AFSC Midwest Digest – November 2026

Stories of work from around the region



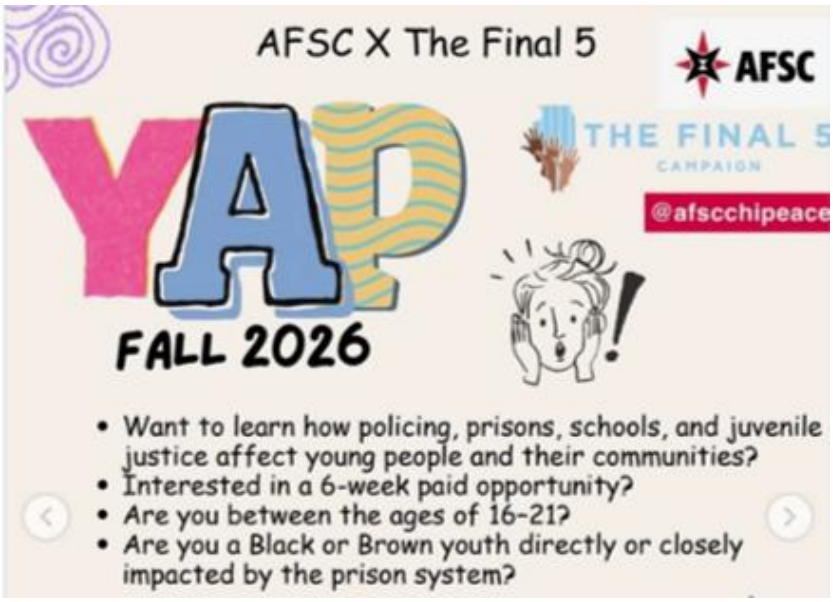
AFSC St. Louis staff and friends with the Embodied Liberators cohort (Photo: Jazmine Starks)

St. Louis cohort of Embodied Liberators build transformation and healing

In their latest AFSC St. Louis newsletter, Barbara Gunn Lartey and Alex Jones celebrate AFSC's inaugural Embodied Liberation cohort with Rooted + Rising: A Celebration of Strengths, Purpose & Collective Action. This commissioning ceremony honored the cohort's journey and affirmed their charge: to carry the practices of embodied liberation forward -- in their bodies, relationships, communities, and work toward liberation.

Our newly commissioned Embodied Liberators are now developing a shared project that puts their collective strengths into action. Looking toward spring, they are exploring an event -- or series of events -- focused on strengthening young people's agency and capacity for collective action.

We invite you to learn more about Embodied Liberation: Movement, Healing & Intergenerational Impact and the journey that brought us to this moment. And check out our Black August Weekend, welcoming the Embodied Liberators, friends and families to celebrate Black revolutionaries and activists who resisted the carceral state.



Chicago updates: Youth Action Program and Treatment Not Trauma wins

Destiny Harris, Chi Peace Program Associate (at right), reports that this year's youth programming is focused on the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and the juvenile justice complex.



Chi Peace is collaborating with the Final 5 Campaign. Their work centers youth who are currently or formerly incarcerated as they seek to close the final five youth prisons in Illinois. Alicia Brown, a former Chi Peace Michael McConnell Fellow, continues work with Final 5 as one of their main organizers. We look forward to working closely with Alicia.

asia smith, Chi Peace Program Director, shares about big wins for mental health care in Chicago. AFSC and our partners in the Treatment Not Trauma campaign have seen two important wins recently. The first involves the expansion of the Mobile Crisis Response Teams – or care vans -- from pilot projects in certain wards to citywide. They now can operate across the city. If someone sees someone else in crisis, they can call and have a van respond.

We also won expanded care program hours, more than doubling the care vans' hours, now 8 am to 10 pm. Mental health crises can happen at any hour. We're hoping to expand to 24 hours but need to organize more and overcome some barriers to win that funding.

Stay tuned for more exciting news – and save December 13 on your calendar for the premiere of our new anti-militarism video!



From left, AFSC staff and partners Megan Engel, Quiana Lovett, Jacara Moore, Shavonne Davis, and her wife, Moon, attend the "Open the Cage: Dedicated Night to Incarcerated Queer & Trans Family" event at the Affirmations LGBTQ+ Community Center. Jacara spoke at the event. (Photo: AFSC Michigan)

AFSC Michigan builds on work supporting women coming out of prison

The AFSC Michigan Criminal Justice Program is working to provide safety, support, and resources for women coming home from prison. We are so grateful for the love and solidarity we have received from the community all along this journey.

We are proud to share about three remarkable women who've "come home" recently and are working with AFSC to liberate and support others.

Jacara Moore serves as the Associate Director of the AFSC Michigan Criminal Justice Program, guiding statewide efforts to confront the crisis of long and life sentences. She contributes essential insights shaped by her lived experience. Her rich background strengthens her leadership while fueling her deep commitment to justice.

Shavonne Davis came home this fall after 24 years in prison and is now working as a fellow with AFSC Michigan. While incarcerated, Shavonne put together a proposal entitled "Transitions to Success" that addressed different areas individuals like her needed to be comfortable in reentering society.

Quiana Lovett served 16 years in prison and recently came home. She's also a fellow working with AFSC Michigan. In September, she spoke at her first Survivors Justice Act (SJA) conference about critically needed legislation which AFSC Michigan is developing along with several partners.



Eloise Cranke, left, retired as an AFSC Regional Director in 2001 but keeps going strong. Above she joins Jan Corderman of WILPF at a rally outside the Federal Building in Des Moines. (photo: AFSC)

How we can organize for real change

The midterm elections shifted the political landscape, and a new Congress takes office in January. Voters sent a strong message. They want leaders who will protect healthcare, stand up against ICE abuses, and end the war with Iran.

That's cause for hope. But turning that message into real change will take organized communities pushing for it. What do our communities need now, and how should we engage with lawmakers to get there?

In this article, Mary Zerkel, Regional Director of the Midwest Region, explains how we can come together to understand this moment and find opportunities for change.

Be sure to join us on Tuesday, November 17 at 7 pm CT for the next Protect, Resist, and Build webinar. We'll explore these ideas and share tools you can use to continue the conversation in your community. Together, we can resist authoritarianism in peace and solidarity – and build the better world we envision for all. Register now.

More opportunities for action

- Tell Congress: End the war with Iran
- Tell Congress: Restore funding for Medicaid and SNAP
- Donate to support Gaza Emergency Response

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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.*