

MICHIGAN PEACE TEAM

pursuing peace through active nonviolence in places of conflict

Vol. Xii No. 1
Spring 2007

WHAT GOOD DO PEACE TEAMS ACCOMPLISH IN PALESTINE/ISRAEL?

By Peter Dougherty

Michigan Peace Team (MPT) has been fielding violence reduction peace teams in areas of conflict internationally and in the U.S. since 1993. Internationally, MPT has fielded teams of 2 to 13 people. In Palestine/Israel, we work with other groups that do these kinds of tasks. Our first team to Palestine/Israel was in 1995, and we have sent teams there regularly since 2001. This spring we will begin a year round team there, and continue placing spring, summer and fall short-term teams. What good do our small peace teams accomplish in the large picture of the horrendous violence in Palestine/Israel? What is it peace teams do, and are they worthwhile? Relating a few of our experiences as peace teams can help people appreciate the value of this work.

In 2002 four of us from MPT were in the Al Farah camp north of Ramallah, West Bank. The Israeli tanks had rolled into the town three weeks before, destroyed the community center and wounded Palestinians. We made



Palestinian children give the peace sign Fall 2006

ourselves visible every day, working to deter more Israeli attacks. Two of us on the team went to Nablus, responding to a call for international protection. The military presumed we had left Al Fara, and invaded the town in tanks. The two MPT members that were still in Al Fara immediately went on the streets, to

confront the tanks with the message of their presence: The world is watching. The other two of us returned from Nablus to join our teammates when we heard of the invasion. The tanks went to the outskirts of the town, but remained still. Finally, they left in the early evening. No one was injured or killed. A leader in the town said it was because we were there.

Internationals may interpose themselves when Palestinians are actually being physically attacked, and thereby break the momentum of attack. Last summer MPT members went to the town of Bil'in, West Bank, to join Palestinians in the nonviolent attempt to stop construction of the Separation Wall cutting through their agricultural fields. One of the Palestinian town leaders proceeded to walk forward toward the wall. Israeli soldiers knocked him down and began beating him. Two of our team member's laid their bodies over the Palestinian to protect him, and the beating stopped.

In the city of Tulkarem, West Bank, Israeli soldiers took over a mosque, looking for a man they intended

PALESTINIAN NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE ACTIVISTS SPEAK IN

Continued on page 7

By Anna Reosti

Feryal Abu Haikal and **Mohammed Khatib** embarked on a

nationwide speaking tour in the United States to discuss their experiences as non-violent activists in Palestine. Haikal and Khatib hail from some of the communities in Palestine most vulnerable to discrimination, harassment and oppression on the part of Israeli military and settlers. These speakers revealed the innovative and



*Feryal Abu Haikal and Mohammed Khatib with Maurya Orr
Photo Courtesy of Tom Rico*

non-violent methods they utilized to mobilize members of their communities into an effective resistance front against the Israeli occupation and its

consequences.

Mohammed Khatib has been a principal organizer of the *Popular Committee Against the Wall* in his community, Bil'in. During the last two years, this committee has directed their resistance toward the proposed construction of

an Israeli "apartheid" wall in Bil'in as well as maintaining their opposition to

the further illegal expansion of Israeli settlements in that area. The *Popular Committee Against the Wall* has succeeded not only in mobilizing members of the Bil'in community, but also in attracting Israeli activists to support

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MICHIGAN PEACE TEAM IN WEST BANK

By Brenna Cussen

In November 2006, four members of the Michigan Peace Team traveled to the West Bank, serving as an active non-violent presence and assisting the Palestinian people in their struggle to nonviolently resist the Israeli military occupation of their land. Participation in the olive harvest campaign was a large part of the trip and was jointly organized by the Palestinian-led International Solidarity Movement (ISM), Rabbis for Human Rights, and International Women's Peace Service.

ISM trained us in international human rights work and nonviolent intervention and placed us in fields with Palestinian farmers. Our job was to protect Palestinians from settler violence, to document any abuse that occurred, to insist that soldiers did not prevent Palestinians from accessing their own land, and to help harvest olives.

