

**SANTA BARBARA INTERFAITH EVENT CELEBRATES PEACE
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Ali S. Malaikah, an engineer originally from the Middle East, has been a Santa Barbara, Calif., resident for 24 years. “The Sept. 11 incident makes it more important than ever for people in our community to come together and to realize the importance of peace,” said Mr. Malaikah. “Many people have misconceptions about Islam, like it is a violent religion. Well, it is not.”

Mr. Malaikah was one of the participants of “Celebrating Peace—Nonviolent Responses to Terrorism,” a meeting sponsored by the University of California at Santa Barbara Interfaith Council on Oct. 22. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together likeminded people by creating a forum for dialogue, and talk about how they can work together.

Pete Peterson, member of the Interfaith Council and the SGI-USA’s Victory Over Violence representative in Santa Barbara, facilitated the kick-off event. The meeting started with two exercises relating to what happens when violent thoughts become rooted in human beings, followed by a dialogue among all participants. Approximately 25 people participated. The dialogue focused on the importance of talking about nonviolence and how people in Santa Barbara can work together to build a peaceful community.

Participants also viewed the Gandhi, King, Ikeda exhibition and the Victory Over Violence video documentary. A tree made of recycled newspaper by SGI-USA member Sophie Hou and Alan Phipps, a member of the local St. Mark’s Church, both UCSB students, was presented at the University Religious Center, where the meeting was held. The tree will be on display at the center as a long-term exhibition. Visitors may hang leaf-shaped cards with pledges and comments.

Ann Elise Rudrud, a student at UCSB, found the meeting useful in her search for answers. The exercises helped her to understand more about the causes of peace and violence, and the meeting encouraged her to express her opinion about violence in her community. “It was definitely a positive experience,” she said.