



**American
Friends
Service
Committee**

AFSC Midwest Digest – January 2025

Stories of work from around the region



AFSC St. Louis Program Director Barbara Gunn Lartey, front, with Midwest Regional Group member Steve Tamari and Midwest Regional Director Sharon Goens-Bradley

Elevating peacebuilding in St. Louis: A year of bold, inspired action

Barbara Gunn Lartey, AFSC St. Louis Program Director, writes: “When I joined the AFSC family as Program Director for St. Louis Peacebuilding, I carried with me a deep commitment to nurturing spaces for healing, empowerment, and transformation. These first months have been an incredible journey of collaboration, growth, and action—all guided by the vision of abolishing systems of injustice and building a more peaceful, equitable world.” [Read more.](#)



Twin Cities looks back at 2024, ahead to 2025

From [Instagram](#): “We are so excited to be ringing in the New Year with you! Take a peek at some of what we were up to in 2024. Between Intensives, our Youth Board, and other events, we’ve sure made memories that will last. The Big 3 was an intensive with all the Midwest youth programs in the Twin Cities, Chicago, and St. Louis. We discussed topics such as the use of social media to raise awareness with liberation in mind. Other intensives focused on *Chasing our Dreams* and using our unique gifts to bring about the change we wish to see in the world. Stay [connected](#) with us for opportunities to participate in our upcoming events and more!”



Photo: Isiah Veney

Chicagoans rally to end youth incarceration

AFSC’s Chicago Peacebuilding Program and our partners continue the struggle to close the five remaining youth prisons in Illinois as well as all juvenile detention centers. In December, a “Loud and Lit Up” rally outside Chicago’s Juvenile Temporary Detention Center demanded that young people detained and incarcerated in Illinois be released immediately. People contacted the governor and other officials to remind them that youth should be home for the holidays, not locked in cages. Follow AFSC on [Instagram](#).



A rally for Second Look outside the Michigan Capitol

Second Look falls short in Michigan; AFSC and partners vow to press on

Despite all the efforts of AFSC Michigan and our coalition partners, Second Look did not make it through this legislative session. This outcome was largely out of our control. Leadership's prioritization of other issues ahead of criminal justice, deep political divides, and late opposition by law enforcement were just some of the reasons we couldn't get Second Look over the finish line this year. Read [more](#).

At a large rally at the statehouse, Adalia Kirby of AFSC reminded lawmakers that the millions wasted on incarceration would be better spent truly supporting victims of crime. "The possibilities for justice reinvestment from Second Look legislation would create new opportunities for healing among victims and survivors and help to break the cycle of violence in our communities," she said. "That's a reality we should all embrace rather than reject."



Billie Wade

On racism and the struggle for equality

Billie Wade is a member of the Des Moines Valley Friends Meeting and several AFSC governance bodies, including the Midwest Regional Group. In this recent [interview](#), she talks about her lifelong work against racism and for equality.

More news of peace and justice work in Iowa

The AFSC Midwest Region co-sponsored the annual [Feast of the Holy Innocents](#) service in Des Moines....AFSC alums with Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice [share](#) about their train-the-trainers and Know Your Rights events....As part of AFSC's [No Hunger Summer](#) work, AFSC staff wrote this [opinion piece](#) calling on Iowa to take part in the Sun BUCKS program and feed hungry kids.

Short takes

Join AFSC's monthly webinar series to learn about concrete ways we can all take action for migrant rights, economic justice, and peace. Starting Jan. 21, these webinars will be held on the third Tuesday of every month at 7 pm CT. [Register now.](#)

Read AFSC's [remembrance of Jimmy Carter](#); [AFSC's statement](#) about the New York Times' rejection of our ad using the term "genocide"; and some final [thoughts on Hanukkah](#) from AFSC alum Rabbi Brant Rosen.

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