

## The Peace Alliance and Lori Draper

*by Bishop Shelley Wickstrom*

After reading a letter from her son's friend in Iraq, Lori Draper needed to do something for him and for peace. She found action and education through The Peace Alliance, which trains citizens to interact with their democracy. Training in Non-Violent Communication focuses on an understanding that every human being has the same needs; we have different strategies to attain those needs.

Lori found herself incorporating non-violent communication training in her role as a bank manager. Inviting staff to speak opened up creative problem solving that the staff owned. Listening to each other in talking circles allowed for frank conversation and a deeper willingness to shape their future. Even when folks disagreed with a management decision, if they felt heard, they received the change with openness.

The Peace Alliance worked with Representative Don Young to sponsor the Juvenile Justice Act to reduce youth incarceration. As a part of Peace Alliance work on juvenile justice in Alaska, Lori identifies missing pieces for "petty crimes" in Alaska as the need for restorative justice which requires accountability, making personal amends, meeting the victims in person with a mediator, and sometimes incarceration. Programs cost less than prison. Lori recalls the late Senator Ted Stephen's support of their efforts. She reminds us all that our legislators need relationships with a wide variety of constituents to serve well.

The Peace Alliance has also focused on restorative justice in schools. Scholarships were funded by Alaskans so Alaskan educators could participate in the Tele-series "Teaching Peace in Schools." The research is clear that incorporating accountability, concrete restoration, and talking circles reduces expulsions and bullying. The whole school is trained in these methods of non-violent communication and problem-solving. Young children are introduced to "Giraffe thinking" and "Jackal thinking." Giraffes have big hearts and long necks to make their ears available.

Serving as a lay preacher at Resurrection Lutheran in Seward, has given Lori opportunity to use the lens of non-violent communication, and restorative justice in her sermons. She recounts the story of a young offender called before the village elders. The elders take turns reminding the young man of his virtue, the times they've seen his kindness and courage. They remind him of who he really is and whose he is. Isn't that what the grace of Christ is and does?

Lori is eager to share more about this comprehensive and coordinated approach to prevention and resolving violent conflict. She serves as a State Coordinator and as an Action Team Leader in Alaska. "The more grassroots people who are trained, the bigger the impact we can make on our society. "See the Peace Alliance website and contact Lori at [Lori@peacealliance.org](mailto:Lori@peacealliance.org) for more information.



Photo of Lori Draper