



AFSC Midwest Digest – October 2025

Stories of work from around the region



Chicago youth look at peacebuilding, prepare for second year of YAP

From [Instagram](#): This summer, two young people with AFSC wanted to facilitate a summer camp called 3P (the People's Peace Project) with other young people. They engaged in conversations around what peace and Peacebuilding means and what it looks like in Chicago. They explored community organizations within the city working to bring peace and talked about war, militarism and the police as peace disrupters. [Here](#) are some of their reflections.

The second year of Chi Peace's Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) is here! This year's theme is "People and Planet Against Militarism." AFSC is calling on BIPOC high school students from Chicago who, over the course of seven months, want to learn how militarism and environmental racism affect communities in Chicago. The [application](#) deadline is October 29.



Barbara Gunn Lartey, left, and LaWanda Hollister

St. Louis, Michigan staff explore somatics at Black Intensive Groundwork

In the summer of 2024, LaWanda Hollister, Statewide Organizer with the AFSC Michigan Criminal Justice Program, traveled to Florida to [take part](#) in BIG (Black Intensive Groundwork) training led by the [Mass Liberation Network](#). As Mass Lib writes, "We cultivated Black joy and then we got to work... centered in our dignity, to liberate our people. Most systems take away our safety, belonging and dignity. Our work is to reclaim that from the inside out."

In the summer of 2025, LaWanda returned to BIG with her colleague, Barbara Gunn Lartey, AFSC St. Louis Program Director. At a recent Midwest Region staff gathering, LaWanda and Barbara shared their experiences. Read [more](#).

The St. Louis Peacebuilding Program continues to advance its youth-centered, intergenerational vision through its *Pulse Check Experiences: Beyond the Bell*. The effort engaged community members in a survey and focus group that revealed urgent priorities. As a result, organizations including the YWCA, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, and the Freedom Community Center have asked to partner with AFSC, extending AFSC's work into areas such as restorative justice and tornado relief.

At Vashon High School, nearly 600 students accessed the Peer Mediation Peace Room, and the school has requested AFSC continue the program. AFSC also shared this vision nationally at the [Forward Through Ferguson Summit](#), where youth and elders co-led a circle to resist systemic harm.



Midwest staff gather in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

Michigan Criminal Justice Program hosts Midwest staff program share

In September, AFSC staff from throughout the Midwest [gathered](#) in Ypsilanti, Michigan for a time to learn more about somatics, share about their programs, and consider more ways to work together. One of the highlights was visiting [We The People Opportunity Farm](#). The beautiful farm is an AFSC partner "dedicated to breaking the cycle of incarceration by providing formerly incarcerated individuals with paid internships, workforce development, and a supportive community."



AFSC Iowa alums and current staff reunite in Des Moines.

Iowa updates

AFSC alums with Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice recently hosted their annual meeting and talent show in Des Moines. The vibrant sharing of cultures emphasized the resilience and unity of our community. Here's the latest [Resistance Update](#) from MMJ....The AFSC Midwest Region co-sponsored the annual [International Day of Peace](#) celebration in Des Moines. Brian Campbell of Physicians for Social Responsibility gave the keynote. AFSC alum Eloise Cranke offered an opening prayer.

Short takes

Here's AFSC's [statement on the Gaza ceasefire](#)....Children in Gaza [reclaim](#) the right to learn....[Tell Congress](#) to stop illegal military airstrikes in the Caribbean....Check out AFSC's [guide to protesting](#) ahead of the No Kings mobilizations on Oct. 18....Mary Zerkel of AFSC shares why [mutual aid networks](#) are one good way we can support each other while building community power to create lasting change.

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AFSC Mission Statement: *Guided by the Quaker belief in the divine light of each person, AFSC works with people of all faiths and backgrounds to challenge unjust systems and promote lasting peace.*