



Peace Certification Journey
Large Community
Ingleside at King Farm
Rockville, Maryland

www.MattieOnline.com



October 2013 Update:



Bob Balkam, one of the founding members of the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation and now a resident at Ingleside at King Farm, resting on the bench sponsored by his family to honor his role in the development of Mattie's Park and Peace Garden.

In 2002, Mattie J.T. Stepanek and his mom, Jeni, moved to King Farm in Rockville, Maryland. A few weeks later, **Bob Balkam** and his wife, Laurin, moved to the same neighborhood, and became friends with the Mattie and Jeni.

No one could have predicted that three years later, Bob would become a founding member of the Board of Directors for the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation. No one could have predicted that in 2008, Bob would be key to successful development of the Peace Garden area in the 26-acre Mattie J.T. Stepanek Park in King Farm. And, no one could have predicted that in 2013, Bob would be the driving force that would bring Mattie's message of hope and peace to a local retirement community called **Ingleside at King Farm**.

In fact, IKF was not even built at that time! Yet today, IKF is the first adult community seeking **Peace Certification by the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation**.

Intrigued by Mattie's concept of **Heartsongs** and purpose, and inspired by the essays in Mattie's book, "**Just Peace: A Message of Hope**," Bob has long been a supporter of the mission to make Mattie's message something that ripples out to people of all ages throughout the world. Although health and family issues led to his resignation from the Board of Mattie's Foundation in 2010 (at the young age of 89), nothing would slow Bob's enthusiasm for continuing to share Mattie's message, or to support the work of Mattie's Foundation.



Jeni Stepanek, Ph.D. (Executive Director of Mattie's Foundation) discusses the Peace Certification journey with Marilyn Leist (IKF Executive Director), Bob Balkam (IKF resident and former member of the Mattie's Foundation Board of Directors), and Richard Thayer (IKF Chaplain) during the July, 2013 Peace Chat at Ingleside at King Farm, Rockville, Maryland.

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In 2012, the Foundation launched its Peace Certification Program for individuals, families, and communities of all ages and sizes. The **Peace Certification** journey is personalized for each person or group, but it always involves three choices:

- **Reflect** on some element of Mattie’s message of hope and peace – a quote, a poem, a book, the pages Mattie’s website (www.MattieOnline.com), or even the information provided in the *Peace Tips Guide* that is a part of the *Peace Certification Program*;
- **Respond** to the message in some way – journaling, conversation, artwork, photography, poetry, dance, song, meditation... anything that supports moving from *attitude to action* with peace; and,
- **Reach Out** with that element of peace in a way that positively impacts at least one other person – create and carry out a “*Peace Plan*” (as small as a book group with peace conversations or a classroom lesson plan, or as large as a school-wide activity that touches a community or a fundraiser to support another person or community in need of hope and peace).



IKF residents enjoy the “Peace is Fun!” Picnic, and share suggestions for the Peace Plan that will be a part of their journey to Peace Certification by the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation.

When Bob learned about the new program, he reached out to leaders in the IKF community, including **Richard Thayer** (IKF Chaplain), and **Marilyn Leist** (IKF Executive Director). After discussion with other members of the community, the decision was made --- IKF would seek Peace Certification!

During July, 2013 a *Peace Chat* was scheduled with Jeni Stepanek, Ph.D., Executive Director of Mattie’s Foundation. Jeni shared photos and audio of Mattie to help the IKF community connect with him – first as a young neighbor, and then as poet and peacemaker. The community was also introduced to Mattie’s “*Three Choices for Peace*” which is the framework that guides the *Peace Certification* journey.

By the end of the presentation, residents and staff had a better understanding of Mattie’s message of hope and peace – for one’s self and for our world. They were also excited to begin considering the *Peace Plan* that would be part of their community’s peace journey.



During August, 2013, IKF held a *Peace Picnic* for their own residents, and also for neighbors and local politicians – “because Peace Is Fun!”

Residents of IKF and the local community mingled outside over light fare, and enjoyed a musical performance and sing-along led by Stephen Geller – which included Mattie’s favorite song, *Let There Be Peace on Earth*. In addition, a sheet and colorful markers were spread along a table on which everyone was encouraged to share peace thoughts and ideas for the IKF *Peace Plan*.

The ideas generated included an annual peace lecture, ongoing peace chats, a peace quilt, a peace video, one or more peace trees, peace walks, and more. The IKF community decided that peace is such an important matter that a single activity would not be enough. So, they decided to plan a series of activities and projects!

During October, 2013 the IKF community held their first “Peace Walk in Mattie’s Park.” Residents met with members of Mattie’s Foundation Board of Directors for a brief Peace Chat, then enjoyed time walking through the park and resting in the Peace Garden where the life-size bronze of Mattie and his service dog are located. During their visit, they also enjoyed listening to Mattie’s voice on the sound post, and reading the Mattie quotes on the benches placed throughout the entire park.

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Members of the Ingleside at King Farm community, members of neighboring Rockville, Maryland communities, and members of the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation enjoy the IKF



Peace Picnic during August, 2013. Musician Stephen (pictured with Jeni Stepanek at left) led the community in songs about hope and peace. The picnic was a part of the IKF's journey toward Peace Certification by the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation. www.MattieOnline.com



IKF residents and staff, and members of the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation Board of Directors participated in a "Peace Walk in Mattie's Park" during October, 2013. After a conversation about the development of the park and Peace Garden, participants listened reflected on the Mattie's peace message that is spread around the park.



During January, 2014 they will begin creating a Peace Quilt, with squares representing Mattie's message of peace and personal peace thoughts, each contributed or created by different IKF residents. The quilt will be available for loan to Mattie's Foundation to support peace events and activities, and it will also be available to IKF's sister communities in Washington, DC and Northern Virginia to help raise awareness of peace and Mattie's message in those areas.



Ingleside at King Farm residents chat with members of Mattie's Foundation and listen to Mattie's voice sharing poetry and his peace message during the community's first "Peace Walk in Mattie's Park."



One of the most important goals of *Peace Certification* is to support people of all ages in moving not only from *attitude to action*, but also in moving peace from a *To Do* task or project to a *To Be* goal and character trait. Once an individual or community *Peace Plan* is completed, the ultimate challenge is ***"What Next?"***

IKF has already begun considering their *"What Next?"* ideas that will continue beyond receiving their Certificate. In addition to continuing their discussions on other suggestions that grew out of the Peace Picnic, IKF would like to encourage their sister Ingleside communities, and other retirement communities beyond those, to take up the call for peace --- learn about peace, talk about peace, and make a public statement by choosing to become *Peace Certified by Mattie's Foundation*.

At Ingleside at King Farm, peace is no longer a possibility – peace is a choice, and peace is becoming a foundation for daily interactions and activities.

For more information about Mattie, his Foundation, or *Peace Certification by the Mattie J.T. Stepanek Foundation* please visit www.MattieOnline.com