The campaign, started six years ago, was created to combat the frequent attempts by Israeli settlers to drive Palestinians off their own land. Since 1967, some Israelis who believe that the entire land of Israel and Palestine belongs only to Jews have been "colonizing" the West

Bank – building developments on Palestinian land and connecting these developments to Israel and to each other by "Israeli-only" access roads. Under Israeli law, if Palestinian land has not been tended to for three years, then the land can be "legally" claimed by an Israeli. So it is in a settler's interest to keep Palestinians from harvesting in whatever way they can. When Palestinian farmers try to harvest their trees that are located near the recently built Israeli settlements, they are often attacked by settlers.

Our presence as international human rights workers offered a great deterrence to settler violence and restriction of access because, as internationals, we have greater contact with media than Palestinians do, and we can use cameras to document events to be used as evidence in court.

This was the sixth year of the campaign. We have been impressed with its success so far. In June 2006, due in large part to years of nonviolent struggle by the Palestinians accompanied by international human rights workers, the Israeli High Court issued a ruling that declared that Palestinians had a right to access their olive trees. Still,

internationals continued the campaign to be sure that settlers and soldiers obeyed this ruling. During my time in the West Bank, some of our fellow peace workers have been beaten, targeted by stone throwers, and kicked by settlers. Some were arrested by soldiers for assisting in the olive harvest.

Each morning, we left our apartment in the old city of Nablus around 6:30 AM in order to arrive in the villages by 7:30 or 8 AM, when the families began harvesting their olives. It should have taken only a half-hour to get to the villages, but because of the military checkpoints we encountered, it usually took three times as long. There were three checkpoints between the city and most villages. We would take a taxi to one checkpoint, hop out, wait in line, then get another taxi to the next checkpoint, wait in line, and so on, until we arrived at our destination. At each checkpoint, we would show our passports to the nineteen

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SPEAKERS FROM PALESTINE (continued from page 1)

their cause.

Feryal Abu Haikal has taught and served as a headmistress at the *Qurtuba School* in Hebron's old city, which provides educational services for approximately 100 Palestinian children. Although recently retired after 11 years of service, this 60 year old mother of 11 children has long witnessed the offenses of some of the most extreme Israeli settlers that have taken up residence in Hebron's old city. These settlers have been known to frequently attack Palestinian residents in Hebron in an effort to drive this population from their homes and community. Haikal has worked to maintain the *Qurtuba School* for over a decade as a symbolic and practical vestige of non-violent resistance to these devastating circumstances of occupation.

Local co-sponsors include Michigan Peace Team, MSU's Peace & Justice Studies Program, the MSU



Drawing done by Feryal Abu Haikal's son.
Email- A_ABUHAIKL@hotmail.com

Department of Philosophy, The NorthStar Center, the Shalom Center for Peace & Justice and the Peace Education Center. ☪

This information was taken from the biographies provided by ISM.

Peace Team Benefit Dinner is a Success!

by Heather Dunn

The recent fundraising event at the Islamic Center in East Lansing, drew a large crowd to sponsor our first long term peace team in Palestine/Israel. The event was held on Saturday, March 24, 2007 and was only ten dollars to eat a Middle Eastern feast. The dinner was donated and prepared by several Palestinian families, allowing for all of the proceeds to go towards Michigan Peace Team's active support for peace in the Middle East. Along with the proceeds from the dinner many donations were made for the cause, including a generous check from the Metaphysical Church in honor of Mark Ueberroth. The success of this event made it possible to launch our team into action by funding this nonviolent alternative to militarism and the force of arms in order to resolve conflict and to restore peace in the Middle East.

Michigan Peace Team would like to take this opportunity to give a special thanks again to the Islamic Center for hosting the event, all of the Palestinian families who donated and prepared the food, the Metaphysical Church and everyone who made charitable donations and helped to support our long term peace team. ☪

WEST BANK (Continued from page 2)

and twenty-year-old soldiers who held the fate of our day in their hands.

And we were American. It is not uncommon for a Palestinian student going from Jerusalem to school in Ramallah to travel for three hours when it should take twenty-five minutes. Palestinians deal with frequent check-point closures and are often denied passage. Palestinians must carry their IDs around with them at all times. Palestinians may be stopped at any time, in their own land, to have their IDs checked. They are often detained for an hour or more. While in Ramallah, a Palestinian friend asked me to travel to Jerusalem for him to pick up his visa to Spain. He was traveling to Spain for an international peace conference, but he did not have permission to enter his own capital city of Jerusalem, about ten miles away.

