

Celebrating 2023: Fifteen Singing Tree® Murals and More

The Unity Through Creativity Foundation (UTC) fosters connection, compassion, and creativity to overcome loneliness, division, and violence. We do this by creating the Beloved Community one mural at a time, teaching 21st Century peace literacy skills.

Painting a mural is about more than making a work of art. Each mural envisions a positive future in response to concrete community challenges. The process of creating the mural supports us in practicing community building in the face of the unknown. No one knows how the painting will turn out. Everyone listens deeply to each other, building the trust needed to create an inclusive and original image. After the Singing Tree® mural has been completed, this shared experience empowers the community to undertake more complex and riskier matters.

We invite you to join us as we celebrate the beauty and power of emergent intelligence so needed in the face of separation and fragmentation.



Milestones in 2023

- **1714** people—youth, adults and elders—participated in creating **15** Singing Tree® murals
- **150** youth and **105** adults received intensive training in peace literacy, collaboration, and creativity skills.
- **89** Art Teachers received professional development in Arts Integration and Peace Literacy in El Paso, TX.
- **17** organizations and **250** people celebrated International Day of Peace Celebration at Keystone Heritage Park.
- UTC led the initiative for El Paso to become an **International City of Peace**. The El Paso County Commissioners adopted the authorizing proclamation on September 11, 2023.

Over 90% of participants report significant increases in their experience that people can create extraordinary results together, in seeing themselves as peace leaders, in acknowledging that they matter, in having confidence in their imagination, and in having a sense of belonging.



Pieces of Peace Dogwood Singing Tree

155 students and staff at The Community School in Roanoke, Virginia. Funded by the Roanoke Arts Council and National Endowment for the Arts. Facilitated by Jane Gabrielle.

"I hope that one day [our painting] will become a reality and peace will overcome greed." Dylan, 6th grade

"Something that I enjoyed about the project was that I had an idea that it was not going to work and we made something even better." Sebastian, 6th grade



The Post Oak Singing Tree of Spiritual Refreshment for the Long Haul

55 contributors ages 4 to 74 at the South Central Yearly Meeting of Quakers at Greene Family Camp, Bruceville, Texas. It is traveling to various Quaker meetings in Texas and Louisiana. Facilitated by Joanna Vaughn.



The Bonsai Singing Tree That Heals Heartbreak

Funded by Bioneers, created by 35 youth and 5 adults at the Bioneers Conference in Berkeley, California, and facilitated by Laurie Marshall, Leslie Rein, and Sweta Chawla.

"We came up from Louisiana for the conference again this year, and were hoping we'd get to make another Singing Tree mural. It was the highlight of the conference last year." Lauren, age 17





The Ancestor Willow Singing Tree to Protect Future Fruits

12 educators and artist activists training to become Singing Tree Facilitators. They came from the Pittsburgh public school system, Mozambique, and El Paso. The Pittsburgh group were preparing for a trip to Kenya on a Fulbright grant where they facilitated a Singing Tree mural. Books are the protection we wish to give the children, our future fruits. Facilitated by Laurie Marshall.



The Palo Verde Singing Tree of a Green and Connected El Paso

137 people ages 8-73. Funded by Eco-El Paso. Partnering with PBS Kids and Plant-a-Seed, families added flowers, butterflies and birds at Bassett Place Mall in El Paso. Facilitated by Laurie Marshall.

"We honored Judy Ackerman who spent 50 years fighting for the Castner Range to be made into a Federal Park and died the week before it was official." Fernanda Lugo



The Afghan Singing Tree of Women's Strength and Freedom

80 people from the Women's Studies Department of the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP), Seton Hill University, PA, and the Interfaith Alliance of the Southwest joined Afghan Guest Scholar Neema Soratgar, her twin children, and Singing Tree Facilitator Anita Khatkani of Mumbai. Facilitated by Laurie Marshall.

"Through the artistry and actions of this project, our Singing Tree Mural exemplifies a tireless commitment to making the world a better place for all of humanity."

