

## The Oktoberfest Peace Quilt

by Lauren Kingsland



It was late summer 2006. Plans for the Arts Barn annual Oktoberfest celebration were well along. City staff were lining up the entertainment, the vendors, the horses, and the kettle corn. My job amid all this was to plan a community quilt project so it would be easy for people to spend a few minutes in my quilt studio and contribute to a beautiful, meaningful project.

The plan for the Oktoberfest 2005 quilt had been easy. The aftermath of hurricane Katrina led me to ask folks to write what they were thankful for on spirals in the quilt, "Count Your Blessings."

With the Iraq war dragging on and so much in the news about the unrest and atrocities everywhere, it seemed a good thing to find out what the public thought about PEACE.

The design plan was to offer visitors the chance to write or to select and sew. Writers were asked to share their thoughts about Peace on light green strips 6 x 3" with freezer paper applied to the backs to make it easier to write on the cloth. Acid-free, archival pens were provided. Non-writers could select two or three strips of fabric to sew together to go between the writing. The in between fabrics were peaceful blues and greens with suggestions of water and growing things. They were cut into strips 6" wide by 2, 3, 4, or 5" so the quilt could be constructed in long 6" wide panels without worrying about matching up crosswise seams. Volunteers manned the sewing machines to stitch up the chosen strips. Writers and choosers alike got to put their finished piece up on the design wall so the quilt grew over the course of the day. Raffle ticket chances were sold to help with the cost of the materials and finishing labor.



"How big is it going to be?" someone wanted to know early in the day. "I have no idea," I told her. "It depends on how many people chose to participate." And that's the beauty of this type of project. I can pick a theme, select a color scheme, lay out some construction ground rules, but I don't know what exactly will result. She was really wondering if her raffle ticket would win her a throw for the couch or a king-sized quilt that would require repainting the bedroom to match the greens and blues. The quilt ended up 59 x 87, great for a twin bed, a nap, or to hang in an entryway.

Over the course of the day we had many color choosers and not so many writers. Among writers, there were mainly quotations from songs, poetry or Bible verses.

On one level I was disappointed that more people didn't want to talk about Peace, especially in their own words. I guess I did have some expectations after all.

By afternoon it dawned on me that having an Oktoberfest at all was proof that peace can work. Oktoberfest celebrations have their



origins in German royal wedding festivities, which I understand included much more beer and probably not the scarecrow making station of our American version. But just over 60 years ago we were at war with Germany. Calling a Fall festival “Oktoberfest” would have been unlikely in the USA in 1945. Which made me wonder about 60 years from now. Will there be peace and will we have embraced aspects of cultures where there is now conflict?



The finished “Oktoberfest 2006 Peace quilt” is currently on display at the Gaithersburg Community Museum, 9 S. Summit Ave., next to the Gaithersburg train station. It is part of a quilt exhibit “Oh The Stories We Could Tell” which features quilts made by groups of Montgomery County residents. The show runs June 1 - Oct. 14, 2007.

Museum Hours are 10 am - 2 pm, Thurs. - Sat. 301-258-6160 [www.gaithersburgmd.gov/museum](http://www.gaithersburgmd.gov/museum)

BTW - “The Road Home” quilt, subject of my May column, is also there on display.

Now... about the raffle tickets. The quilt is 59 x 87”, perfect for a nap, or for display. It is fully quilted with a leafy border. There is a hanging sleeve. Tickets are available in the Arts Barn quilt studio for \$1 or 6/\$5. in person or by sending a check and SASE to Custom Quilts Studio, 311 Kent Square Road, G’burg, MD 20878 .

**The drawing for the quilt will be held on Sat. June 23 at the Community Museum.**

Lauren will be signing her book “The Extraordinary T-shirt Quilt - A Scrapbook you Can Sleep Under” at the Gaithersburg Community Museum, 9 S. Summit Ave on Sat. June 23 from 1 - 3 as part of Montgomery County Heritage Days celebration.