Our group picked olives at the village of Kfir Khlil. We picked with Monder and his thirteen-year-old son, Mohaned. Monder showed us his orchard where half of the trees had been burned by the Israeli settlers and no longer bore fruit. The Israeli settlement had built a road through Monder's land, and only Israelis were allowed to drive or walk on it. The road divided Monder's house from his field. When Mohaned wanted to go home to fetch us lunch, my teammate Peter accompanied him for safer passage.

I witnessed countless other ways Palestinians were suffering under Israeli military law: family members arrested and jailed for months without charge, homes destroyed to make way for a huge cement wall through Palestinian land, schools closed, curfew imposed on entire cities. Their economy is depressed, and the younger generations are provided with limited opportunities



Fall Harvest 2006

Taken by Brenna Cussen

and lack hope for the future. The Palestinian people are suffering too much.

The people of Israel also have a long history of suffering. Speaking to Israelis from the Rabbis for Human Rights, we got the sense that most Israelis only desire to live in a land where they feel safe and secure, where they do not have to live in fear of losing their lives or their

way of life. The Jewish people have come under attack in many countries where they have lived, and they are being attacked even now, in Israel, by forces that seem to want them destroyed. They have experienced the horror of losing their loved ones in senseless attacks of terror.

So many of us wonder whether there can ever be peace. Some think that perhaps the only answer is for Israel to build walls, to take as much land as they can get as a "buffer," to destroy homes where suspected terrorists live, and continue to bomb until the violent enemies are "defeated." But this way is not working.

In Bethlehem, the city of Jesus' birth, I read graffiti that had been sprayed on the cement wall: "Fear builds walls; hope builds bridges."

When I was in Palestine, I witnessed a people of hope and of nonviolence. I met people who are willing to struggle bravely to live free lives. It became obvious to me that the main cause of fear and violence in Israel and Palestine is Israel's military occupation and colonization of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israelis would have no need to live in such paralyzing

fear of their neighbors if they would let go of the myth that they can protect themselves by destroying another people. It is our responsibility, as members of the international community to help Israel to stop living in fear and help them to see that security will come when they treat Palestinians as fellow human beings. Security will come when they recognize that Palestinians also have the right to live with dignity and without fear. ☺

WE APPRECIATE ALL OF THE DONORS WHO GIVE SO GENEROUSLY TO MPT!

Approximately 80% of Michigan Peace Team's funding comes from individual donors like you. About 20% comes from grants. Please consider making a donation to MPT this year. **If every reader contributed one dollar, we would cover the cost of our newsletter printing.**

- I will make a single \$ _____ gift to MPT at this time.
- I would like information about making a gift of stock to MPT.
- I would like information about planned giving options to benefit MPT.
- I will help Michigan Peace Team send peace teams in 2006 with my gift of \$ _____.

Name: _____

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Phone: _____ Email: _____

Return to MPT 1516 Jerome Street Lansing, Michigan 48912-2220. Contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law.



JENNIFER BERT was an intern for the MPT this past fall. She is a senior at Michigan State University studying Interdisciplinary Humanities in Philosophy, Anthropology, and Religious Studies with a specialization in Peace and Justice Studies. Jennifer plans to go onto graduate school to become a secondary school counselor. She believes the future is in the hands of our youth and she would like to help guide them along their way.

Jennifer likes practicing yoga, reading a good book, and nachos!

Spotlight on MPT Interns

ANNA REOSTI is currently completing her last year at Michigan State University, studying Sociology and Philosophy. She originally hails from Detroit, coming from a long line of radical activism in pursuit of social and economic justice. Anna is looking forward to learning about the manner in which non-violent advocacy organizations, such as the Michigan Peace Team, operate as well as working with Michigan Peace Team's group of wonderful and inspiring staff and volunteers.



HEATHER DUNN has been interning with MPT since February of 2007. She is a student at MSU majoring in communication, with a specialization in public relations. She will be studying abroad this summer in Paris, France as well as Brussels, Belgium learning and experiencing international and organizational communication. Heather will graduate in May of 2008 and plans to move to the "Windy City" of Chicago to work for a PR agency.



