

Community

Peace group sponsors event to celebrate Gandhi's life

By Hon Walker
Emerald Associate Editor

Mohandas K. (Mahatma) Gandhi, born 120 years ago today, will be honored with a birthday celebration at 7 p.m. upstairs at the Eugene Public Library, 100 W. 13th Ave.

Bhavani Manheim, Gandhi scholar and University faculty member in the anthropology department, will discuss the human side of the Indian political and spiritual leader.

The party is sponsored by the World Peace University (WPU), an organization which relocated to Springfield from Portland last year.

The group is launching a fundraising campaign in hopes of creating an international research library for peace studies. The library will be located in Eugene and will feature 27,000 volumes of Gandhi's works, the largest collection anywhere, said Richard Schneider, WPU chief executive officer.

"Eugene is one of the most progressive communities in the Northwest," Schneider said. "It has the kind of public attitude we felt was necessary for what we are trying to do."

Four areas of concern to WPU are peace education, food efficiency, ecology and social justice. For two years the group has operated Radio Peace International, a short-wave station which broadcasts from outside San Jose, Costa Rica.

Though the WPU is not an accredited university, and certainly not traditional, it is a nonprofit group dedicated to

educating the global community, Schneider said.

"'University' is a generic term we use so we can be recognized for what we're trying to do by the rest of the world," he said.

By January, Schneider said he hopes to start an internship program for students from third world nations. Currently the WPU employs three full-time staff members.

Schneider has been involved with the WPU since its establishment five years ago. He has worked extensively with the Oregon Department of Human Resources in addition to years of social work in several nations.

An international advisory board oversees the WPU, consisting of 20 members from nations including the United States, Costa Rica and the Soviet Union.

Although University students have attended WPU-sponsored workshops in the past, none belong to the 12-member local board, which is a situation Schneider would like to change. "We'd like to see University students on the board," he said.

Manheim is a member of the local board, and her speech at tonight's event will focus on the personal aspect of Gandhi's life. "It will deal with Gandhi as a person rather than a political figure," she said.

Gandhi's birthday party will feature free cake and refreshments, as well as "food for thought," Schneider said.

All this and much more.....

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