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Local Groups Work For Nonviolence

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For the groups and community members joining together for this year's Season For Nonviolence, the effort is more than just 64 days on a calendar — but now is always a great time to get the word out.

“It's about building that critical mass in starting a movement,” said Michelle Molina, CEO of PeaceBuilders. “We hope other organizations will follow suit and we will grow larger and larger with each event.”

To begin with at least, this year's event marking the Season For Nonviolence is a collaboration amongst Second District Councilwoman Suja Lowenthal, PeaceBuilders, VoiceWaves, Junior League of Long Beach and The Center Long Beach.

The kickoff for the season will take place from 1 to 2 p.m. this Sunday, Jan. 27, at The Center, 2017 E. Fourth St. The event will showcase several videos for the Season, a VoiceWaves video about local peace building community members and a PeaceBuilders sneak peak of an anti bullying music video.

There will be youth spoken word and musical performances and previews of the Season's scheduled activities (Jan. 30 to April 4).

The national organization defines the season as a 64-day educational, media and grassroots campaign dedicated to demonstrating that nonviolence is a powerful way to heal, transform and empower lives and communities. It is inspired by the legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and has taken place in Long Beach for the last six years.

Lowenthal said there is no better time than now to emphasize nonviolence and peace, with a rash of shootings occurring in the city during the last week — reaching out to youth now can prevent many future crimes.

“There are so many more members of our community who want safe streets and all those things that will lead their children and families to prosperity,” she said. “We need to build on that, build on what the majority of us want.”

Many of the organizers involved with the season said this year would have a bullying focus — a topic that PeaceBuilders has a specialization in.

“The message is about the empowerment of the bystander — the most powerful group of young people in a bullying situation,” Molina said in reference to their music video.

VoiceWaves will have a video called “Enough” that showcases about a half-dozen youth taking on the nonviolence theme.

“They are recounting their encounters with violence in their lives, with some pretty powerful stories,” said Antonio Ruiz, VoiceWaves community engagement coordinator. “It’s a pretty moving video and I think it will give the message that we need to do something about the spike in violence we’ve seen.”

The Junior League of Long Beach is helping sponsor LUNAFEST, which is a video series at the Art Theatre relating to violence and women — the event already has sold out.

Activities during the season will range from art displays to community clean ups. People can follow the schedule by logging onto Facebook and searching for “Season For Nonviolence, Long Beach.”

“It’s 64 days where we call upon community members in Long Beach to work together, to build peace and to shine a spotlight on efforts on a day-to-day basis that help connect the people with their community,” Ruiz said.