Volunteer with MPT

We are always looking for enthusiastic people to help out in our office. Recycling, mailings, and event help are just a few things we need your help with.

The Unsinkable Ms. Jeffreys

By Shirley Jones

There's probably no one better than I to write about Mary Ellen Jeffreys.

I lived with her (and ten other human-rights workers) for three weeks in a house on the West Bank in Israel/Palestine. I picked olives with her there, and marveled at how unobtrusively and lovingly she watched over all of us. She was unflagging in her labor in the hot sun, or cooking in the kitchen, or marching in demonstrations. In fact, I have no doubt that she would have taken a bullet for any of us—that's why I stayed so near her!

Back at the office in Lansing, she stuffs envelopes, makes calls, and does whatever she can to be helpful. She spends about twenty hours a week volunteering, and has been with MPT for six years.

"Last year," she tells me, "I spent ten days in Douglas, AZ with Martha Larsen, RSM. We were invited there by the Christian Peace Team to explore what other groups were doing, and to see if MPT could help

with the US/Mexican border dispute. We also went to several protests against the wall/fence dividing the two countries."

Her hair in a neat bun, this devout Catholic, mother of five and grandmother of four, is prettier than most. She's soft-spoken and modest, so her humorous zingers are all the more unexpected, leaving you howling or chuckling at her irreverent take on the subject at hand.

Mary Ellen was born in Detroit and raised in Lansing, but remembers most fondly her four years on her grandparents farm in Howard City, northwest of Grand Rapids. She was five years old when she arrived, and attended the same one-room schoolhouse her father had—Hillman Hill School.

Mary Ellen's final words are typically selfless. "At our MPT office, there's lots of laughing, even when we're really too busy. We need more volunteers there, and you know, people

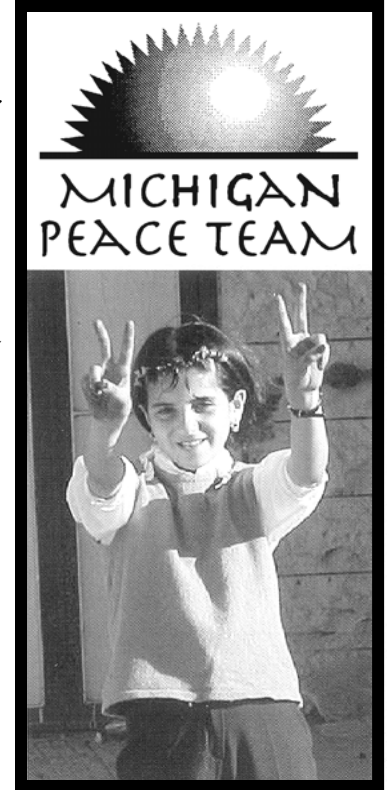
think they have to be multi-skilled, but they don't. They can be on a call list, and help us when they can. It's really a good cause, and great fun, too!" ☺



"PURSUING PEACE THROUGH ACTIVE NONVIOLENCE IN PLACES OF CONFLICT"

YOU CAN HELP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- ✧ Invite an MPT speaker to do a presentation for your community or work group
- ✧ Attend or arrange an MPT nonviolence training for your school, workplace, church or community group, etc.
- ✧ Join one of our domestic or international violence reduction teams
- ✧ Make a gift to help us continue our work towards non-violent alternatives that empower peacemaking



MICHIGAN PEACE
TEAM

1516 JEROME ST.
LANSING MI, 48918
(517) 484-3178

EMAIL:

MICHIGANPEACETEAM@COMCAST.NET

www.michiganpeaceteam.org

CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM NONVIOLENCE TRAINING

Over the past year, MPT Trainers Mary Hanna and Sheri Wander have worked with the Lansing Area Homeschoolers group, which consists of children ranging in ages from 4 to 14. Under the guidance of their parents, they were interested in learning how to begin to use the tools of non-violence. The parents involved reported that this was one of the most successful sessions we conducted: understanding the basis tenets of "how to apologize"....

What to do when you hurt someone's feelings

Nobody likes to have their feelings hurt. When we know that we've hurt someone, we should apologize and show real concern about how it made them feel. We should say we're sorry when we do something that hurts or bothers someone. But apologies don't mean much if the behavior – the thing we did that hurt someone - doesn't change. An apology really can help, but only if we are *sincere* about doing things *differently* the next time.

