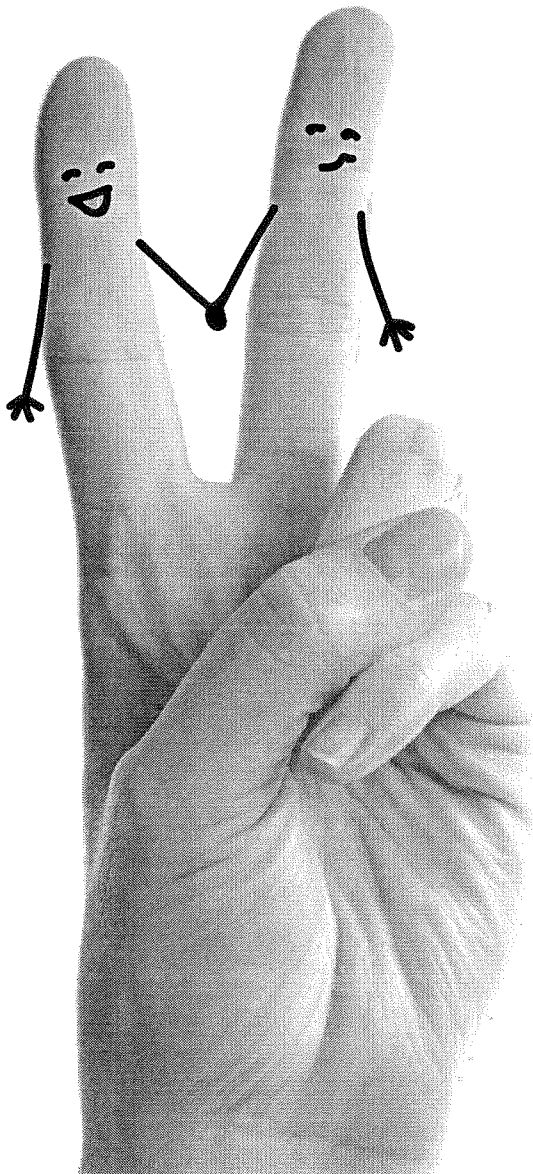


the advocate



PEACE TALKS ON CAMPUS

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Meet your ASG candidates

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Ending shame with art

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Lady Saints bury Chemeketa

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Leaders with experience with violence talk peace

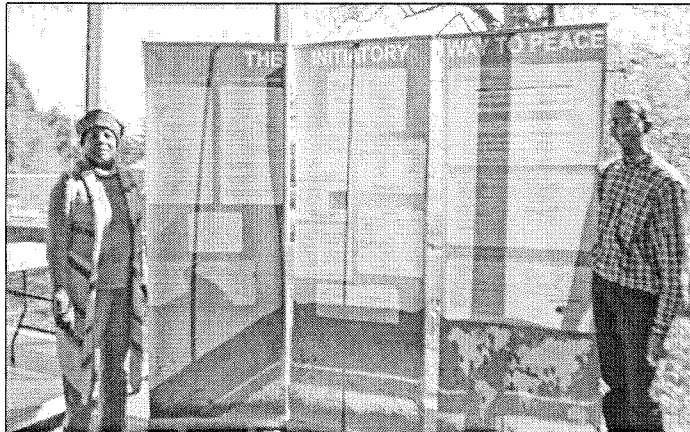


Photo by Beka Haugen - the advocate

Laila Al-Amin and Sheikh Ally Peerbocus in front of Peerbocus' non-violence work that he discussed.

Hayden Hunter the advocate

The Oregon Peace Conference, hosted in the Student Union April 17, was "a day of sharing, caring, learning, and getting in touch with inner selves to understand that to make nonviolence a life decision means taking a certain kind of initiative," said Laila Al-Amin, Women's Federation For World Peace Oregon chairwoman/chaplain.

The event started with Cambodian genocide survivor Kilong Ung explaining why April 17 was an important day for history and the struggle for nonviolence and peace. On April 17, 1975, Cambodian communists, known as Khmer Rouge, unleashed terror on the entire country. Some 2 million Cambodians were systematically murdered in the so-called "Killing Fields" during this "hell-like" period, Ung noted. "The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living," he said, quoting Cicero; "Clear as glass, the memory of those who passed lived in my nightmares."

