

# Spiritual community stands against hate

By **LAUREN FORMOSA**

Grand Haven Tribune

Sarah Jacobs has been a lifelong advocate for peace and acceptance for all. Since moving to Grand Haven roughly five years ago, she said four of those years have been spent standing against hate within the community and raising awareness for equality.

"I marched in the '60s with my parents, and we're still dealing with the same stuff in 2023," Jacobs said. "It's been important for me my whole life. The issues now are probably worse than they were back then, so it's like you can't stop."

On Saturday, June 3, Jacobs and several other members of C3 West Michigan stood in silent solidarity on Washington Avenue during their Vigil for Peace and Justice.

For one hour at noon, the group held signs with saying such as "Peace and Justice for all" and "We Stand for Peace" while some flew Pride flags. The members held up peace signs as cars, walkers, and



Tribune photo / Lauren Formosa

**Sarah Jacobs holds sign supporting anti-hate at last week's Vigil for Peace and Justice.**

bikers passed by; a few drivers honked to show support for the vigil and one biker voiced her appreciation for their efforts.

"C3 is a spiritual community that is very open and affirming," said member Suzi Koster. "We're a questioning

community, we don't pretend to know all the answers. We believe in peace and justice, and I believe in that with all my heart."

As a community encouraging civil discourse and the open exchange of ideas, C3 along with its co-sponsor

Stand for Peace Michigan, hopes that the Vigil for Peace and Justice can help people in the greater Grand Haven community become accepting of others differences to create a more peaceful world.

Not everyone has been receptive towards the groups efforts, however, as Jacobs recounted from a past vigil.

"I had somebody drive by here last week with school-aged kids in his car and he shouted [an obscenity]," Jacobs said. "I thought 'I feel really bad for those kids that their dad felt he could do that.'"

"I don't agree with a lot of people in this world and I'm fine with that. They can do what they want, they don't have to come to the things that I'm involved in and I don't have to go to the things they're involved in. But I don't think that one group should have a chance to say what everybody else is going to do."

Follow C3 member Char Zoet echoed Jacobs' sentiments, saying he hopes to

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make change in a peaceful way especially considering how contentious the atmosphere in the community has been.

"I have a granddaughter who is gay and I just want the best for her, I don't want people fighting over who she is," Zoet said. "We are all the same when it comes right down to it. Our religions may

be different, our colors may be different, our makeups may be different, but we're really all the same. I want to change attitudes and this is a way I can do that."

C3 will be holding vigils every Saturday throughout the month of June from noon to 1 p.m., helping people to further reflect on how they can make the world around them a better place and start conversations in their own circles.

"C3 believes in the values of

human beings, everybody is equal and everybody deserves equal justice and equal opportunities," Jacobs said. "It's nice to be involved in something that is basically harmless but can get a big message out."

"We need to make love, not war," added Koster. "Hate hurts everyone, and so this is an opportunity to say 'we stand for peace' and we need more of that."

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