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Peace activists to speak on MLK day

Greg Coleridge, 47, of Akron, economic justice director of the American Friends Service Committee, will deliver the keynote address at the Tuscarawas County celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

The celebration will begin Monday at 7 in First Baptist Church at 140 Regent St., Dover. The event is free and open to the public.

Tuscarawas County Republican Women and Tuscarawas County Democratic Women will provide refreshments after the program.

The AFSC is a Quaker-related social action organization that educates, advocates and organizes for peace and social and economic justice. It formed in 1917 to assist civilian members of war. It helped refugees during the Spanish Civil War and World War II and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947. AFSC and its British counterpart accepted the prize on behalf of all Quakers. Both AFSC's Quaker founders and King were inspired by the power of nonviolence to overcome injustice.

In Northeast Ohio, the AFSC's economic justice and empowerment program includes campaign finance reform that addresses money in politics from a moral and religious perspective and the Ohio Committee on Corporations, Law and Democracy, which examines the connection between corporate power and democracy.

The program supports efforts to clean up radiation at the Industrial Excess Landfill in Uniontown. The program also addresses Pentagon spying on peace activities, protecting local cable access and minority employment.

Coleridge also coordinates the Northeast Ohio Anti-War Coalition. He is a principal member of the Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy, a group that instigates democratic conversations and actions that contest the authority of corporations to govern. He is the author of "Citizens over Corporations: A Brief History of Democracy in Ohio and Challenges to Freedom in the Future" (2003) and the main writer for the documentary "CorpOrNation – The Story of Citizens and Corporations in Ohio" (2003).

He also contributed to "Defying Corporations, Defining Democracy – A Book of History and Strategy" (2001). He is a former member of the national board of Common Cause.

"Martin Luther King eloquently advocated and worked for not only civil rights, but for peace and economic justice using nonviolence," Coleridge said. Coleridge believes this is a time of ongoing racism, growing inequality and international wars. "King's messages and methods are still inspirational and instructive."

"We still have issues of race and poverty to overcome," reflected Rev. Christopher Lowery, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dover. "My prayer is that we renew the King dream and strive together to make it our reality."

Those attending the public celebration will see the results of the Unity Project, a joint effort of First Baptist Church and the Berlin Christian Fellowship to renovate First Baptist Church in Dover.

"(Attendees) share a unique spiritual bond at this annual event," said Richard Renner, a Dover attorney who is sponsoring the program with Lowery. "It is a point from which our wider fellowship can grow."

Additional information, which includes directions and a flyer, is available at www.taterenner.com/mlk.htm.

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