

May Peace Prevail in **Highlands**

With music in the air and children's voices rising in harmony, Highlands came together to celebrate a new symbol of peace — a 12-foot Peace Pole gifted by local Rotarians, now rooted in the heart of town and the spirit of its people.



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On a sun-dappled afternoon in late July, the Plateau gathered in quiet reverence and joyful celebration as Highlands unveiled its newest symbol of unity – a 12-foot Peace Pole, gifted to the town by the Mountaintop Rotary Club and the Rotary Club of Highlands.

The ceremony, held beside the Highlands Community Building on US 64, marked the culmination of a year-long collaboration and joined Highlands with more than 250,000 communities worldwide who host Peace Poles bearing the universal message: May Peace Prevail on Earth.

In Highlands, that message is etched in Cherokee, Gaelic, Spanish, and English – a reflection of the town's cultural tapestry and its commitment to honoring diverse voices.

Rotary Presidents Cath Connolly Hudson and Randy Foster presented the pole to Mayor Pat Taylor, who commended the Rotarians for sparking a

meaningful dialogue about peace in a time when such conversations are more vital than ever.

The dedication ceremony unfolded with heartfelt grace. Jessica Jenkins, Rigo Ortega, Alistair Fox, and Cath Connolly Hudson each offered a poem, prayer, or song from their heritage, weaving a lyrical thread through the afternoon's proceedings. Children from the Highlands Community Child Development Center sang *"It's a Small World,"* their voices rising amid a sea of handmade peace doves, pinwheels, and signs crafted by students from The Bascom, The Gordon School, the Boys and Girls Club, HCCDC, The Literacy and Learning Center, and local residents.

Bagpipers Margaret Tooke and Glenn Morris bookended the event with soulful airs, lending a Highland solemnity to the occasion and reminding all present of the town's unique cultural heartbeat.

The vision for expanding Peace Poles

across North Carolina originated with Rotary District Governor Connie Molland, who attended the Highlands dedication alongside incoming Governor Alex Portelli. Molland praised the initiative as a beacon of Rotary International's mission to foster peace through education, mediation, and community engagement.

Architect Jim Ward and landscape architect Hank Ross led the design, with contributions from Robi Decking, Yonah Mountain Timber Frame, Rigo's Stonework, Bryson's Grading, Tate Landscaping, and Reeves Ace Hardware.

The Peace Pole now stands as a quiet sentinel of hope, inviting all who pass to pause, reflect, and carry peace forward.

For more information, contact Jane Jerry at janepjerry@gmail.com or Cath Connolly Hudson at cathconnolly.hudson@gmail.com.

by Jane Jerry | Photo by Susan Renfro

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