

38th Annual Hiroshima-Nagasaki Vigil to be held in Ashland “Planting Peace” is the theme

This year’s observance of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be held Saturday, August 6 at the Thalden Pavilion, 155 Walker Avenue, next to The Farm of Southern Oregon University. That venue was chosen because a highlight of the program will be the dedication of a ginkgo biloba tree growing nearby, which was grown from the seed of a tree that survived the atomic blast in Hiroshima 77 years ago.

One Sunny Day Initiatives, a foundation begun by Hiroshima survivor and Medford resident Hideko Tamura Snider, partnered with Green Legacy Hiroshima to secure precious seeds from legacy trees. Under the direction of Michael Oxendine, then Landscape Supervisor at SOU, the seeds were grown into more than 120 trees, which have been distributed across the United States, including more than 50 planted throughout Oregon in partnership with Oregon Community Trees and the Oregon Department of Forestry.

The program will begin at 10 a.m. with welcoming remarks by Elizabeth Hallett, Executive Director of Peace House, lead sponsor of the observance. Dan Wahpepah with Red Earth Descendants will offer the opening reflection. Hideko will give expression to the collective hope for an end to the threat of nuclear annihilation. There will be a reading of the City of Ashland proclamation declaring August 6 as “Hiroshima Day” and August 9 as “Nagasaki Day.” The Rogue Valley Peace Choir will offer several songs. Also featured will be the traditional ringing of the gong followed by silence to mark the moment of the detonation that killed more than 100,000 residents of Hiroshima.

Closing the program at the pavilion will be the offering of prayers while ladling water over stones in a basin. The attendants will then proceed with the basin over a short boardwalk to the site of the peace tree, where the dedication will take place and its roots will be watered with prayer.

Parking is limited at the site, so please walk, carpool, or use public transportation if possible. Additional parking is available next door at ScienceWorks, and along Campus Way off Main Street. It is outdoors, but attendees are encouraged to wear masks to protect vulnerable people.

The day before, Michael Niemann and Estelle Voeller, members of the planning committee, will be guests on JPR’s Jefferson Exchange at 8:30 a.m. Long active in the global movement to abolish nuclear weapons, they will discuss the current dangers we face, including the U.S. failure to re-enter the nuclear agreement with Iran and the strained relations between the U.S. and Russia.

Co-sponsors of the observance to date are Ashland Culture of Peace Commission, Ashland First Congregational United Church of Christ, Medford Congregational United Church of Christ, One Sunny Day Initiatives, Red Earth Descendants, Rogue Valley Peace Choir, ScienceWorks, South Mountain Friends Meeting (Quakers), Southern Oregon Japanese Association, Southern Oregon University, United Nations Alliance at SOU, United Nations Association of Southern Oregon, and Veterans for Peace Rogue Valley Chapter 156.

For more information, contact Peace House - peacehouse.net or 541-482-9625