of those who has made the most of this opportunity.

Max, who graduated in May, started working at the
Center for Peacemaking during his sophomore year as a CRS ambassador. Then at the end of his junior year when the PARC initiative was announced, he immediately indicated that he wanted to get involved.

We hired Max to work as a research assistant on the PARC initiative throughout the summer and for the duration of his senior year. In this role he conducted community-based research with faculty, actively engaged with residents in the Near West Side, and created ways for other Marquette students and student organizations to participate in PARC.

**Conducting Research**

Working with Dr. Amber Wichowsky and the MU Democracy Lab, Max helped measure and develop strategies to increase civic engagement in the Near West Side. He was responsible for organizing a group of students to administer surveys to collect data on civic engagement. With the data gathered, he worked closely with Dr. Wichowsky to analyze the data and develop recommendations for PARC. They then shared the research on the role of community voices in public development with audiences beyond Milwaukee. Max presented with faculty and staff at three academic conferences over the past year.

**Strengthening Neighborhoods**

Max also frequently assisted with trainings for various programs facilitated through PARC. One such program is the Good Neighbor Program which works with landlords to maintain safe and desirable living conditions. Max participated in a walk-through in which landlords and community organizers learned about internal and external property conditions that qualify a landlord for a “Good Neighbor” designation and how to identify areas for improvement.

**Engaging Students**

The last of Max’s responsibilities was to recruit students and student organizations to participate in PARC programs. Many of these programs were neighborhood cleanups that provided Marquette students the opportunity to explore the Near West Side beyond the campus boundaries and interact with their neighbors. Over 20 students participated in a cleanup as part of their freshman orientation. In another project over 100 residents and students joined Max in building a playground (see cover photo) at Merrill Park.

Through PARC, the Center for Peacemaking will continue to provide students and faculty with opportunities to practice nonviolent peacemaking. ■
School seeks new path for youths stuck in a world of trauma

Exerpts from Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, December 14, 2015 article by Annysa Johnson

Any other day, in an argument like this, he might have hauled off and punched him. But DaVon lowered his voice, took a deep breath and waited.

He reached for his pocket and pressed the small beach stone he carried there. And, as quickly as it started, it was done.

"Some people just know what to do to get me mad," said 12-year-old DaVon, who popped off because another student was copying his classwork. "But I had my rock in my pocket that day. ... And I just thought about calming down and walking away."

"That was a good day," said Pam Stahler of Marquette University’s Center for Peace-making, which is working with DaVon and other students at Southeastern Education Center... on ways to manage their anger and deter violence. Touching a "grounding object," such as the beach stone, is one of the techniques they’ve learned. ...

Southeastern is one of four behavioral reassignment schools that contract with Milwaukee Public Schools to accept suspended or expelled students and work with them so they can eventually return to the traditional classroom.

Most of the kids at Southeastern... are here for fighting... Many come from families and neighborhoods where violence is a daily part of life, ingrained at an early age. ...

Lee and Lajuan, both 13, sit at a table rearranging small pieces of paper each printed with a word — justice and love, family and trust... Stahler asks them each to pull aside 10 that best reflect their own values.

"So, let's talk about how our values help us make decisions and choices," said Stahler, launching them on conversation that meanders from the ethics of drug dealing to movies that made them cry.

Lajuan tells of a friend who was invited to help steal a car. But the boy’s mom called him right before, and he backed out.

"So there's an example of trust — he didn't want to lose his mother's trust," Stahler said, connecting the dots.

"Well, it wasn't my friend, really," said Lajuan, who said he was expelled from two MPS schools before landing at Southeastern. "It was me."

The discussion is part of the Peace Works curriculum... At Southeastern, Stahler and colleague Patrick Gradus work with the students on anger management, conflict resolution, how to set goals and other skills. They talk a lot about values and empathy. ...

DaVon has worked to use some of the techniques he’s learned in Peace Works — the touch stone, counting down, trying to visualize that he’s somewhere else, often imagining he’s on a trampoline.

"I do metacognition a lot; I try to think about my thinking," he said, eliciting an impressed smile from Stahler. She didn’t learn that word until college, she tells him.

Stahler and others at Southeastern have seen subtle improvements in his behavior this year. "I’m getting better, but I could still work on it more," said DaVon. "I still pop off, but not like I used to. ... I be tryin'." ■

Counselor Patrick Gradus works with a student on coping with stress at Southeastern Education Center. Photo: Rick Wood
Two years ago Miguel Sanchez started as a student worker for the Center’s Peace Works program teaching nonviolence and conflict resolution to inner city youth in Milwaukee.

Miguel quickly recognized that the same games, role plays, and discussions that he taught youth in Milwaukee would resonate with youth in Palos Altos, Jalisco, Mexico – his family’s hometown. As a result, he decided to apply for a peacemaking fellowship which is available for students because of your generosity.

Miguel identified Caracol Psicosocial, a Palos Altos-based community center as an ideal partner for his fellowship project. He was familiar with the “Caracol,” a safe space for youth to develop leadership skills.

Upon learning that he received the fellowship, Miguel developed the workshops he would facilitate at the Caracol with Palos Altos youth.

These workshops took into consideration that Palos Altos is a largely agricultural area and, like many other regions in Mexico, is influenced by violence in the media and on the streets. Miguel lamented that these factors foster youth to believe that violence is an appropriate means to conflict resolution.

However, Miguel also saw his workshops and the Caracol as a way to address the root causes of violence. During his fellowship, he facilitated workshops on fundamental approaches to peacemaking and conflict resolution for youth ranging in age from 6 to 12 years old.

In the various role play scenarios he noticed that the youngest kids were the quickest to react to anger with violence so he made sure to model nonviolent behaviors for them and to engage them in discussions about their emotions. By working with the youth on violence prevention and conflict transformation, Miguel helped the youth come to important realizations at a very impressionable stage of their development.

Due to the small population of Palos Altos, Miguel was able to see the impact his work left on the community in daily situations. Likewise, your generosity made it possible for Miguel to take the skills he gained working with youth in Milwaukee to help future leaders in Palos Altos understand the pragmatism of nonviolence.

Just as Miguel left a lasting impression on youth in Palos Altos, the fellowship and your support left a lasting impression on him—it affirmed his enduring passion to teach nonviolent peacemaking and advocate for human rights.
Max Bertellotti (Arts ’16) and Shivani Chokshi (Arts ’17) present their research on the PARC initiative during a poster session at the Benjamin V. Cohen Peace Conference at Ball State University.

Because of donors like you, students are able to study peacemaking and contribute to groundbreaking peace research.