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Kucinick promotes lasting peace

By Scott Stafford, Berkshire Eagle Staff

Posted: 09/18/2011 12:05:15 AM EDT

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Updated: 09/18/2011 12:05:16 AM EDT

Sunday September 18, 2011

HANCOCK -- The Village of Peace, also known as Hancock Shaker Village, was the setting for a conference on peace Saturday as roughly 100 people came together from around the country to study the ways of peace both locally and globally.

The keynote speaker of the Peace Conference was U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), a former presidential candidate and prolific critic of armed conflicts and America's role in them.

Kucinich told the gathering that while it would be difficult, it is possible to grow a lasting peace despite the prevalence of war in this society which has grown to promote and glorify a "warrior state."

He noted that more than half of America's discretionary budget, about \$5 trillion, goes to the Pentagon.

"That incredible arrogance is breathtaking -- that we're assuming we have the responsibility of life and death over others," Kucinich said. "The only way we interact with other peoples is through force and at this point, the violence is so pervasive we don't know anything else."

He praised participants of the conference, noting that such gatherings "have great power. Through the luminous quality of these gatherings you create a counter-balance, a potential for a new world to emerge. People are gathering all around the world for a similar aspiration."

The "War on Terror," Kucinich said, is a justification for "a war without end."

Too many people, he added, equate the

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workshops earlier that day, was that in order to curtail war, one has to begin with one's self. By seeking a peaceful heart, Kucinich said, people can have peace in their homes, peace in their communities, with the eventual result of "peace in the larger world."

Before he arrived, conference attendees took part in a variety of workshops examining various aspects of peaceful living and advocating for the avoidance of violent conflict.

The conference, called "Pathways to Peaceful Living: Tools and Explorations," was organized and presented by the Center for Peace Through Culture and Hancock Shaker Village.

In a Native American teepee there was a discussion about the International Day of Peace, which is coming up on



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Wednesday (Sept. 21). Later a Native American traditionalist, Richard Kastl, spoke at length about his past, his experiences with the Hopi nation, and on creating peace through stewardship of the land and each other.

Another discussion, led by Dorothy J. Maver, explored the international Roerich Pact, which in 1935 declared sites of cultural activity and historic value as neutral ground independent of international conflict.

Earlier in the day, Donald W. Goodrich -- whose son, Peter, was aboard United Flight 175 when it struck the World Trade Center on 9/11 -- led a discussion on the causes of extreme human violence, such as poverty and fear.

Another workshop was presented by Colin Goddard, who was shot four times in the 2007 Virginia Tech shootings. Since then he has been advocating for stronger gun control legislation, and he spoke about problems presented by gun violence and some possible solutions.

There were also musicians specializing in the spiritual and healing power in music and dance.

Peter Hansen, acting director of the Shaker history museum, said he had no idea what to expect when the peace conference began, but was "absolutely amazed at the turnout and the intense level of interest. They're all engaging in discussions about how to re-establish dialogue and turn the shouting down."

To reach Scott Stafford:

sstafford@berkshireeagle.com

or (413) 496-6241.

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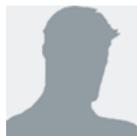
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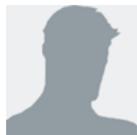
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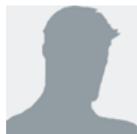
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