Mt. Hood ASG's director of diversity, Tenzin Yangchen, led the introduction from the panel of local students. The panel consisted of five other individuals representing Maltripa college, Portland Community College, Washington State University, and a Quaker peace program.

Being a Tibetan refugee, Yangchen has a different perspective from most people. She was taught as a youth in a refugee Tibetan transit school, where Buddhism was very prevalent. She learned about the 10 forms of violence that are categorized into three categories: physical, verbal, and mental/spiritual. "If you can't help someone, don't hurt them," was one lesson ingrained in her by the Dalai Lama's teachings, she said.

Sheikh Ally Peerbocus, an instructor of

the International Sufi School of Peace started off the Conference seminars and introduced the audience to the Initiatory Way to Peace, a formula encouraging people to choose nonviolent actions over violent actions.

Peerbocus asked why there aren't more people such as Martin Luther King Jr., the Dalai Lama, and Gandhi in the world today. He said people come into the world innocent, and are taught to be "selfish, deceitful, cruel, and violent." "One can override these characteristics that "have been conditioned by our history and our parents." For example, individuals feel the need to compare themselves to others. "We are never satisfied, we always need more," he said. "This leads to a great deal of violence in the world."

A lot of violence comes from emotions, said Peerbocus. To eliminate these emotions, individuals need to be conscious of the causes of such feelings which result from teachings and experiences during early childhood. After locating causes of violence inducing emotions, action is necessary to correct thoughts and thinking. "In order to solve a problem, you have to change the consciousness behind the problem," he said. "We are all a gift to humanity ... everything that you have will be for the benefit of all."

Ung started off another group by defining what a "golden leaf" is: according to his blog, a golden leaf is "a survivor of a heinous act against humanity, especially genocide."

The Portland-area resident has published his own memoir about his experience in the Killing Fields. He has done multiple philanthropic works in Cambodia and around the world through his organization, The Golden Leaf Education Foundation. Currently, he helps the foundation is working on a documentary focused on forgiveness, and works as a State Farm Insurance representative.

This talk, said Ung, was unlike most other presentations he usually gives. "In the beginning, I would (usually) cry more than speak when I started presenting... (today) I want to deliver my message in the context of what you want to get out of this room."

The preview of the documentary that Ung is working on detailed what he experienced during those five years in communist controlled Cambodia. Ung said he knew how to kill, because he saw it daily, growing up an eight-year-old boy trying to survive. He was starved for five years, only eating two tablespoons of rice porridge diluted with water, daily. He learned to eat rat, bat, and snake because of these conditions. "Anything was food - roots, all that stuff."

Ung was put in a slave camp and forced to work "13 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days out of the year." He endured the Khmer Rouge killing 10 members of his family and more than 50 relatives, in all. He watched his parents starve to death. "While two million leaves disintegrated, I persevered... Against all odds, I survive," he said.

After this brief historical perspective, Ung asked the audience, "Right now, how many of you have somebody to forgive?" Hands timidly went up. Ung said people probably had a good reason to not forgive, and that he feels he is not one to judge those people for not forgiving. However, he said, "I can offer you this, though: For 20 years after I was freed from slavery, I was a victim of that feeling."

The moment someone declares himself to no longer be a victim, is the only way to move forward, Ung said. For him, forgiveness allowed him to be able to deal with his fear, anger, and pain. "I went from having PTSD, to no more nightmares."

There was a communication seminar led in the afternoon by Kathy Masarie. She is the mother of two children, a grandmother, and a pediatrician who left her medical practice 19 years ago to become a parent coach and life coach and to found an organization, the Family Empowerment Network. She left her practice to help troubled teens before they walked in "anorexic, pregnant, violent, and drug-addicted," she said.

Her seminar was focused on communication, specifically parents and their adolescent-teenagers. "Empathy is the key ingredient to getting along."

Along with her partner, Jody Bellant Scheer, Masarie developed a form of nonviolent communication based on the work of renowned psychologist Marshall Rosenberg.

Rosenberg said every behavior committed is driven by an emotional or physical need.

"You are sitting in these chairs on a really nice, sunny day. There are a lot of other needs that you could be having met right now, but you chose these values (peace, harmony with other people) that got you in these chairs," Masarie told the audience.