Let's practice both giving an apology, and getting an apology....

When you have to apologize for something, here are the things you should do:

1. Say the person's name, and then say "I'm sorry".**
2. Tell the person what you are apologizing for.
3. If you know, tell them why you did what you did.
4. Tell them what you will do to make things better (this is called "restitution").
5. Ask them to please accept your apology.

When someone apologizes to YOU, here are the things you should do:

1. Say the person's name, and thank them for apologizing to you. (Remember, apologizing takes courage!)
2. Explain to them how you felt: "When that happened, I felt _____."
3. Tell them a way the problem could have been solved better.
4. Thank them for talking with you to find a way to make things better.
5. Let them know that you accept their apology.

Ways to help you apologize (remembering that an apology only works if it is genuine):

- Do something nice for the other person.
- Bring them some flowers you picked out of the garden.
- Draw them a picture that tells how you feel.
- If you can't write yet, you could ask your mom or dad or older sibling to write down the words to an apology that you tell them. (*dictate*)
- Give the person a hug when you apologize, especially if it is someone in your family.

***Research has shown that effective communication improves simply by verbalizing the other person's name. It increases their feelings of connectedness to the speaker.*

– "How to Apologize" written by Mary L. Hanna, M.Ed.

Long Term MPT Team in Palestine

By Martha Larsen and Sheri Wander

Since 2001 MPT has sent between 2 and 3 teams to Palestine each year. Team members typically stay from 3 weeks to one month. We are proud of those teams and believe that with them MPT offers something no other organization we know of offers – a chance to serve on a violence-reduction peace team for short periods of time. Our peace teams are different from what most third party nonviolent intervention [TPNI] organizations offer for those who don't see themselves as full time "activists". It is an opportunity for everyday folks to join an important and effective team for a short time, without having dedicated many years to an educational background.

We will continue those teams, and are excited to announce that as of this spring we also placed our first long term team! MPT has received encouragement from several organizations, such as Christian Peacemakers Teams, International Solidarity Movement, International Women's Peace Service, Palestinian Cen-

ter for Rapprochement, and Rabbis for Human Rights. Based on their input, and our previous teams, the team will be based somewhere it can have significant impact with easy access to other areas in need.

We will start with a 9 month plan, at the end of which we will evaluate and determine if the need is still there and if we can sustain a continued presence. The long term team, like all MPT teams, will support the nonviolent work of grassroots Palestinians and Israelis in creating justice and peace by working with other human rights monitoring groups, provide protective accompaniment, and being an international presence in areas with consistent and regular nonviolent resistance actions. Additionally, The long term team will establish a base for MPT short term teams.

The Middle East has been in the news constantly, and the Palestine/Israel situation has become an increasingly essential element in the peace process. Michigan Peace Teams who

have gone to Palestine/Israel have witnessed the intense human suffering of both Israelis and Palestinians caused by the occupation.

Michigan Peace Team does not take a position on what is the best solution for to the conflict. What our teams do is to help "create the space" for those involved in the conflict to come to a just and lasting solution. There is an urgent need for international TPNI workers in the area. It is our hope that our long term team can join our short term teams in filling that need.

Team members who have been to Palestine/Israel come back and continue their work by sharing their experiences in talks and writing; as well as, educating the public on what is happening there. You can assist with this long term team by giving financial support, buying olive oil, and olive oil soap, inviting team members to give presentations, and volunteering for long or short term teams. Contact MPT for information about how to be more involved. ☮

Help MPT by detaching the flyer on the previous page and hang it up in your community center, break room, church fellowship room, or make copies and pass them out to friends! MPT is always available for trainings and speaking engagements and needs your help in getting the word out!

MPT is trying to enter the digital age with an electronic newsletter.

Sign up by sending us an email and help protect our environment while staying involved in MPT's work in peace keeping!

We honor the life of **Sister Elizabeth LaForest** who was on Michigan Peace Team's first international team to Bosnia. She was a lifelong activist and dedicated her life to just causes all over the world.

"Though Sister Elizabeth was small in physical stature, she was a giant in moral strength and vision of non-violent peacemaking for our world," - Peter Dougherty

Support our Peace Teams* and add some flavor to your dinners by buying a bottle of Fair Trade Palestinian Olive Oil**
Call (517) 484-3178 to place your order.

