

## Quaker Presence at a Street Fair

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Albany Meeting

Our Outreach Committee had a busy year. We removed a hedge to create a more welcoming entrance to our Meeting House. We sponsored a series of programs on Quaker Faith and Practice. We participated in NYYM's Outreach Practitioners' Circle. But our biggest project was participating in the Upper Madison Avenue Street Fair that took place September 24.

We worked for months to get ready. The first problem was being accepted. We were told initially that churches are not included in the space available to non-profits but that we could make a case for our inclusion, if we wanted to. We based our case on the Fair's mission statement: to promote City Living at Its Best. We argued that participating in social justice projects was part of the best of city living where people of difference races, cultures, and incomes live in close proximity. We would be promoting the opportunities that Albany Friends Meeting provides for this kind of engagement. We were given a table.

What, then, should we do at the Fair? We needed an activity for young folks. One member suggested temporary peace tattoos. We tried them out on ourselves; they looked great. We ordered forty more. Another member brought in a peace dove from Color Me Quaker, suggesting that we put our contact information on this page and have people color on the spot or take them home. We got flyers from FCNL; NYYM's Children and Youth Field Secretary Melinda Wenner Bradley sent us fifty copies of "Quaker Meeting and Me"; and we had pens made with our address and phone number. We created an information sheet about our Meeting, printed out more "You Are Welcome Here" cards, and were ready to go.

The big day arrived. We met early at the meetinghouse, loaded up our table, chairs and handouts and drove to the site. The fair started at noon. About one hour in, we noticed that people were looking at our banner, averting their eyes and moving on. We hadn't been able to find the banner that said "Albany Friends Meeting," so we were using one that said "Religious Society of Friends." We said to ourselves, "Bet folks are turned off by the word 'Religious.'" So we took the banner down. Then people seemed more receptive. We engaged anyone who looked our way or paused before our table. A few people colored the Peace Dove on the spot; others took one home for their children. Several

people took the “Quaker Meeting and Me” booklet and commented on its being bi-lingual. Both adults and children happily got tattooed for peace.

At 4:30 we packed up, but first we did a self-assessment. “On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate this event in terms of outreach for the Meeting?” We all gave it a 7 based on the fact that we reached some people with our message. We let others know Quakers are still here. We proved to ourselves that we could do this kind of outreach and we learned how to do it better. We know now that we need a new sign, we need better activities for children, we need a tent for shade, and...we need to bring cookies.

In Summary—we had fun, got to know each other better, did some good outreach, and got inspired to continue.