One thing Masarie said people need to understand about communication is "no matter what behavior you have done your entire life, the good and the bad, there was a positive value behind it." She said that even for bad behaviors, there were good needs driving them, but the situation was solved through ineffective strategies.

Masarie said nothing necessarily needs to be done about emotions. They are "warning flags" indicating needs that aren't being met. "Instead of figuring out what the need is, we (people) direct it towards the person that triggered this feeling with us," she said. And, conversation in this state is unproductive.

Human brains cannot distinguish the difference between an emotional or a physical threat, Masarie said. The reason humans are alive is because there is an effective system for dealing with threats - they go into fight, flight, or freeze mode. "The people who went, 'Ooh la la, I don't think that saber-toothed tiger is going to eat me' - they just died," she quipped.

Masarie said the state people are in once they have committed to fight, flight or freeze mode is their "lizard brain." It is what should be flashing in the mind when someone is caught in an unproductive situation, and requires a pause. "When you find yourself in this state (lizard brain), don't talk. Whatever comes out of your mouth is stupid and you don't want to hear what is coming out of (the other person's) mouth because it is also not very good," she said. Distressed individuals should reflect on needs not being met; this should help them calm down. They should then ask what needs of theirs (the person(s) that inspired the conflict) are not being met, she said.

"It all comes back to empathy," said Masarie. No one should start their side of an argument until they have enough empathy for themselves so that they are grounded and also have enough empathy for the other person, as well as their argument, so that both sides can not become "lizard brained." She said people should begin an argument by confirming the other person's needs as a question, and only then should they present their own needs.

Peace Conference
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April 24, 2015

Derr unveils MHCC's Strategic Plan

Hayden Hunter
the advocate

Mt. Hood Community College is planning to become more recognized in the greater Portland area and across the state.

On Friday, April 10, President Debbie Derr presented the college's updated strategic plan during an all-staff forum.

According to Derr, the question that MHCC asked in a recent community survey was, "What if we were to be recognized as the best community college in the country? What would we have to do to get there?"

"That generated the ideas of how we could make Mt. Hood a great college," said Derr.

Created by MHCC faculty and staff members that were on the formal Strategic Plan Task Force, the plan outlines ways that Mt.

Hood will try to achieve its maximum academic potential by focusing on three key areas: "learners' success," "community pride," and "partner innovation."

"These are the big, audacious goals. This is the basis of the plan," said Derr, commenting on the key goal statements that were taken from stakeholders' input.

From here, the three pillars of the plan are broken up into more specific categories on what the college will do to achieve the objective. Learners' success is broken up into nine sub-categories, the community is discussed in five sub-categories, and the partners are covered in nine sub-categories.

"How we get those done is through individual departments and divisions of the college saying 'How can we interact with learner success?'" said Derr.

Now that the strategic plan has been presented to the school's staff, the next step is to go before MHCC's board of education for approval before the Strategic Plan Task Force can move forward with pursuing the outcomes.

"We are working on a continuous improvement cycle, so they'll plan, and they'll have to check and report how they are doing, they'll have to make adjustments, and then they'll have to report their results," said Derr.

Contingent on the board's approval in June, the plan will take effect this fall, she said.

Derr said the plan should be a blueprint for success. "If we talk about our vision for the future, it is really about improving the quality of life of the people in our district, and it's about serving our students in the best way we possibly can," she said.

Peace Conference

Continued from page 4

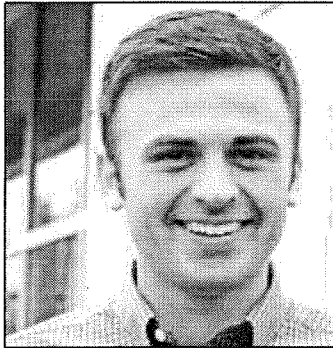
Rachel Hestmark, a human trafficking survivor and community advocate was one of the last speakers at the conference. Hestmark talked to her listeners about not forgetting what happened to them in their past, but to instead draw hope from it. "Who would I be today if those things hadn't happened to me. I can now empower others to be free," said Hestmark, "Peace was hope, peace is the freedom that I got from hope."

