



When the Euro replaced most former European currencies, jewelry designer Wendy Black-Nasta received a phone call from a reporter that was destined to change her life.

Wendy moved to Middletown in 1996 so her husband Bobby, a musician, could study ethnomusicology at Weslevan University. She immersed herself in teaching jewelry design at various art centers and colleges and through her own studio. As well established artist, Wendy also continued designing for museums, galleries, collectors and stores.

One of her students, Celeste Bellinghieri, was making her belly dancing debut and Wendy went to support her. She was fascinated by the belts the dancers wore and decided to make one as a gift for Celeste. She began sketching ideas that eventually became the catalyst for The International Peace Belt, "A week later Bill Daly, a reporter for The Hartford Courant, called several Connecticut artists to ask how we would integrate European currency into our artwork now that it was out of circulation. I thought it would be interesting to incorporate all the European coins, along with coins from all over the world into an international belt of peace that symbolized the coming together of all nations, peoples, dancers, artists, peace leaders, and tribal people," recalls Wendy.

Wendy immediately contacted all her international customers and family members living abroad, and began the two year task of gathering coins from their respective countries. "Because it was a belt for peace I wanted everything donated because right away we are including the world in our vision,"says Wendy.

Word spread. Packages containing coins, gem stones from Iraq, Afghanistan Pakistan and other places where coins could not be obtained at the time, and shells from tribal nations that don't trade in traditional currency, arrived on Wendy's doorstep. Included, was a box from the Bahamas with an unsigned note that read: 'I hope this makes it onto the belt. Mon'



Celeste and Wendy in studio



In the summer of 2003, Wendy and her Wendy's cousin Sara Morgues and friend gotten already," says Wendy.

apprentices Katie Rosenblatt and Margaret Sola Meghein Uhrich were the belt's first caretakers. began working on the belt. When it was completed, The pair was traveling to India to attend the 115 countries were denoted with the ultimate Golden Jubilee for World Peace honoring the 50th goal of one day having all 191 countries birthday of Amritanadamayi (AKA Ammachi), a represented. "When it was done I thought we saint and guru from India. Sara offered to carry should have the belt blessed because I did not the belt and have it blessed by Ammachi. The belt know what was going to happen, but I thought it wound up being worn by a person from would be big because of the response we had Ammachi's ashram and led the peace procession of 150,000 people, thus taking on a life of its own. "I started getting calls asking where the peace



says Wendy.

While in India, people wanted to contribute the Performing Arts. funding to keep the peace belt traveling. It was then that Wendy officially established the Since then the Peace Belt has traveled to 16 not into anyone's pocket.



Lea Mac Leod, Scotland

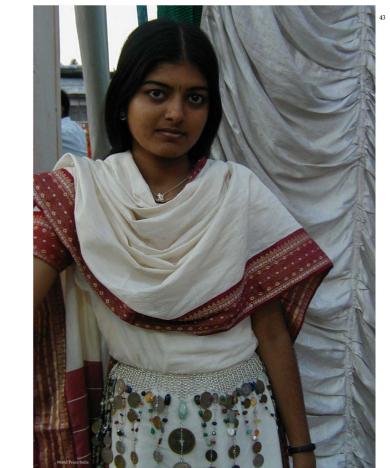
belt was so I thought we should document After the Golden Jubilee, the belt was danced in the university's 4th annual year-end dance everyone who wore it because I wanted to see, by the Classical Nrityragram dancers in India and performance. In 2007, it went to the Ecuadorian and I wanted everyone else to see. We put up a by an Israeli dance troupe. In December 2003, it Amazon and was blessed by a Shaman. In 2008, website so people could track its whereabouts," traveled with filmmaker S. Smith Patrick to South Korea where it was worn during a dance performance at the prestigious Seoul Center for

