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Springfield's Global Education and Peace Network Promotes Dialogue and Understanding Throughout Community, Inspires Nation

SPRINGFIELD, OHIO – August 4, 2017 – The City of Springfield's Global Education and Peace Network (GEPN) will kick off another year of programming with a booth at the annual CultureFest on Saturday, September 23, 2017. The efforts of the network's members recently gained national attention and were featured in the "Beyond Tolerance" mini-documentary on CBS News.

The GEPN was formed in October 2001 to provide a forum for intellectual understanding between different cultures and religious groups. It is organized through the City of Springfield's Community Development Department, Human Relations Division, which is a government department responsible for educating and informing people of their rights, as well as preventing discrimination.

Each month, the network hosts a presentation to provide an opportunity for the community to be exposed to other ethnic groups, cultures and religions as a way of increasing understanding and respect for those with different lifestyles or beliefs.

"It is so important to understand people who are different from us, because conflict can develop when we don't understand other people and their cultural practices," said GEPN Coordinator Nancy Flinchbaugh. "The Global Education and Peace Network has provided the opportunity for people to learn about other cultures, religions and traditions for 16 years. We feel that it is very important to continue building awareness so that our local citizens do not experience discrimination."

Recently, several members of the GEPN were featured in the CBS News mini-documentary series, "Beyond Tolerance." While the first half of the video discusses the recent political and societal turmoil in the United States, the second half shows Springfield as a national example of tolerance and a way to approach creating opportunities for positive discourse.

The video shows a weekend where Pastor Carl Ruby, a member of the GEPN, organized a meeting between members of his church and members of a local mosque. The groups attended each other's religious services and, at the end of the weekend, shared a meal together.



“By working together, we can show Springfield, and the world, that people of different faiths can love each other, can be good neighbors and can work together to promote peace,” Pastor Ruby says in the video.

To watch this video, visit www.cbsnews.com/videos/beyond-tolerance-1.

The GEPN hosts a speaker each month from September through June, beginning with their booth at CultureFest. CultureFest will be held on Saturday, September 23, from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. on the City Hall Plaza. For more information about this event, visit www.springfieldohio.gov/culturefest.

If you would like to become a member of the GEPN, contact Nancy Flinchbaugh at 937-324-7696. To see their program plans for the year, visit www.springfieldohio.gov/global-education.

For more information about the City of Springfield, visit www.springfieldohio.gov.

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