

Making Words Matter: Peace Tree Ceremony Creates Hope

01/30/2024

Making Words Matter: Peace Tree Ceremony Creates Hope



A student adds a message to the "Peace Tree"

*By Jade Bartnicki, Heravi Peace Institute Staff Assistant
Edited: May 10, 2024*

In a world full of chaos and conflict, the Heravi Peace Institute aims to provide the Utah State University community with a bit of hope and belonging. On Wednesday, Jan. 24th, they did just that by hosting a peace vigil dedicated to sending messages of peace and goodwill into the world. Over two dozen students and faculty joined together for a moment of reflection as they added their messages to the HPI's "Peace Tree." One student wrote, "Participating ... highlighted the significance of sharing the universal value of peace with those in your community. I'm continually impressed with how the [Heravi] Peace Institute spreads harmony to others through their actions."

The olive tree now covered in personal messages and colorful ribbon is meant to represent the goodwill and commitment of those who are paving the way for peace. "The Heravi Peace Institute recognizes that peace is not the absence of conflict;" reads the institute's mission statement. "Peace is an enduring commitment to nonviolence and human flourishing that comes with a complex and nuanced understanding of how peace and

conflict function in our world." Students, faculty, and alumni of the institute recognize the perseverance it takes to build peace in today's world. Through coursework, internships, research, and continuing involvement in the fields of conflict and peacebuilding, those involved not only wish for peace, but they also put in the work to see it through.



One attendee shared, "It's been a tumultuous semester so far, so sitting and letting the thoughts stop swirling and spinning allowed me to let go of some anxiety and fear. Seeing the notes on the tree reminded me I'm not alone in seeking [peace]. It restored my belief that people are trying their best, which is all I can ask."

The Peace Tree was on display in Merrill-Cazier Library through the month of March, where people continued to add their messages and send their hopes into the world. The tree now stands with over 200 messages calling for peace, sharing inspirational thoughts, and proclaiming personal commitments.



Jade Bartnicki, HPI staff and organizer of the event feels the Peace Tree will continue to be a unifying symbol for the institute: "It was incredible how readily faculty and students came together to share their hopes for peace. Whether their wishes were for their own lives or the lives of people involved in conflicts halfway across the world, the heart behind them was all the same," she said. "That's what the institute does—it unites people and reminds them of our common humanity. The Peace Tree will be a lasting

symbol of what we're committed to as an institute as our mission continues to grow."