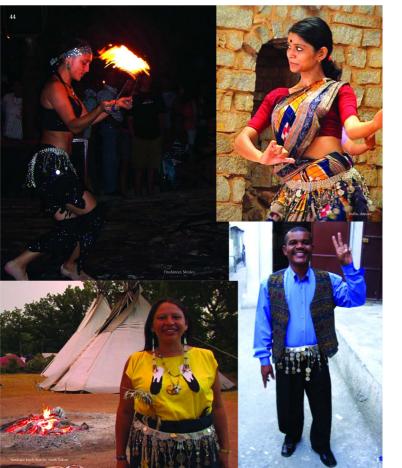
non-profit foundation Artists for World Peace so countries on 3 continents and has been worn people would be assured that 100% of the during numerous performances and at peaceful proceeds donated went to the organization and and spiritual gatherings. In 2004, the Peace Belt was part of the Women's Art Show at Arts + Literature Laboratory in New Haven to commemorate the first anniversary of the US Sylvester's Laight Street Project. In 2005, it made Antiwar Mobilization, and went on a peace out in the world," says Wendy. mission to the Middle East where Palestinians



invasion in Iraq; and it was offered as a blessing cancer survivor Chantal Laliberte carried the at Ground Zero in conjunction with artist Donna peace belt while climbing Mount Kilimaniaro in Africa to help raise money for cancer programs. its way to DC to participate in the National "The belt doesn't belong to anyone now, It's just

and Israelis wore the belt while holding hands 
The belt always travels with a caretaker and and talking about their mutual desire for peace. Wendy is always looking for people to help with In 2006, it was worn by Belinda Jiménez this goal. There are only 2 requirements. González at Carlos III University in Spain during "Whoever wears the belt is asked to meditate on







peace while they have it, and they must agree to visits either monetarily or by aiding other artists be documented and lend their voice on what with their projects. "We had an artist contact us peace means to them in their country and in their who was trying to raise money to build a school life. It is intended that through this act, the belt in Ecuador. The kids are not allowed to attend will become a living link between cultures, and a school without proper footwear but they are so symbol of peace and unity binding the people of poor they can't afford shoes. We had a fundraiser all nations as one," says Wendy.

The belt always comes back from every country it get them to California where visits with a little gift. In Scotland it was a sterling they were flown to Ecuador. silver bagpipe. In Vietnam it was jade Buddha. In then bussed to the Amazon South Korea it was a coin from a reporter, "We River, and then canoed up have so much stuff now that we can't put it all on river where they arrived in the belt because it will be too heavy to wear. We the rain forest. I try to tell save everything in hopes of donating it to the people you never know when Smithsonian or the United Nations one day along vou get involved the impact with all the footage and stories," says Wendy.

In addition to the Peace Belt, Artists for World school by a simple act," Peace partners with other entities to assist those says Wendy. in need. With their Children of Peace Project they try to sponsor a child in each country the belt For the past 3 winters, over 30

descended upon Wendy's living room, volunteering their time and

> first year they raised over \$4000 at a charity auction and were able to build a safe house in Cambodia for battered women and their children. This year, climate, the money they made selling their hats remained in the state. "All the local food banks were empty and they asked me for help. I worked with an amazing guardian angel named Lou at Price Right in Cromwell. I showed him our wish list and he saved

talent to make Hats for A Cause. The

me over \$1500 per page. He helped me buy enough food for 400 people that we delivered to local food banks and a women's shelter, "says

Another ongoing project is their annual Food and Clothing Drive. The drive begins in October and ends in December. Clothing is given to the people of Haiti, food is delivered to a Connecticut food pantry, and blankets, toys, warm clothes and food are collected for the Rose Bud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, "We now have 300 volunteers for this one activity. We used to box and sort at our house but it was too much. Now the First Church of Christ in Middletown lets us do the boxing and sorting in one of their rooms, and Extra Space Storage gives a unit to house the donations we get throughout the year," says

Wendy has her own wish list for the organization that includes much needed funding, and a director who not only knows how to grant write and fund raise, but can help spearhead all their projects." I get about 200 emails a day from people all over the world asking for help. We try to help everyone when we can but sometimes we have to put people on hold. Artists for World Peace has



embarked on a long journey with a grand vision, but one dancer at a time, one performance at a time, and one project at a time, we are building towards our ultimate goal of international peace and unity," says Wendy.

because of the current economic To make a donation, become a volunteer or caretaker, to apply for the director position, sponsor a child, or to learn more about Artists for World Peace log onto "http://www.artistsforworldpeace.org" www.artistsforworldpeace.org or call