

# Peace through Art

## Teens design, build life-size totem pole as part of SMDC Army Family Action Plan conference

By Debra Valine  
Editor, *The Eagle*

Fourteen teen delegates to the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command's Army Family Action Plan conference held July 29-Aug. 1 in Crystal City, Va., worked together to design and build a peace pole — an extension of a totem pole — that will be

displayed on the National Mall Sept. 9-11 as part of an exhibit by the International Child Art Festival.

The completed peace pole was presented to Harriet Mayor Fulbright, chairwoman of the International Child Art Festival, at the conference's closing ceremony.

Marietta Dantonio-Fryer and Richard (Rik) Fryer, founders of the non-profit agency Totem Rhythms Inc., led the art

project, with assistance from facilitator Jan Osthus-Kaplan and transcriber LaJeannia Lacey.

"This will be the first peace pole done completely by teen-agers," said Rik "Winter Bear" Fryer. The peace pole is part of the "Totem Rhythms" project.

The Fryers, who refer to the teens as art peace makers, also worked with the teen delegation at the 2002 SMDC AFAP



Photos by Debra Valine

## Peace Pole

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conference to paint a mural commemorating the Sept. 11 tragedies. The mural was presented to then-Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White and is on display at the Pentagon.

"For the past 25 years, I have been creating art programs to promote healing and creativity," said Marietta "Dream Weaver" Dantonio-Fryer, an art professor with Cheyney University of Pennsylvania. "Creativity fosters healing for anyone with issues. Those issues could be anything from child abuse to physical disabilities to the military teen-ager who is faced with moving from one place to another and making new friends."

Rik Fryer also works at Cheyney University in facilities.

The Fryers, members of the Lenapé Nation, work with indigenous cultures all over the world using the totem as a wisdom tree, to tell the stories of the people within those cultures. Their last totem pole project was for the United Nations and involved 50 indigenous cultures. That totem pole is part of the permanent collection at the United Nations in New York.

The teens worked in groups to develop sections of the peace pole. The base for

the peace pole reflects the importance of the arts.

"We are talking about music, art and theater arts," said Ashley Wheelock, a teen delegate from Houston, Texas. "We wanted to show people of different cultures holding hands. We wanted to show how art links everybody together." In the Lenapé language, this is *Elan Kumankwa* - we are all related.

"Under the people there is a little world showing that we are all part of the same world," said Jonelle Henning from Denver, Colo. "The animals depicted on the base represent the animals from a medicine wheel."

Each animal represents a characteristic of human nature and is a recurring image on the peace pole.

"Animals represent certain things about peace," said Doward Hicks, a teen delegate from Woodbridge, Va. "The otter stands for joy and sharing. The eagle stands for overcoming all problems; you can obtain peace. The deer represents gentleness; the donkey represents wisdom and humility."

Cody Jean and Justin Norris from Tennessee and Jason Buckner from Alabama, representing SMDC Huntsville, used a different set of animals to illustrate

freedom, wisdom, unity and honor.

Another symbol depicted on the peace pole - the nine-point star - symbolizes the nine gifts of the spirit: love, happiness, peace, patience, leniency, benevolence, trustworthiness, meekness and temperance.

The military message is included as well. A section of the peace pole shows images of teen-agers, hands shaking, a satellite and the SMDC unit crest. The top of the peace pole is the SMDC logo.

"The SMDC AFAP conferences are unique in that we actively engage our delegation to create artistic murals and art projects that receive national-level visibility and attention," said Portia Davidson, chief, Community and Family Support Division and coordinator of the conference. "Involving our youth in creative projects demonstrates the important role the cultural arts play in building self-esteem, promoting peer-based learning and nurturing creativity."

"We are proud to exhibit our teen delegation's totem pole as a unifying symbol in our world, bringing people together across vast cultural, social, economic and geographic divisions," Davidson said.