Neema Soratgar

The Singing Tree of Courageous Connection that Inspires Harmony

Created by clients from Crescent Moon Center, an equine-assisted learning, poetry, and painting program for people in recovery. Facilitated by Laurie Marshall

"I couldn't believe how deeply and quickly we were able to trust each other and have so much fun working together. There were no power struggles." Cynthia Caruso



The Singing Tree of Differences and Appreciation

314 students and staff at Schaefer Elementary School, Santa Rosa, California. Funded by a California Arts and Music Block Grant. Facilitated by Lili Lopez and Laurie Marshall.

"This is how Common Core Standards can be carried out, covering the subjects using creativity and collaboration."

James Garcia, 6th grade teacher

"Making this mural was an opportunity of a lifetime."

Owen, age 11



The Redwood Singing Tree of Healing and Freedom from Fear

313 students and staff at Jack London Elementary School, Santa Rosa, California. Funded by a California Arts and Music Block Grant. Facilitated by Sweta Chawla and Cynthia Caruso.

"I'm most proud of how it was just a piece of wood and then it was a mural. My biggest take away is how creative I can be and other people can be, too." Marianna, age 11



The Singing Tree of Peace and Justice

354 students and staff at Olivet Elementary School, Santa Rosa, California. Funded by a California Arts and Music Block Grant. Facilitated by Leslie Rein and Lili Lopez.

"I think this mural is about connection and relationship, compassion, kindness, empathy, and making a world where everyone is equal." Kai, age 11

"If you're not fighting, you can make something great together." Victor, age 11



The Singing Tree of Radical Loving Imagination

Graduate students and professionals in George Washington University's e-Co Leadership Coaching program in the Center for Excellence in Public Service. Exhibited at George Washington University's graduation. Facilitated by Laurie Marshall.

"Thank you for facilitating this project. It was a creative way to express our learning and values together."
Mia Cellucci



The Singing Tree of Creating Creative Community



Co-created with the Creative Learning Center's 17 Teaching Artists and staff in Roswell, New Mexico. Facilitated by Laurie Marshall

"I came away from the professional development experience committed to being more creative, less judgmental and more proactive." Marie Manning, Elementary Teaching Artist

The Kenyan Singing Tree of Hope That Through All Her Pain, the Motherland Will Continue to Support Life

162 people contributed including the Makuru Collective, St. Paul School, Kakenya's Dream and educators from Pittsburgh, PA. Organized by Dr. Maureen Porter of the University of Pittsburgh through a Fulbright.



The El Paso City of Peace Singing Tree

Co-created with 27 people from different faiths, cultures, languages, ages, and races, gathering to express their vision of the incorporating Restorative Practices in schools, courts, government and in areas of conflict. Partly funded by the Multi-Cultural Arts District of the El Paso Museum. Facilitated by Laurie Marshall.



The Songs of Our Mother Singing Tree



Four women survivors of AIDS co-created this Singing Tree subtitled "HUES-Healing and Uniting Every Sista". Funded by the San Francisco Aids Foundation. Unveiled at the Foundation's Year-End Gala. Facilitated by Diana Sciarretta.

"The Singing Tree Mural Journey has been a vibrant exploration of cultural identity and resilience for me." Ebony Gordon



EVENTS

International Day of Peace Celebration

On a 104-degree day, 250 people gathered at Keystone Heritage Park, joining over 5000 celebrations around the country for the 41st anniversary celebration of the UN's international holiday. The El Paso County Commissioners shared their proclamation that El Paso is designated as an International City of Peace, joining 396 other cities around the world. We celebrated the use of the arts, sports and speeches to create the Beloved Community in El Paso. The event was partly funded by the Multi-Cultural Arts District of the El Paso Museum.

"When I come here and see there's peace, I am so happy." Eeman, age 11, arrived from Afghanistan in 2021



International City of Peace Potluck

This event was the next step following the passage of the International City of Peace designation of El Paso. 27 people ages 8-80 shared food from different cultures at Abara, an immigration innovation center. The gathering will be a seasonal meeting to envision and practice supporting a culture of peace. It was partly funded by the Multi-Cultural Arts District of the El Paso Museum.

"What joy to experience creativity, openness and fellowship with people who care so deeply." Rachel Quintana

