

# Harbinger

Swords into Plowshares Peace Center and Gallery

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## Next Exhibit: Syria: Crisis and Hope

An exhibit of paintings and ceramics by Syrian-American artist ILham B. Mahfouz will open on March 1, 2014. The tragic events now occurring in Syria make this a most timely exhibit.

ILham Mahfouz graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a BFA in painting and ceramics and a Minor in art history. She currently teaches the Arabic language at the University of Detroit Mercy and is a Ceramics Instructor at the Pontiac Creative Art Center. She has exhibited her work both nationally and internationally. Locally, her work is on display at the National Arab American Museum in Dearborn and the MONA Museum in Armada, Michigan.

Her paintings are large abstract works, many of which are wonderful bright colors; others are dark, to reflect the tragedy that is unfolding in Syria. The frequent inclusion of ladders, windows and doors in her works, is ILham's way of depicting people's need and desire to escape from unbearable situations, like the current war in Syria. Mahfouz is personally affected by the war, because many members of her family still live there.

The ceramic works she creates include large bowls and abstract figures that include symbols of Syrian culture and the calligraphy of the Arabic

## What's a Little Free Library?

It's a take-a-book-return-a-book gathering place where neighbors share their favorite literature and stories. In its most basic form (the kind SIP is planning) a Little Free Library is a box full of books where anyone may stop by and pick up a book or two and bring back another book to share. There are several at Detroit's Riverwalk, and this summer I discovered one in Quebec.

Participants of Art and Soul, which meets at Central Church, are currently in the process of decorating SIP's proposed library. Then, mounting it and creating a way to make it sturdy are the next steps. In the spring, SIP will have a little free library right on our sidewalk in front,

offering free books to folks who care to stop by and pick them up.

SIP has numerous books for grown-ups but children's books are limited. If you would like to donate children's books for the little free library, we would be delighted.



One kind of Little Free Library

Pauline Feltner

## Director's Corner

On behalf of all the volunteers and members of the Steering Committee, we wish you all peace in this new year. In addition to all the other wishes for good things, I wish you enough. Just think of the sea change in this world if everyone had enough.

The exhibit Committee has developed a schedule for 2014 that promises to continue the missions of using art to inform and transform. On Saturday March 1st, Syria: Crisis and Hope will open (see article, p.1). Our annual Visions of Peace exhibit opens on April 26th. Inspired by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it will showcase art of Detroit-area youth, and all submissions are accepted. If you know a school class, synagogue or Sunday school, individual student or would simply like more information, please contact us.

Plans for Fall 2014 include a return of Art4Detroit, and an exhibit of the photography of Patricia Lay-Dorsey.

Several positive changes are afoot (see articles elsewhere in this newsletter). A number of groups are meeting here now: a book club, Veterans for Peace, Compassionate Communications and the newest, the Sierra Club. I am so pleased that the use of this space is expanding. If your group is looking for its weekly, monthly meeting space, give us a call. If we can accommodate you, we'd love to have you. Of course, we are also available as a rental for weddings, birthdays or any similar event. Our rates are way below market rates and especially with the large parking lot, an ideal location.

More information about us can always be found on our web site:

[swordsintoplowsharesdetroit.org](http://swordsintoplowsharesdetroit.org)

A tireless volunteer, Bob Krzewinski, designed and maintains the site.

As I look back over last year and ahead to the new year, I am once again touched by the generosity and support of so many of you. Central Methodist Church's letting us use this space, your contributions that make it possible to continue our work, and of course, the generosity of all the volunteers who give of their time to make things

happen. There is a lot of behind the scenes work, and some time in the coming year we plan to calculate volunteer hours and the cost/value at even the minimum wage.

I expect we will be amazed.

Wendy

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## The Gift Shop

Time to visit the Swords into Plowshares Gift Shop to inspect the recent addition to our hand-crafted items donated by our volunteers and friends. Friend Jane Everhart has graciously donated a number of her beautifully hand-crafted fabric pins, adding to the hand-painted cards by Shirley Magder, the hand-crafted cards by Pauline Feltner and the hand-knitted dish-cloths by Wendy Hamilton, Winkie Covintree and Carol Reid. In addition, Joyce Mason's hand-built pottery is also on sale. Most of these people also volunteer with SIP in many other ways.

Looking for a special gift for a special child? Perhaps a book about Peace beautifully illustrated by school children in the Metro Detroit area. Or a challenging peace puzzle. Or hackysack balls, peace frisbees and even an antique doll quilt. We welcome you to come in and browse around!

Joyce Mason

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## Coming up:

### DETROIT REP

Mark your calendars for our Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup> annual fundraiser at the Detroit Repertory Theatre. The play, "Brother of All" is a mystery about three men infused with Cherokee legend and loyalty.

Please plan to attend. You'll enjoy great theater and support both the Peace Center and the Detroit Repertory Theatre. That's a deal that's hard to beat. Tickets will be \$25. Why not sell them to your friends or buy some extras to give as gifts?

Jack Chase

# New Projects Improve Our Site

Plans are underway to make over the first floor restroom at the Peace Center, with the objective of making it more accessible for people who are handicapped. The renovation won't be in accord with the Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA) for various architectural reasons, but what we plan will be a significant improvement, both in accessibility and aesthetics. This idea came to members of the Steering Committee in their discussions on how best to distribute the bequest from Jo Bristah. (See also article p.1, Little Free Library.)

Also, Ron Mason and his volunteers are installing a new hanging system for the art. Not only will the system provide more flexibility and efficiency in hanging, it will virtually eliminate the patching and painting tasks that Ron & Co. have to do after each exhibit.

In addition, we will soon have an outside sign, visible from Woodward, we hope. We all agree that the community needs to know what the Peace Center does in terms of its activism and what the Gallery does in terms of our beautiful and exciting exhibits.

Watch for it. As soon as the sign goes up, we're getting ready for an overwhelming crowd, breaking down our door to get in!

*Suzanne Antisdell*

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## Thank You!

To all who responded to our year-end fundraising letter: Please know that 100% of your donation will go to support the wonderful exhibits and programming we have planned for 2014.

If you have not yet sent in your donation, it's never too late. Contributions in any amount are welcome and appreciated but please be as generous as you are able. Thanks to all of you from all of us.

*Jack and Audrey Chase*

*MAHFOUZ cont'd from p. 1...*

language. In her Artist Statement, Ms. Mahfouz explains the focus of her work:

Through my art, I support the message of peace and harmony, as called for by people of different nationalities, cultures and religions. I believe that if we want a peaceful world, we must live with and help each other.

ILham Mahfouz is dedicating the exhibit to all Syrian refugees, as well as the needy and homeless everywhere. She explains: "Anytime we help to rebuild in one country, we are helping to rebuild the world. The reverse is also true. When we destroy one part of the human family, we destroy all of humanity."

She will be donating 25% of the money raised from the sale of her art, to the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS). That organization is providing medical service to the people of Syria in this very dangerous time.

At a date to be determined, a panel will present information at SIP, about the war in Syria and what is needed to create peace and justice there. The panel will include representatives from the fields of education, medicine and journalism. It will also include the voices of young Syrians. Check our website – [www.swordsintoplowsharesdetroit.org](http://www.swordsintoplowsharesdetroit.org) - for updates on the date and time of the panel discussion.

*Marti Alston*

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## Your Help Needed

Two committees requiring expansion at this time: GALLERY STAFF: greeting visitors with a smile and MAINTENANCE: behind-the-scenes work includes hanging the art and working directly with the artists, always an intriguing aspect.

Call us if you're interested and we'll discuss how we can work together.

*RON MASON*

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