

# PATCHOGUE'S LEGACY OF PEACE



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The Greater Patchogue community prides itself on its ongoing efforts to create an inclusive community that fosters peace by encouraging and inspiring understanding, goodwill, and compassionate actions. Our long history of inspired collaboration among our residents, institutions, schools, local government, businesses, and organizations reveals our dedication and commitment to establishing an enduring culture of peace.

## Organizations and Institutions as the Cornerstones for Peace Building

The nationally recognized Patchogue-Medford Library has long served the community through innovative and engaging outreach. Through workshops and programming, it's provided powerful opportunities to examine racism on Long Island, identify and intervene in domestic abuse, initiate civil discourse amidst polarizing times, and much more. The library educates and inspires all ages to spread peace through innovative events such as virtual peace circles, mediation trainings, and open mic nights featuring songs of peace. It builds goodwill and engagement through a broad range of events and activities such as:



- Volunteer Fairs
- Voter Registration Drives
- Cleanups of Patchogue River, local parks, and historical cemeteries
- Planting in the community garden
- Creating care packages for active-duty military, senior citizens, healthcare workers, mothers in need, and even animals in local shelters

Located in a diverse community with a large immigrant population, the Patchogue-Medford library has created a safe and welcoming environment for all. These efforts were honored with the 2010 National Medal for Museum and Library Service at the White House during which First Lady Michelle Obama gave the award for its work in bilingual education.



Patchogue-Medford Youth & Community Services (PMYCS) also does tremendous work to enhance the quality of life for local families through outreach, recreation, counseling, and support services. By providing programs and services to all those in need, PMYCS is committed to promoting peace, equality, diversity, and inclusion in a variety of ways and settings. Their Project Strive, Suite 5, and Youth Council programs all include education on conflict resolution, anti-bullying, healthy relationships, diversity and anti-violence. PMYCS seeks to educate youth at an early age to ensure that they have the

tools necessary for managing crisis and embracing diversity. Some projects include: Kindness Matters campaigns; Anti-bullying poster projects; and Inter-school PenPal project. Patchogue-Medford Youth & Community Services also seeks to engage youth in a variety of service projects that involve giving back to the community in diverse ways, including participating in a Peace Pole project.



Another pride of Patchogue is St. Joseph's College. Founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph, their mission statement includes a commitment to peace, justice, and non-violence -- and those values pervade the ethos of the college. The Religious Studies Department offers a minor in Peace and Justice Studies and they have planted two peace poles on campus. Each year the college's Institute for the Study of Religion in Community Life hosts a Kristallnacht lecture and dinner for the community to foster awareness of the Holocaust. The college also presents the *Esse non videri* (the motto of the college, "To be and not to seem") awarded to someone who has lived an exemplary life of commitment to peace and justice.

SEPA Mujer, Inc (Services for the Advancement of Women), is a Patchogue-based grassroots not-for-profit organization dedicated to the empowerment of Latina immigrant women and girls through education, advocacy, legal rights and leadership skills training, victim's services and community organizing. The organization was formed in 1993 by Long Island women, both immigrants and advocates, in response to the need for Latina immigrant women to become educated and organized to improve their condition as one of the most vulnerable groups on Long Island and in the country. SEPA Mujer focuses its legal services on relief for immigrant survivors of violence, and provides free legal representation, hotline, case management, counseling, and referrals to support victimized immigrant communities in safely leaving abusive relationships. SEPA Mujer was the first and remains the only organization dedicated to providing not just legal assistance, but education, leadership development, and simple friendship and emotional safety to immigrant women in the region. It strives to nurture and improve the self-esteem, physical and emotional security, economic independence, and civic engagement of their members and all Latina immigrant women on Long Island. For 28 years, SEPA Mujer has worked to unite community members and advocates to push for change, speak out against injustice, access services, and take a stand against violence against women and the immigrant community. SEPA Mujer works both with individuals – through legal representation and a variety of community education programs and in partnership with organizations through service referrals and coalition-based advocacy campaigns.

