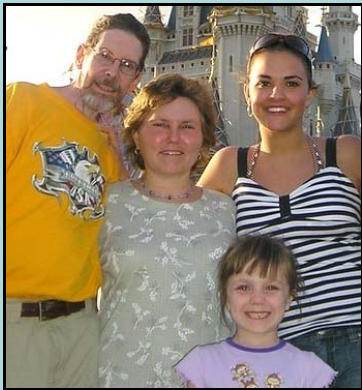


Fifteen Years of Service: Gwenn Bair

Gwenn Bair wears many hats: Wife, mother, Sunday School teacher, freelance artist, job coach for disabled teens, and more. On top of it all, Gwenn has served for the past fifteen years as Ohio Regional Coordinator for WFWP, USA. She is one of the few women in America who have served as a WFWP leader since its inception.

With a quiet and friendly personality, Gwenn has worked steadily during these fifteen years to develop the WFWP chapter in Columbus. In an interview, she was asked how she has approached her volunteer WFWP work:

“My personal commitment was to invest at least a few minutes each day into WFWP, and it often turned into a few hours a day,” she said. Over the years, her experiences have ranged from small discussion groups in the Columbus library, to dinner meetings in members’ homes, to large international conferences in places like Moscow, Russia.



Gwenn Bair, center, with husband Roger, daughters Waverly, age 17, and Wyndra, age 7, on a recent trip to Disneyworld

Gwenn says, “One of the highlights of my WFWP work has been meeting women from all different walks of life and regions of the world. I loved going to New York in 1999 with four other women to participate in a United Nations program.

Then in 2005 I got to go to the WFWP International conference in Moscow. Six of us took a night train from Moscow to St. Petersburg and spent three days sightseeing after the conference. That was truly an unforgettable experience.”

She was drawn to the newly created women’s organization in 1992 because, as she says, “WFWP was founded by Dr. Moon and her husband, Rev. Moon, with the great vision of encouraging women everywhere to develop their natural talents. Women are recognized within WFWP as being equal to men, brilliant and inherently caring, therefore indispensable in the establishment of a peaceful and moral society. The founding vision resonated in my heart and I jumped at the chance to work with this organization.”

Gwenn has volunteering and service in her genes. Her great grandfather, Rev. Edward F. Baldwin, went to northern Africa in 1896 as a missionary. Then he joined the American Colony Christian commune in Jerusalem, which was serving

needy people of all religions and devoutly anticipating the Second Coming. While working with that group of one hundred people, he married and raised four children in Jerusalem, including Gwenn's grandfather. Gwenn's grandparents moved in the 1920s to America.

The building housing the former commune is now the American Colony Hotel. Gwenn traveled to Jerusalem in 2003. She says, "I took the opportunity to visit the place where my relatives once lived and worked. And it was a sweet experience to place flowers on my great-grandfather's grave in the small cemetery on Mt. Scopus, overlooking the hills of Jerusalem."

In 2004, a Women's Middle East Peace Initiative was launched jointly by WFWP and the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP). A moving Bridge of Peace Ceremony was held in Jerusalem, which brought together Israeli and Palestinian women and others from around the world. Although she could not attend, Gwenn was able to participate by creating a mural as a backdrop for the stage. She drew the outlines of a hilly setting with two women and their children meeting one another and angels circling above them:



Others transferred the image onto large blank wallpaper, and it was rolled up and carried to Israel. During the week-long gathering of women, participants used paint and brushes to color in the mural. (see below)



Women Coloring together



Finished Mural at Ceremony

Read more about this exciting Women of Peace event on the WFWP, USA website at: <http://www.wfwp.us/wmepi.html>

Gwenn has built up a network of women who are inspired by WFWP. Setting up information tables at various public events has been an effective way of meeting new people. “Although it always requires a lot of preparation and effort, we have been able to make good connections this way,” she says.

WFWP under Gwenn’s guidance has participated in the annual United Nations Association Columbus International Festival. This large-scale event brings people together to share activities, music, and ethnic foods. WFWP has conducted a Bridge of Peace Ceremony each of the past five years, during which pairs of women from various cultures unite in a moving ceremony of repentance, forgiveness and acceptance.

Read more about the WFWP Bridge of Peace Ceremony at <http://wfwp.org/bridge/Bridge.htm>

In November 2006, Gwenn was awarded a citation which read in part: “A Salute to Gwenn Bair by the Columbus Chapter of the United Nations Association ... for bringing together peoples of different culture, color or creed in the Bridge of Peace Ceremony at the Columbus International Festival thereby promoting PEACE THROUGH UNDERSTANDING.”



*Some of the participants in the 2006 Bridge of Peace at the UNA Festival.
Theme: Mothers and Daughters*

Gwenn also encourages young women to get involved with WFWP activities, giving them opportunities to help organize events and serve as emcees. She is hopeful that, although the Ohio region needs much more development, the ideals and practices of the organization will inspire a new crop of women leaders. Congratulations to Gwenn Bair for her steady and faithful fifteen years of service to WFWP, USA!