

Peace One Day in Alliston ? Sept. 21st

What began as one man's mission to establish a day of peace to the world on one day of the year has blossomed into a successful global effort to perpetuate Peace Day. Major activities and concerts are organized by the Peace One Day foundation, but individuals around the world are invited to organize celebrations of their own, including one right here in Alliston.

The 1st Annual New Tecumseth Peace One Day Festival is open to all ages, with lots of activities for everyone, including music, choirs, face painting, crafts, yoga, drum circles and Reiki. Speakers will also be addressing the crowd along with open mic opportunities for everyone to offer their thoughts, hopes and uplifting experiences about peace.

The event will be held on Saturday, September 21 from noon to 3 p.m. at the Riverdale Park Bandshell in Alliston. They will be one of hundreds of communities who will live-stream their smaller events to connect with the International Peace One Day Rally in Holland, which is the main event organized by the foundation.

It all began in the 1990s with Jeremy Gilley, a British filmmaker and former actor who made it his mission to establish an annual day of cease-fire and non-violence on a fixed calendar date. He documented his efforts on film, and titled it "Peace One Day". His idea and passion for the outcome grew, and in 1999 he founded the non-profit organization, Peace One Day. Finally, in 2001 the United Nations officially established September 21 as International Peace Day.

Since the first Peace Day in 2002 its success around the world has been undeniable, growing each year. As a second documentary, Gilley traveled to Afghanistan for the first time in 2008 with actor Jude Law to document the lives being saved as a direct result of Peace Day.

Through negotiations they were able to get the Taliban to agree not to harm health workers on Peace Day, and 10,000 vaccinators were able to immunize millions of children against Polio in areas they couldn't otherwise visit without the risk of being kidnapped or killed. That year, the UN put out a press release that reported a record-breaking 70 per cent drop in violence in Afghanistan on Peace Day.

But Peace One Day isn't just about stopping wars, it's about putting an end to violence of all kind.

"By working together we can institutionalize peace day, making it a day that is self-sustaining" said Gilley on a video about this year's campaign, posted on the Peace One Day website. "A day when fewer children are bullied, fewer women are hit and fewer guns are fired."

Statistics collected after last year for the 2012 Peace One Day report identified approximately 280 million people in 198 countries who were aware of Peace Day. Further reported, 5.6 million people acted more peacefully because of this awareness. It was the best year to date for participation, and will grow still further with over 600 million people expected to be aware of Peace Day on September 21, 2013.

The theme this year is who will you make peace with? PeaceOneDay.org lists a few simple things people can do to create peace this year, including the following:

"Sometimes the simplest things can have the most immediate and meaningful impact on the lives of everyone around you."

By Emily Wood