

UPF AfP Connecticut hold a Networking Breakfast at the Peace Islands Institute

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January 2020



Members of Universal Peace Federation and Peace Islands Institute sharing each other's work

On a cold Saturday morning in January, about a dozen members of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and Ambassadors for Peace (AFP) in Connecticut met together for a Networking Breakfast at the invitation of the Peace Islands Institute (PII). These two organizations previously met with several leaders of PII including the Executive Director, Enes Yapici, at a Networking Breakfast for Ambassadors for Peace at a local diner. A desire to get to know each other better and work together on various projects throughout the coming year lead to this invitation from PII to hold the next breakfast at their new office. A representative of each organization shared about the origin, principles and vision of their respective organizations and then there was plenty of time for discussion, networking and planning future events together.

Neslihan Bolat, a board member of PII in Connecticut, spoke of how PII (formerly known as 'Hizmet', the Islamic word for 'service') was begun in Turkey in the 1960s out of the inspiration and teachings of Fethullah Gulen, to create an organization that puts the principles of Islam into practice in civil society through service, education and inter-religious dialogue. In recent years, they have received a lot of persecution and misunderstanding in Turkey, and many of their members have been forced to flee the country as political refugees, including Gulen, himself who now resides in Pennsylvania. As they have settled in America and throughout the world, they have established numerous educational, cultural and service organizations to support their local communities. Roger Wetherall, speaking on behalf of UPF presented the goals, activities and best practices of UPF and invited everyone present to participate in our upcoming programs throughout the year.

Much common ground was found between our 2 organizations as they shared the various goals and programs of our respective organizations. Currently they are planning to collaborate on several initiatives

including a banquet in recognition of law enforcement officers, and a fireside chat between two state government representatives from opposing parties called "Bridging the American Divide". The program, to be held in April, will bring people together from differing political viewpoints to listen to and acknowledge each other's philosophy and life experience, so that they can understand and appreciate the motivation that inspires and empowers them to make a difference in the lives of others. Discussion will focus on the common desires, principles and ideals that we all are striving for in order to build a peaceful and happy world.



The formal program concluded with an exchange of gifts and a commitment to work together on other programs in the future.

In summary, the format of the meeting was easy to setup and conducive to networking with each other in a semi-formal setting without a huge investment of time or money. Both groups plan to do monthly breakfast meetings like this going forward, meeting in local diners or community venues as appropriate. "Sometimes we may have a presentation, but mostly we just want to fellowship with those who are pursuing similar goals in order to support each other in creating a loving and peaceful world" Mr. Wetherall confessed.