According to Hestmark, everybody has to be a slave to something. "You choose to be a slave to life, or you choose to be a slave to death."

Board candidates hope to create a better Mt. Hood

Michael Calcagno and Mike Langley are candidates in the May 19 Special Election, running against MHCC District Board Chairwoman Diane Noriega

Hayden Hunter
the advocate



Michael Calcagno:

For the past two years, Calcagno has been working closely with administrators from Mt. Hood for his marketing firm, Calcagno Media.

"I have been producing videos that help promote career and technical education," he said.

He has also worked on programs like VESL (Vocational English-Spanish language) and I-BEST. "These programs have really engaged me to want to do more to support low-income families and to provide skills training for nontraditional students so that they can attain better incomes," he said.

Holding a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Oregon, Calcagno enjoys hiking with his wife and dog, as well as enjoying culinary options with his wife. He is mentoring a young, at-risk youth whose parents thought "could benefit from a role-model ... to talk to him about life skills and character building," he said.

According to Calcagno, MHCC needs more

leadership coming from the board of directors to identify and address concerns from within the community and to come up with "forward-thinking and innovative ideas."

Calcagno said he is passionate about making college affordable at the community college level.

"I fear that if we are to do things the way that they have always been done, we are going to get the results that we've always seen," he said.

"I really, strongly believe that the community colleges in Oregon provide the best avenue for learning and achieving goals," he said. But he also said he thinks that actions and comments by Mt. Hood's board members at the March 10 board meeting was very troubling - including a planned 3.8 percent tuition increase for this autumn.

"That we are considering another increase in student tuition, I think it is wrong," he said. "We cannot keep financing our operations of the college on the backs of the students."

Community colleges are becoming less and less accessible to low-income students and low-income families, Calcagno said. It is important for students, faculty, and the community to recognize that "education must be accessible," he said.

He also criticized salary increases for several Mt. Hood administrators.

"Our board ought to be thinking long and hard before giving mid-level managers promotions, (how) we're also going to essentially tax our students more," he said.

MHCC can either blame its problems on the state and the actions coming out of Salem - "pass the buck, as it were - or stand up and say, 'No, we are going to find the money elsewhere,' and not put the burden on the students," he said.

Hayden Hunter
the advocate



Mike Langley:

Langley graduated with an associate degree in political science from the State University of New York, (SUNY) Canton. He then transferred to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, to earn a bachelor's degree in marketing.

According to Langley, he stayed at home, worked, and saved money during his years at SUNY. "I paid for all of my education," he said.

Langley moved out to Oregon from New York in 1975 and, he said, ran for Portland mayor two years ago because of how much he has fallen in love with the city.

Along the way, he attended a class here at Mt. Hood. "I took some computer programming courses in Excel and Word. That was great, we went our own pace, and there were tutors coming around giving me help," he said.

Langley currently works at Smitty's Golf Shop and with Nike as an equipment specialist. He said he has worked with kids his whole life, including through his job at Smitty's.

Langley currently holds a seat on the Parkrose School District board. He said he has seen public school budgets have gone down over the years, and the results.

"You share stories about math tutors and counselors, you want to help them but once you start checking into stuff, especially (while serving on) the high school board, (everyone) is adamant about Oregon absolutely needing help" to improve its education system.

Langley feels that this is a crucial time for community colleges, because four-year schools are becoming less and less affordable for modest-income families now. "Where are those kids going to go?" he said.

"At the last meeting (MHCC board meeting), I saw them (Board of Directors) take a vote to raise your guys' tuition instead of looking for more funding. MHCC's board of directors admit that they don't follow up on scholarships."

Langley wants to install a new "3 R's" (for all of you who still remember the first version: readin', ritin', and 'rithmetic). "The new 3 R's are recruitment, retention, and revenue," he said.

Commenting on the recent 3.8 percent increase in student tuition adopted by the board, Langley suggested other ideas to come up with these funds. "We could go door-to-door, soliciting help from alumni to help MHCC, work the high school circuit, and get some of those kids from Clackamas (Community College) and PCC to come back to our Mt. Hood Community College.

"I feel like we have to have more of a business approach," he said. At the last board meeting - where the \$3.50-per-credit tuition increase was passed - he said he was upset that he "didn't see a lot of passion, and no indignation."