# Global delegates meet for SMDC Army Family Action Plan Conference

By Debra Valine  
Editor, *The Eagle*

**CRYSTAL CITY, Va.** — They came from all corners of the globe, from throughout the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, to take part in the fourth annual Army Family Action Plan Conference held July 29-Aug. 1.

Sixty-one delegates — 14 teens, 22 soldiers, 9 spouses and 16 civilian employees — discussed family issues vital to Army readiness. Groups worked through issues relating to teens, civilian personnel and well-being, medical/dental and entitlements. The top issues from this conference will be forwarded for consideration at the Department of the Army AFAP conference.

"Our family readiness groups make us proud every day," said LTG Joseph M. Cosumano Jr., SMDC commanding general during opening remarks.

"They have done amazing things. They raised money for massive care packages to send to deployed soldiers. They also supported the families left behind with such events as an Easter Egg hunt and baby-sitting. 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Shawn Price and his wife worked with their church to provide blankets to those in need in Afghanistan."

These are just examples of the outgrowth of this conference, Cosumano said. Delegates take what they learn in this conference and put it into action when they get back

to their units.

SMDC's AFAP conferences are so successful that the format is used as a model for other Army AFAP programs.

At last year's conference, SMDC's AFAP delegates developed 29 issues, 12 of which went forward to the Army-wide conference for consideration. Two of those issues were accepted as part of the Army Family Plan:

- **TRICARE Referrals and Authorization Process.** Currently the TRICARE prime patients suffering documented long-term health conditions, repeatedly see their primary care provider to get referrals for outside medical care. This process is time-consuming and inefficient. Delaying patient care adversely impacts readiness. The recommendation was to eliminate the requirement to repeatedly see a primary care provider for additional referrals for documented long-term health conditions. Enforce policy for a flexible referral system.

- **OCONUS Shipment of a Second POV for Accompanied Tours.** Current privately owned vehicle shipping options for service members during a permanent change of station are insufficient. Service members can only ship one POV OCONUS. In today's world, both the soldier and his or her spouse family member drive POVs. Soldiers must incur financial debt to purchase

another vehicle OCONUS or lease one. The recommendation was to allow soldiers to ship a second POV on OCONUS accompanied tours.

"It speaks very well for this conference," Cosumano said.

AFAP, part of the Army's push for Well-Being, has come a long way since its inception in the 1980s. It used to be said that if the Army wanted you to have a wife (spouse), you would have been issued one. That is no longer the case. Thanks in part to efforts by Army spouses, leadership recognizes that family is an equal part of the readiness equation. Well-Being is balanced readiness. Execute the mission - Take care of people.

"It is important that we stick together as an Army family," said Army Sgt. Maj. Jack Tilley. "There are roughly 380,000 soldiers deployed in 20 countries around the world."

Tilley said there are five issues that always stand out when talking about military readiness and quality of life: pay, TRICARE, housing, retirement benefits and operations tempo.

"How can we take care of families?" Tilley asked. "Do not just talk about taking care of families, do it. I think at the senior level, we are doing it. However, reality at the top may not be reality at the E-5 and below level. We have to talk, communicate and be good listeners."

Taking care of people requires cultural change. To meet the end state of well-being, "institutional needs of the Army cannot be met without meeting the needs of the people," said Col. Mike Pfenning of the Army's G-1 staff.

He suggested everyone can help effect this cultural change by "being a champion for the well-being of your people. Let us hear what is important to you. What are the priorities at your level?"

"There are a number of ways to reach out and tell us," Pfenning said. One way is through the Internet. The Web address is [www.army.mil/WellBeing/default.htm](http://www.army.mil/WellBeing/default.htm).

"This is really much more than just a conference," said Portia Davidson, chief, Community and Family Support Division, and coordinator of the SMDC conference. "It's more like a family reunion. We have such a good time. The conference encourages interaction among the 'family members' through so many different events."

The week kicks off with a welcome reception. During the week there are work group discussions, gift give-aways, exhibits to browse, professional speakers and opportunities to do some sightseeing in Washington, D.C.

The week culminated with the report out of issues that will be forwarded to Department of the Army.