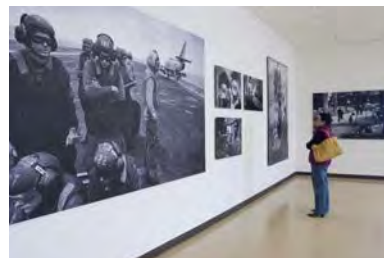


There are many organizations working to promote understanding, inclusivity, nonviolence and compassion in Patchogue, including the Rotary, Lions Club, Kiwanis, Greater Patchogue COAD, Federations of Organizations, and various faith-based groups and food pantries. Their tireless efforts throughout the community define who we are as peacebuilders and demonstrate that Patchogue is a city of peace.

## Peacebuilding as a Work of Arts

Patchogue is home to a vibrant grassroots arts community that continuously plays a vital role in promoting a culture of peace.

The Patchogue Arts Council was founded in 2008 with a mission of bringing a wide variety of sometimes challenging art to an audience unfamiliar with contemporary art forms. Through exhibitions, originally staged throughout and involving community partners, PAC promoted the values of art to a large swath of central Long Island. The community responded and in the early years PAC was run entirely by volunteers, receiving most of its funding from local citizens and businesses. During that period, PAC engaged the community with “Walking Tours” throughout its downtown and developed a partnership with the Patchogue Theater for the Performing Arts in which it created its first gallery. It also mounted three major exhibitions in a hall donated by Briarcliffe College, one featuring a retrospective of photojournalist Phillip Jones Griffiths war time images taken in Vietnam, Northern Ireland and other countries ravaged by war.



PAC opened its first independent gallery in 2013 featuring exhibitions that often revealed the multidimensional truths of people to help audiences to understand one another and themselves. The 2014 exhibition, Remembering Things Past, featured artists all born outside the US, notably placing the work of a woman who once served in the Israeli army next to another who after fleeing Beirut returned to find her family home damaged by bombing. The 2015 exhibition The Other America brought together artists from South and Central America, the Caribbean, as well as Native Americans. In 2016 PAC offered its gallery to African American artist Robert Carter whose exhibition glorified the powerful matriarchs who served as such a source of strength for those living in the Old South. Later that year PAC hosted an Anonymous exhibit featuring artist representations of those whose voices were silenced. The year 2018 was given over to theme E Pluribus Unum which included the creation of a mural and a series of concerts combining local and world music. One of the exhibitions, Varieties of Experience, featured the works of African American artists from across a sixty-year age spectrum. The exhibition included Faith Ringgold’s Tar Beach and Mac Arthur fellow Emma Amos among others whose art portrayed their experiences of living as a minority in our country.



Patchogue Arts Council Gallery • 20 Terry Street, Patchogue, NY 11772

For over five years, the Patchogue Arts Council also partnered with Herstory Writers Workshop to host a weekly social justice memoir writing workshop. By giving voice to the hidden communities on Long Island, the initiative helped to cultivate empathy and a deeper understanding of the challenges confronting them. The writings from these workshops were featured in several public readings, including in Freedom Forums hosted at the local public library and Stony Brook University.

The Patchogue Art Council Gallery recently became the Museum of Contemporary Art, Long Island and continued its progressive programming while giving voice to various underserved communities. For example, the 2021 exhibition, Illuminated, shed light on Gender Identity. PAC/MoCALI is planning ahead with exhibitions for 2022 survey artists of Asian heritage and a 2023 survey of the Latinx community.



The Plaza Media Arts Center, established in 2011, is a single-screen cinema and media arts center with 70 seats. As a community supported not-for-profit, The Plaza's mission is to celebrate the power and magic of film as an art form and as a medium for multicultural exchange and social responsibility by:

- Screening quality mainstream, independent, foreign films, operas, and plays captured live from world stages
- Presenting series and festivals with guest speakers
- Offering field trips, classes, and workshops in filmmaking and animation
- Contributing to the economic and cultural development of the community

At the heart of The Plaza's enthusiasm, vision, and commitment to the community is creating inspiring, thought-provoking, and interactive film and media arts programming that focuses on engaging and nurturing a diverse audience, people of all ages and backgrounds. Documentaries highlight environmental, social, humanitarian, and current affairs. Guest speakers facilitate and navigate informative discussions while providing in-depth commentary and insight into a broad range of topics creating a safe forum for public discourse.



