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Minutes from January 2015 meeting

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CITIZENS FOR PEACE
January 13 , 2015

Our meeting opened at 7:00 pm, with a warm welcome (on the coldest day) by President, Colleen Mills. She thanked all for coming tonight and so pleased to see so many people interested in starting the year off on a Peaceful note. She introduced Inner Peace Dir., Sally Peck, who helped us to get centered by sharing a quote from Mary Ann Williamson on Forgiveness.

Special Presentation:

Mr. Peace, and CFP member, Kevin Szawala, introduced our featured speaker. Kevin said Gary Weinstein has been a hero if his, ever since meeting him. Gary made national headlines when he forgave the man who killed his wife and two sons in a terrible drunk driving accident.

Gary asked the group to practice active listening. To listen to what he had to say without any preconceived notions. He went on to say that although he lost his legacy, he realized that he, was the same person. And he realized that his community needed him, especially children who lost their best friends. And, sadly, he had to cancel the 20 year wedding anniversary plans he and his wife were making. He needed to identify what the loss actually was, and to come to grips with it.

He started the healing process by writing a Victim's Impact Statement. And he did so in the form of a letter to his wife. In the letter he stated what he lost and described his loved ones. He went on to express that the greatest loss, is that of the contributions his two boys would not be able to make to the world. This letter was read the sentencing trial. (This was the drunk driver's 1st offence, having "fallen off the wagon" after being sober for 17 years. However his alcohol level was 5 times the legal limit.) When Gary met with the man, about a year after the accident, he had no agenda. He wanted everyone to know that he did not hate this man, but he hates his actions that day.

Sometime, before the accident happened, Gary took a Landmark Education Course on "Who We Are in the World", and he suggested we do the same. This course helped him identify who he was and his mission in life. He described himself to be filled with aliveness, fun and joy through contribution, creativity and participation. The most important thing is to find out who we are. For those of us who issues, whether it is a loss, or something else, it's ok to cry and grieve. But don't let the situation define you. He said you don't need to hold onto the past as a determining factor of where you'll go in this world.

Gary also spoke of the importance of Responsibility – We must be responsible for our actions. Actually he described it as an empowering grace that we give ourselves. He said the important thing is to be responsible for ourselves – and for our neighbor. He also spoke about Integrity – being who we want to be. He stated that the human being is a meaning-making machine. But so much of what we do is response driven. To live a powerful life, he said, is to step back from the automatic responses, and be your authentic self. To close, he thanked the group for their attention to his message, and read a poem by George Bernard Shaw. He also said that the video clip we watched is part of an upcoming documentary, produced by Project Forgive, depicting five stories of loss, called "Transforming Loss". He was thanked, with applause by all.

Business Meeting:

- Colleen nominated the following members to the board, for a vote by members. President – C. Mills; Vice President – T. Gunter; Treasurer – R. Abdoo; Secretary – L. Lieder; Citizens Action – A. Abdoo; Education – R. Doyle; Inner Peace – S. Peck; Hospitality – P. Castillo; Public Relations – G. Mills; Technology – B. Frank; Outreach – G. Gonek; Lending Library – B. Jantz. The board was unanimously voted in.
- Rick Abdoo gave the Treasurer's report
- Rosemary Doyle mentioned that the Nuclear Waste, Postcard Campaign continues. She was excited to share information about our Random Acts of Kindness project during the Season for Nonviolence. She asked that we fill out a card describing a random act of kindness you did, or someone did to you. How did it make you feel? We will read a couple of cards at the start of upcoming meetings.
- Carole Kersten invited all to a book discussion on Sat., Feb 7th. She had copies of the fascinating book – "The Day the World Came to Town" describing 9/11 in Gander Newfoundland.
- February meeting: Conversations on Compassion

Colleen thanked all in attendance and read a quote on Compassion by J.M. Barry. The meeting closed at 8:40 pm.