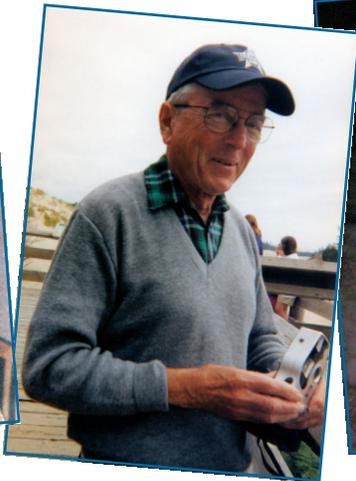
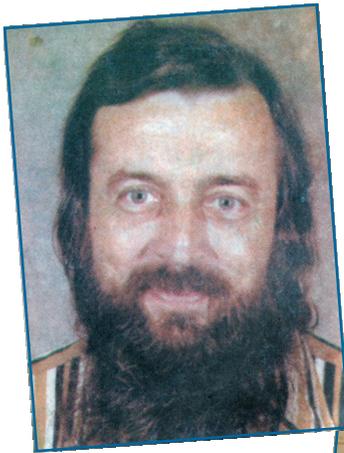




A life dedicated to faith, justice and peace

OCC to recognize Father John Vrana with First Annual Mertens Peace Award



Father John Vrana, an Oklahoma native who became a Catholic priest and took controversial public stands on civil rights and war, will be the recipient of the first annual Mertens Peace Award presented by the Oklahoma Center for Conscience.

On Saturday, April 2, The Oklahoma Center for Conscience will present the first annual Mertens Peace Award to Father John Vrana, at a ceremony at Mayflower UCC Church. A native of Oklahoma City who lived and worked here most of his life, Father Vrana was a local diocesan priest who took a public and sometimes controversial role in seeking racial justice, ending war and promoting nonviolence during the years of the civil rights struggle and Vietnam war.

The ceremony will be part of an OCC fundraiser to which the public is invited. Festivities begin at 7pm and the evening will close with a concert of peace songs from local singer/

songwriter Peggy Johnson. The event is free, but donations will be gratefully accepted at the door. Beverages and light refreshments will be offered. Mayflower UCC is located at 3901 Northwest 63rd Street in Oklahoma City.

Father Vrana was nominated for the award by Marianne Mertens, as someone whom she felt should be recognized for his long commitment to peace and his courage to take moral but unpopular stands. Marianne and her husband Art, who passed away last year, were founding members of OCC.

Rena Guay, OCC's Executive Director, said that "the Mertens embody the

kind of selfless service to grassroots peace and justice causes that we seek to honor with our award, so it is fitting that it carry their name. Their actions over their lives and the people they have helped and inspired are their legacy, a legacy which we hope to

Continued on page 2

Inside This Issue

- **Mayflower Church** becomes newest OCC sponsor
- **War Resisters League** comes to Oklahoma
- **GI Rights Hotline Training** soon! Register now.
- **Bradley Manning** update

War Resisters League comes to Oklahoma

OCC became an affiliate of the War Resisters League in 2010. What does this mean for OCC's future work and for WRL members in the state?

In the spring of 2010, OCC made the decision to see affiliation with the War Resisters League, a well known and respected organization based in New York City.

We believe this will help OCC with spreading our message about war in Oklahoma, and outreaching to those who know of WRL but don't yet know of OCC. We believe it can also help WRL made connections here.

"Our values and philosophy certainly relate well to the League's long record of action and services on issues relating to war," said Rena Guay, OCC's Executive Director. "We've been using WRL literature, reading their excellent magazine, *WIN*, and following their lead in many ways, in opposing war, resisting aggressive recruitment tactics and the general heightening militarization of our culture. Many of us have been members individually, so it was a natural progression to affiliate."

We will be reaching out to WRL members who are not already OCC members and asking them to consider supporting our work close to home as they continue to support WRL. Current OCC members are encouraged to join WRL to take advantage of their outstanding resources and web site.

(Continued from page 1)

echo each year when we present it to a deserving individual or group."

"By recognizing the peace leaders of our past, we hope to inspire a new generation to follow in their footsteps, and so we build on their history and create a more just and peaceful future for all," she said. "Father Vrana is such an individual and we are proud to be able to present him with the first annual Mertens Peace Award."

Father Vrona is currently residing at St. Ann's Nursing Home, where he is visited by those whose lives he touched through his many years of service. Because of his poor health, he will not be able to attend the ceremony; his award will be accepted by Marianne Mertens.



This being tax season, be sure to check out WRL's annual federal tax chart showing very clearly "where your tax money really

goes." It can be downloaded online in color or black and white, as well as in a Spanish language version.

We were honored to be asked to submit a local report for the winter 2011 issue of *WIN* and that article can be read online.

