

## **Peace center settles into new Seaside office**

By LAITH AGHA , *Monterey Herald* Staff Writer

Posted: 12/13/2008, 12:01 AM PST

Karen Araujo said there is something poetic about where the new Peace Resource Center is located.

On one side of its Seaside address is a yoga studio, a place that offers a path to inner peace. On the other side is a Tae Kwon Do facility, which trains people in self-defense.

"And in between," Araujo said, "is the Peace Resource Center, which is seeking the middle way."

Araujo, executive director of the Peace Coalition of Monterey, said operations used to be tucked away in a small office in Monterey. But since opening its center at 1364 Fremont St. in September, the coalition is better positioned to spread the word on peace and social justice.

"People see these peace signs (on the front window), and they stop and ask what's going on," said Janet Wilson, the center's office manager. "We're getting more and more people involved."

Though the center opened three months ago, it is holding its grand opening celebration Sunday.

"We've been moving in and getting organized," said board member Sandee Scott. "Hopefully we're ready for it now."

At the celebration, coalition volunteers will offer information about the center and its mission. There will be music and discussions about issues important to the center's constituency.

Organizers said the larger, more visible location allows the coalition to expand its library of books and videos dedicated to government, social justice and nuclear issues in areas such as the Middle East and South America.

Wilson said the center gives its members, a group not afraid to publicly voice its opinions about current affairs, a more consistent presence in the public view than just the occasional protest.

"Usually, peace people are out on the streets with signs," Wilson said. "Here we are a regular part of the community."

A monthly film series, which has primarily featured documentaries, will become a weekly occurrence and mix in movies that adhere to the center's themes.

Scott said the center's previous location, a 200-square-foot office at 801 Lighthouse Ave., was "mostly just a place to have our books and DVDs." Meetings were limited in size because of the small space, and its film series was usually held at the Monterey Public Library.

With its new 1,500-square-foot space, the organization can expand its operations, meetings can include more people, and it can host the film series.

"We have wonderful materials," said Darby Worth, a Peace Coalition donor from Carmel Valley. "We're trying to find like-minded people who will feel free to use our facilities and be involved in causes we believe in."

The center, which has about 20 regular volunteers and 100 financial contributors, hosted a luncheon Friday for about 40 prospective donors and volunteers.

Recently elected Assemblyman Bill Monning, D-Carmel, stopped by for a few minutes to voice his support for the center and to laud the local organization's growth.

"It may seem like a small step, but this is a center with a foundation," Monning said, "and from this foundation we will do great things."

Laith Agha can be reached at 646-4358 or [lagha@montereyherald.com](mailto:lagha@montereyherald.com).

---

If you go ·What:Grand opening of the Peace Resource Center ·When:1 to 6 p.m.  
Sunday ·Where:1364 Fremont St., Seaside