*Your purchase directly supports Palestinian olive farmers and supporting and sending MPT peace teams!

**\$20 for a larger 25.4 Fl oz. bottle



Special Thanks to our editorial team- Heather Dunn, Anna Fischer, Paul Pratt, Sheri Wander, and Shirley Watson

Would you like announcements about current events MPT is involved in or weekly updates about teams we have in the field?

Then join our MPT News list serve and stay in the loop!

We honor the life of Paul Armstrong who we lost earlier this year. Paul volunteered with MPT and will be missed. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

What Good...? (Continued from page 1)

to arrest or assassinate. Six internationals, including myself, responded to this by going to the mosque with the Palestinian leader of the nonviolent organization that invited us to Tulkarem. A soldier indicated that we were to leave the area by aiming his rifle at us. We stayed in the street, refusing to leave, knowing we would be shot if we continued moving closer. Youth started throwing stones at Israeli jeeps behind us. Soldiers then fired overhead, and the people around attempted to run from the line of fire. During this episode, our Palestinian host said that someone would be killed today. The military did not find the man they were after, so they arrested his sisters' two young boys and then left the city. The Palestinian leader said no one was killed or injured that day because we internationals were present.

Palestinians say they suffer less abuse and harassment when internationals are present. They express gratitude to us for being there and feel safer in many instances because when we are there we give them hope. In Rafah, the southernmost city of Gaza on the Egyptian border, a Palestinian woman wrote a statement about international peace team members. She said:

We feel safe when they are here. They work 24 hours a day. They work to protect us and our children. You

don't feel they are foreigners. They love us. They love our Koran. They love our religion. And they respect us.

Peace teams may also stay in a home that is targeted to be demolished; thereby deterring the demolition Teams may accompany Palestinians so they will not be attacked by Israeli soldiers or settlers. They may be present at a checkpoint and thereby reduce the amount of Israeli soldier harassment to Palestinians who need to pass through to go home, to their field, to school, or wherever. In the larger picture of the conflict, small groups of internationals a year from now might not seem like a solution. But international peace team work is important, and the Palestinians want us to be there doing this work.

If we had 15,000 trained international peacemakers, we could shut down the occupation by making it impossible for the Israelis to continue business as usual. With so many eyes of the world watching, we would create an international outcry. World opinion could force Israel to negotiate a just resolution of the conflict. We do not have 15,000 trained internationals ready to go into the Palestinian territory to expose and shut down the brutal Occupation, however, but we are continuing to grow as a force. MPT is a

part of a growing field of organizations doing third party nonviolent intervention. Groups like Christian Peace Teams, Peace Brigades International, Witness for Peace, and Fellowship of Reconciliation each bring their own piece to this exciting world. Additionally, MPT is a member organization of Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), whose slogan is "What you can say yes to when you say no to war." MPT will continue to provide the alternatives to war and militarism, making a difference wherever we can. ☸

Michigan Peace Team

pursuing peace through active nonviolence in places of conflict.

MPT provides nonviolence trainings, educates the public to the vision and practice of active nonviolence, and places violence reduction teams at home and abroad.

Office Staff:

Maurya Orr, *Office Coordinator*
Mary L. Hanna, *Projects Manager*
Jan Kurtz, *Volunteer Coordinator*
Martha Larsen, *Assistant*

Core:

Sr. Mary Pat Dewey
C. Peter Dougherty
Sr. Mary Ann Ford
Jasiu Milanowski
Paul Pratt
Sheri Wander

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You can make a tax deductible contribution to MPT on a monthly basis through your credit card. Just let us know how much you would like to donate each month, and send us your information below. We will deduct the specified amount from your credit card each month. It's a wonderful way to keep MPT going, with little hassle for you. Please consider becoming a Sustainer!

Yes! I wish to join the Sustainer's Circle and make an ongoing contribution of \$_____ each month to be charged to my credit card.

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I'm proud to be a part of the MPT community. Here is my contribution:

\$35

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Other _____

Michigan Peace Team regular office hours are 9:00 am to 4:00 pm EST, Monday through Friday. Our telephone number is 517-484-3178. Our email is michiganpeaceteam@comcast.net



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