In addition to school field trips, and out-of-school classes in animation and filmmaking, The Plaza works with educators to incorporate Media and News literacy skills. Kids today are exposed to complex media messages from a very young age. By incorporating vital ideas and materials in classroom lessons, teachers are in a particularly pivotal position to help advocate for healthy media consumption, breaking down hateful and denigrating stereotypes and barriers between people.

Another organization, Worldwide Voices, was founded in 2005 to strengthen and unify communities through arts and media programs that facilitate collaboration by diverse groups and individuals. This innovative organization develops songwriting workshops, original musical plays, and multicultural/multilingual events with diverse Long Island populations. In Patchogue, they created and shared theatrical and artistic programs such as:



“Artspace Celebrates Unity” – a presentation of musical performances at Artspace Patchogue Lofts, and at Patchogue Theatre for the Performing Arts  
 “Welcome Home/Bienvenido a casa” – a bilingual language-learning new musical  
 “Long Island Families: A Multicultural Musical” – a celebration of the many cultures and languages of our communities

Worldwide Voices continues to sponsor unique opportunities for all ages to experience new languages and cultures as they work together to create public presentations for theaters, galleries, schools, libraries, and community centers.

## A History of Standing Up for Peace

Over the years, the Patchogue community has repeatedly united to reject hate and celebrate the diverse colors and creeds that make up the community.

In November of 2008, the hate crime killing of Marcelo Lucero sent waves of shock and disbelief through the Village of Patchogue. Less than a week after Marcelo’s death at the hands of seven teens who were out for a night of “beaner hunting,” the first of many candlelight vigils was held near the spot where Marcelo was beaten and fatally stabbed. The outdoor gathering drew hundreds of mourners from the Latino and non-Latino communities, young and old – including speakers from various faith traditions, village officials, and Marcelo’s younger brother, Joselo. On that night, Joselo implored us to cast aside our anger and work to awaken others to the rash of hate crimes that had been committed against Hispanic immigrants in Suffolk County.



The following December, musician/songwriter Jack Licitra and many volunteers staged an event in Patchogue called “An Evening for Marcelo’s Mom.” The program featured a candlelight procession for peace along Main Street, concerts at two separate Patchogue locations, stories, poetry, and art. The purpose was two-fold: to raise money to fly Marcelo’s mother Rosario from Ecuador to Long Island; and to foster a spirit of unity among people of all races and backgrounds, documented and undocumented. People from within and outside the Village filled the Congregational Church of Patchogue and Blue Point Brewery vowing to fulfill Joselo’s wish that no other family should suffer as had his.



Over the next ten years, anniversary vigils took place at churches and other venues in Patchogue on or about November 8, 2008, the date Marcelo died. Each year attendees marched to what became known as Marcelo’s Memorial, the spot where he succumbed to his wounds. There, people spread flowers,

offered songs and prayers, and released biodegradable peace dove balloons. From the start, “Culture of Peace and Hope” was the theme for the vigils, expressing the Lucero family’s deep desire that the Patchogue community not only remember Marcelo’s slaying but continue efforts to establish respect and understanding between the diverse groups of people who reside within its borders. At every vigil, banners from the traveling exhibit, “Embracing our Differences,” – sponsored by Suffolk Center on the Holocaust, Diversity & Human Understanding (now known as The Center for Social Justice and Human Understanding, housed at Suffolk Community College Ammerman Campus) – were displayed, including one in memory of Marcelo.

Joselo and his family went on to establish the Marcelo Lucero Award at Patchogue-Medford High School. The award recognized a student-created short video that shows the importance of nonviolence and anti-bullying behavior and promotes respect for differences, human rights and/or fostering community-building both in and out of school. Recipients of the local Award were announced at the annual vigils. Joselo also established The Marcelo Lucero Award as part of the yearly United Nations Plural + Youth Video Festival on Migration, Diversity and Social Inclusion. Winning videos were shown during the vigils.