Membership in WRL includes a subscription to *WIN*.

LINKS

WIN, Winter 2011: <http://www.warresisters.org/node/1125>

Local report article: <http://www.warresisters.org/node/1139>

WRL Tax Pie Chart: <http://www.warresisters.org/federalpiechart>

Those wishing to donate to OCC in honor of Art Mertens or Father John Vrana can send a check or money order to: Oklahoma Center for Conscience, 504 NE 16th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73104.

Records and award event reports to be online

After the event, OCC will publish the news records and photos they have collected about Father Vrana, along with video and photos from the award event. on their web site, beginning a new section dedicated to the Mertens award and its recipients. Visit centerforconscience.org/mertensaward.

Nominations for the 2012 award can be made on the web site. The nominee should be someone who has contributed significantly to promoting peace and nonviolence in Oklahoma.

GI Rights Hotline Training to be offered in 2011

We will be offering a training workshop for new volunteers who would like to explore the opportunity to work on our Oklahoma GI Rights Hotline project. The date has not been set as of this writing, but we expect it to be late spring or early summer..

In Oklahoma we fortunate to have our very own trainer at hand. James M. Branum, OCC's GI Rights Hotline advising attorney, has traveled across the country to conduct training workshops for other hotline groups. His most recent workshop was at the Under the Hood GI Rights Coffeehouse in Killeen Texas. He will likely be joined by another female trainer who will round out the issues covered.

Most GI Rights counseling is done by phone from calls to our dedicated hotline number (405-231-1138), but other means of contact, including email, are being developed by the national GI Rights Network, which oversees a standard of care within the network of local groups.

SUPPORT THE TROOPS!
Become a GI Rights counselor
Sign up for the next training in Oklahoma
 More info online at
okgirightshotline.org
 or call Rena 405-598-7362

The training includes a section on non-directive counseling, the types of military discharges, and the most common problems that callers seek help with, including harassment, discrimination and medical concerns. The training is free and upon completion, volunteers can apply to work the hotline.



Mayflower Congregational UCC becomes OCC sponsor

We are thrilled to report that we have a new sponsor to add to our list of organizations funding and supporting the work of OCC.

Mayflower is well known in Oklahoma City, indeed across the state and beyond, due to the prominent voice of its senior pastor, Robin Meyers, whose sermons, speeches and writings have struck a chord with progressive Christians.

We are grateful to Mayflower member Kenneth Meador, who facilitated the sponsorship. Kenneth, who is a veteran of three tours in Iraq and is now a student at OCC, has become a valued member of OCC's steering committee, and a frequent participant in our vigils and other actions, including this year's OKC Martin Luther King Day Parade.

Book Exposes the Truth About War

In his latest book activist and author David Swanson goes through the history of US wars to provide a comprehensive overview of the hype, distortions, exaggerations and outright lies behind them. It's available from his site, warisalie.org for \$20 each, but OCC has copies for sale for only \$10. We recommend it for peace activists, and at the low price, we suggest getting one for a friend. Limited number available, first come first serve.



We had a great group of marchers to represent OCC in the 2011 OKC Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Parade. Our signs and banners showcased quotes from Dr. King about war and peace. Our intern from last fall, Danielle, guided the less crafty in making the banners, and Richard's peace-bedecked tricycle was a huge hit with the crowds.



Oklahoma Center for Conscience

504 NE 16th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73104

Phone: 405-771-4743
Press: 405-615-2700
GI Rights Hotline: 405-231-1138
E-mail: info@centerforconscience.org
Web: centerforconscience.org
facebook.com/centerforconscience

We ask you to think about war.



Bits & Peaces

Bradley Manning Update

We are increasingly concerned about the physical and emotional wellbeing of Bradley Manning, the Oklahoma native being held at Quantico.

He has now been charged with 22 additional charges in the Wikileaks case, including the capital offense charge of aiding the enemy under UCMJ Arti-

cle 104. This charge could result in the death penalty.

Unofficial reports of Manning's treatment -- extended solitary and forced nudity among them -- have sparked serious questions from congress members, international diplomats, Amnesty International and others.

In Oklahoma we have held demon-

strations, contacted officials and sent cards and prayers.

We continue to get media inquiries from around the world as the Oklahoma connection is made.

Any actions planned will be announced on our web site and listserv.

See bradleymanning.org for current news.

OCC was founded in 2004 and is sponsored by Joy Mennonite Church, Mayflower UCC, and the Oklahoma City Religious Society of Friends.

OCC is funded by our sponsors and through community donations. We need your support.

The Peace Post is published three times a year. Subscriptions are free but donations to cover publication and distribution costs are welcomed.

Support our work

You can mail donations to us at:

OCC, 504 NE 16th Street,
Oklahoma City, OK 73104

Donations are tax deductible.

Thank you!