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Maine Walk for Peace on Midcoast

By Dagney C. Ernest | Oct 14, 2015



Photo by: Dagney C. Ernest

Participants in the 2015 Maine Walk for Peace gather in the parking lot of Rockland's First Universalist Church before heading south Oct. 14.

For the fourth time in recent years, Maine Veterans for Peace is walking through the state, passing through the Midcoast Oct. 11, 12, 13 and 14 on the 175-mile trek from Ellsworth to Portsmouth, N.H.

This year's Maine Walk for Peace is focused on raising awareness of the Pentagon's impact on the world's oceans, with a special emphasis on the Navy's use of sonar, offshore weapons testing and the under-construction base on South Korea's Jeju Island. But the walkers have more local sites in mind, as well; as part of their walk, they plan to deliver a letter to Frederick Harris, president of Bath Iron Works and General Dynamics NASSCO.

That task lay ahead of them when they passed through the Midcoast, spending the night of Oct. 11 in Belfast; Columbus Day in Camden; and Oct. 13 in Rockland. At each evening stop, the walkers, organized by Maine

VFP Secretary Bruce Gagnon, enjoyed a potluck meal and shared their mission before heading home with community members or bedding down in a host space: First Church UCC in Belfast; Our Lady of Good Hope Catholic Church in Camden; and First Universalist Church in Rockland.

In the Rockland church's basement meeting hall, the Oct. 13 program featured opening remarks by Tarak Kauff, up from New York state to be in the walk; a reading of the BIW letter by Morgana Warner Evans of West Bath, spending her fall break from her senior year at college to join the Peace Walk for the third time; a reading by Boston-area poet and Gulf War vet Eric Wasileski; and a guitar-accompanied performance of Morrissey's "In Mexico" by Jason Rawn of Hope, who has been part of the protests at Jeju.

The group stepped out at 9 a.m. sharp Oct. 14, heading for Damariscotta and a night at the Friends Meeting House. Driving ahead of them is a van decorated with a colorful "Demilitarize Our Oceans!" banner and topped with dolphin sculpture with peaceful protest history, having gone cross-country in a cart with Greenpeace. Both were created by Hancock artist Russell Wray, who is among the walkers.

The group will be joined in Freeport by a member of the Nipponzan Myohoji order of Buddhist monks and nuns, who regularly lead the non-violent action. In addition to local support by hosts such as the Midcoast Peace and Justice Group, Maine Walk for Peace is sponsored by Maine Veterans for Peace, PeaceWorks, CodePink Maine, Citizens Opposing Active Sonar Threats, Peace Action Maine, the Boston-area Veterans for Peace Smedley Butler Brigade, Portsmouth's Seacoast Peace Response and the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space.

The peace walk, which began Oct. 9, will conclude Saturday, Oct. 24, in Portsmouth. It is along Route 1 and the public is invited and encouraged to join in for any portion. For schedule and more information, visit vfpmaine.org.



A potluck supper is welcome after a day of walking through pouring rain Oct. 13. The Rockland supper was provided by members of the Midcoast Peace and Justice Group. (Photo by: Dagny C. Ernest)



Jason Rawn demonstrates how he and others sit in protest on the building site of a new naval base on South Korea's Jeju Island. (Photo by: Dagney C. Ernest)



Young Morgana Warner Evans has taken part in the Maine Walk for Peace for three consecutive years. (Photo by: Dagney C. Ernest)



Bruce Gagnon updates the Maine Walk for Peace participants Oct. 14 in the parking lot of Rockland's First Universalist Church. (Photo by: Dagney C. Ernest)



The Maine Walk for Peace heads for Route 1 in Rockland to start another day of walking Oct. 14. (Photo by: Dagney C. Ernest)