

FAITH IN ACTION

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up. Do you not perceive it? — Isaiah 43:19 (a)

From left: Cheryl Lehmann, former teacher at the former Hopi Mission School (now Peace Academic Center) in Kykotsmovi, Arizona, reunites with former students Susan Sekaquaptewa, Lance Polingyouma, and David Sekavayma during a Mission Network-sponsored alumni service-learning tour. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson.

Hopi Community hub reaching next generations

By Laurie Oswald Robinson

Four-year-old Kamryn sang with his preschool classmates at Peace Academic Center during a concert last November on the Hopi Reservation in Kykotsmovi, Arizona. When he saw his mother, Yvonne Kaye, blowing him kisses, he stopped singing, wildly waved his joy, and blew kisses back to her. The strong tug of love between them pulled audience members into its charm as they smiled in response.

The audience included Mennonite Mission Network's alumni service-learning tour participants. They came to witness how the newly developing center is serving preschool and kindergarten students and running a GED program. The center also provides family-oriented activities in the evenings and weekend conferences on topics such as dryland farming.

The center, a re-envisioned partnership of Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and Mennonite Education Agency with the Hopi people that opened in summer 2018, is repurposing space formerly known as Hopi Mission School. The center has become a hub for Kamryn's family — including his father, David Sekavayma; big brother, Shawn; and little sister, Calie. Kamryn is part of a third generation to benefit from educational opportunities forged through partnership with Mennonites. Yvonne's mother and some of her aunts and uncles attended the school, and David attended the school for his seventh-grade year.

Relationships between the Hopi

people and Mennonites began long before the former K-8 school was built in 1951. In 1893, H. R. Voth was the first mission worker with the former General Conference Mennonite Church who came to the reservation. To avoid sending their children to faraway boarding schools that often stripped the children of their indigenous identities, the Hopi people asked the Mennonites to build a

day school. (At the time, there was only one other grade school there. Today, there are five.)

Former Hopi Mission School graduate Lance Polingyouma, cultural liaison for the new center, believes the invitation was extended because Hopi people and Mennonites share some of the same values — including pacifism and strong commitments to family and morals. His mother, Jane Polingyouma, a former school principal, agreed. "The Mennonites were different from some of the other missionaries who came here," she said. "In some important ways, they were more like us."

After decades of trust building, the former school was closed several years ago due to embezzlement by a former principal, neither Hopi nor Mennonite. Today, a resurrected vision for strengthening educational and community life on the reservation is nurturing new generations of Hopi families, Kamryn's parents said.

"My mother supported us sending Kamryn to Peace Academic Center because of her own positive experience at the former school," Yvonne said. "We are glad we did. Because of the small class size, he is getting so much more one-to-one attention than he would have at a bigger school in the area."

David said he feels safe in entrusting his son to the center because "I received a great education in seventh grade — strong values, one-to-one attention, and a lot of music exposure. Kamryn is receiving the same." ■

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David Sekavayma, Yvonne Kaye, and their children, Shawn, Kamryn, and Calie, at the Peace Academic Center.

Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

5 ways to partner with Peace Academic Center

Center leaders Lance Polingyouma, cultural liaison, and Kay Neff, administrator, invite you and/or your congregation to help Peace Academic Center to serve new generations of Hopi families. Here's how you can help at the center located on the Hopi Reservation in Kykotsmovi, Arizona:

1. Become one of 10 congregations of Mennonite Church USA to partner in fundraising for the center.

The process begins with inviting Polingyouma and/or Neff to share stories about the repurposing of

the former Hopi Mission School into Peace Academic Center. Call 928-326-0295 or 316-281-4400 to schedule a visit by them to your congregation, or a tour by you and/or your congregation to the center.

2. Serve at the center as a short- or long-term volunteer with SOOP

(Service Opportunities with Our Partners), one of Mennonite Mission Network's Christian Service programs that provides opportunities for individuals of all ages and for families. Contact Arloa Bontrager, SOOP director,

for more information at ArloaB@MennoniteMission.net, or call 1-866-866-2872. Also visit www.MennoniteMission.net/SOOP.

3. Serve as a center volunteer teacher for pre-K through second-grade classes (six to nine months).

4. Serve as a center volunteer cook/light maintenance worker (six to nine months).

5. Serve as a center volunteer skilled worker for doing building and plumbing repairs. A glazier would be ideal, because the center has many broken windows. ■

Cut out or fold over, post, and use this verse for contemplation and prayer over the next month.

SEE

I am
making
**ALL
THINGS**
new.

—Revelation 21:5

Be the Gospel.



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www.MennoniteMission.net
Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872