The Patchogue-Medford library became a place that bridged the Latino and Anglo communities, giving people a place to grieve, talk and connect. It served as a neutral space where the town’s healing process could begin. Over the ensuing year, a group of inspired women to express their desire for peace and created a quilt in triptych with the theme of “Healing Hands and Mending Hearts.” Members of the community rallied in support of the project, helping to build the quilt stand, donating towards the cost of the materials, and hosting multiple events to highlight the effort.



A local Unity Coalition organized a "Raising the Curtain on Unity" performance at the Patchogue Theatre. The coalition was formed after Lucero's death and was initiated by a host of agencies, including the New York State Division of Human Rights, local advocates, and elected officials. The goal of the free concert was to bring the community together to honor Marcelo, to celebrate its diversity, and to demonstrate a commitment to mutual respect. The sold-out event featured performances by a leading cast member of the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical In the Heights, as well as Patchogue-Medford High School students, local musicians, dancers, and actors.



An annual Play for Peace soccer tournament began as a tribute to the memory of Marcelo that brought people together through their mutual love of soccer. Throughout the day, teams that represented the diversity that exists in the Patchogue area played multiple games and were treated to a lunch afterwards where players from opposing teams sat together and celebrated the day.

Years later, after hate groups' flyers appeared multiple times in Patchogue, the community came together to make it clear that that hate was not welcome here. A Not In Our Town rally was held on a Sunday morning in November which drew people of all ages and backgrounds. Musicians, poets, and speakers joined over 200 local residents to take a stand against hatred and to demonstrate their pride in the diversity and inclusivity of the community.



In 2019, The Greater Patchogue Chamber of Commerce decided to hold its first-ever Pride celebration utilizing a Pride theme for its first Alive After Five street festival of the season. In the weeks leading up to the event, the organizers were the targets of horrific, violent, and homophobic hate mail. While they took it seriously, they were determined to carry on and host the event despite these unsettling letters. The organizers proudly honored local LGBTQ+ individuals for their vast and vitally important contributions to the Greater Patchogue Community by presenting them with certificates and speaking about their lives to those in attendance. Vendors participated by boasting pride themes and elements to their booths, and restaurants made an effort to hire LGBTQ+ artists as their musicians for the evening. The event typically generates attendance well over 10k people, and this was no exception. It was warmly received by families and adults alike.

The people of Patchogue have always pulled together in both good times and in bad and recognize that our differences enrich our community and make us stronger. Whenever confronted with division, we've risen to demonstrate our compassion and unity.

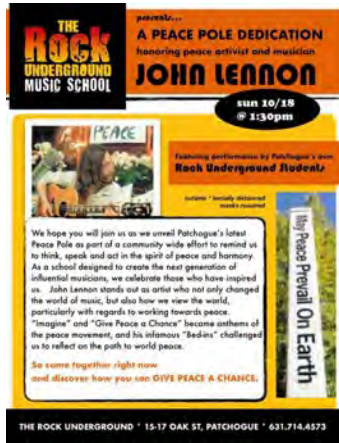


## Planting Peace in Patchogue

Patchogue is home to several peace poles, at public and private schools, St. Joseph's College, the library, music school, and many more are scheduled to go up. Many of the poles have been planted as part of the Long Island Peace Pole Project. The goal of this project, spearheaded by Pax Christi Long Island and the Rotary Clubs of Long Island, is the planting of 100 Peace Poles in 2020-2021 with involvement from local youth groups and the goal of establishing a sister network of International Cities of Peace across the island.

While each of the dedication ceremonies are unique, with a specific focus on those being honored, they all served to remind us to think,





speaking and acting in the spirit of peace and harmony. Whether it is a ceremony at the local library or rock school, they all featured speakers and music to bring people together to inspire a culture of peace. At many of the events participants shared personal messages of peace and nonviolence for future generations to consider and placed them in time capsules inside the peace poles themselves.

The Patchogue Peace Committee, launched in 2020, is comprised of partners from the library, local school, youth groups, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, and

other civic organizations who seek to promote peace into action. The goal is to initiate and support educational, advocacy and collaborative efforts that foster a culture of peace in the community. The committee is currently working on becoming the first community on Long Island to be recognized as an International City of Peace and already working on establishing a sister city network that will unite peacebuilding efforts across Long Island.

