

**A People's Monument**  
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**Inspired by the dream of one man, Kevin Flattery, the community of Kansas City, Mo., united to build a plaza for peace on the site where, 52 years ago, Harry Truman first announced that the United States had signed the U.N. Charter.**

Two years ago, on the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, Kevin Flattery was inspired. As president of the U.N. Association of Greater Kansas City, he shared his vision of a plaza dedicated to those who have given their all for the cause of peace. It would be a site where peacemakers would be invited to speak each year.

It was one man's dream, but it captured the imagination of Kansas City. And together the people made it happen. On the evening of Oct. 26, some 400 people gathered to celebrate the opening of Peace Plaza in Independence, Mo., a suburb of Kansas City.

It's a site touched by history. On Oct. 24, 1945, in San Francisco, President Harry S Truman signed the U.N. Charter, a document he declared was "proof that nations, like men, can state their differences, can face them, and then can find common ground on which to stand. That is the essence of democracy — the essence of keeping the peace in the future."

But Truman didn't announce the news in San Francisco. The next day, he came to Independence — his hometown — to tell the world that the United States had become a signatory power on the Charter.

Originally, the opening ceremony was to be held in the plaza itself. But the first snowstorm of the season forced everyone indoors — across the street at the auditorium of the Reorganized Latter Day Saints, where Truman had made his 1945 announcement. Snow covered the plaza's garden and decorated the 12-foot bronze statue of a woman releasing a dove, by local artist Tim Corbin.

Attending the plaza dedication were many U.N. dignitaries. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson was scheduled to speak but was called away to the Congo at the last minute. His speech was read by Ambassador Victor Marrero, U.S. representative on the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Also attending were Ambassador Alvin Adams, president of the U.N. Association, and Ambassador John Menzies, former ambassador to Bosnia.

Ambassador Menzies, who had witnessed the intense hostilities in Bosnia and also the heroic efforts of U.N. personnel stationed there, declared that U.N. personnel were "the real heroes of the conflict, putting their lives in jeopardy for the sake of peace." He added this warning: "Genocide is a threat to everyone," calling on the community to be vigilant against the evil side of human beings.

The ordinary citizens who gathered alongside ambassadors on a winter evening in Independence exhibited just such a vigilant spirit: a collective spirit to champion their people's monument. The words of one participant in the standing-room-only crowd rang true: "People who take a stand for peace will be the impetus for peace."

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