

Women can be powerful peace force

Local group embodies words of Coretta Scott King

Umpteen times I have been asked: "And what brought you to Kokomo?" On one such occasion, after making this inquiry, the questioner exclaimed with domicile pride, "I've lived in Kokomo all my life. I can't imagine living anywhere else. If I had to move, I think it would kill me." In my mind's eye, I could see the Death Certificate and on the line for Cause of Death, the dreaded "R" word, Relocating!

**DOROTHY
WORD**

**LOCAL
COLUMNIST**



In numerous instances, relocating is an inescapable, necessary part of life. Several studies confirm that after death and divorce, the third greatest cause of stress is relocating/moving. For me, moving from Evansville to Kokomo was plenty stressful. The stress of moving to a foreign country would be unpalatable. But some brave folks have done just that, the foreign country being the U.S.A. and their country of origin elsewhere. Separation from families and

friends, moving into a different culture; learning about life and work in a new community, and embracing a new language demand huge emotional, physical and mental adjustments and re-adjustments.

Sensitive to the need of a helping hand in a foreign land, the Association of International Women (AIW)-Kokomo reaches out to women of foreign families relocating in this area for various lengths of time. The AIW's mission is to facilitate social interaction between women from the U.S.A. and all foreign countries; provide a support group for women as they arrive in Kokomo from outside the U.S.A. or from another state; facilitate cultural understanding between members themselves and the communities in which they reside.

AIW activities include: informal coffee chats; discussions of homelands with follow-up question/answer sessions; cooking demonstrations of foods from around the world; birthday celebrations and good-by parties; participating in the International Day Festival at IUK; tours in the Kokomo area and trips to Indianapolis. The AIW no longer meets in private homes because of its fast-growing membership. AIW now meets at the St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church. I see this rapid growth of members as abundant proof that this kind of support group is sorely needed and greatly appreciated.

Every time I attend an AIW meeting, I observe peace breaking out in this microcosm of women who come together to share common ground, respecting and accepting the differences in others. I mentally take roll call: Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, England, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Uruguay, Vietnam and the U.S.A.

I am not so naive as to think that peace has broken out on all fronts in Kokomo. I lived here less than two months when I was confronted with in-your-face racial indignities. I can easily identify with these women's struggle to adjust, to fit in, to cope and survive. And I stand in solidarity with Coretta Scott King who wrote: "I was, and still am convinced that the women of the world, united without any regard for national or racial dimensions, can become a most powerful force for international peace and brotherhood."