



Photo: Christina Fryle/Varbergs Fotoklubb

Democracy, Dialogue and Participation: Varberg Calling for Peace



**VARBERG
CALLING
for Peace**



**The City of
Varberg**

www.varberg.se

Varberg takes responsibility – again

For the coastal city of Varberg, Sweden, 2015 is the year when the community will unite in a joint effort to take responsibility for peace and human rights – just as they did at an international peace summit held there one hundred years before. The municipality has an active role to play and views the project as an extension of the work towards its vision of developing the city of Varberg to become the Swedish West Coast’s creative hotspot, with the help of local residents.

As the 100th anniversary of a significant peace summit approached, here in Varberg we chose a different way to celebrate. The result was the VARBERG CALLING for Peace project, with the stated aim of engaging and involving residents in actively working for peace and a sustainable society. The basic idea is to draw attention to the local and international history of peace, and in doing so combine the forces of Varberg’s administrative bodies, organisations, civil society and local residents to increase awareness of the important perspectives that are vital for peace and a sustainable future. It is also important to encourage participation in order to highlight issues of democracy, human rights, cultural understanding and sustainable environment, and to examine them in greater detail. Also for there to be a legacy once the project has ended, which can be built on and will provide support for future development.

Greater awareness of the age in which we are living and a common educational perspective on our history provide the conditions for future creativity, innovation and action. We believe that the big, universal human issues can unite many, both organisations and individuals.

Thinking globally and taking into consideration situation analysis and environmental and resource perspectives cannot be restricted to municipal or national borders. VARBERG CALLING for Peace is an opportunity, there-



Photo: Mimmi Persson

fore, for Varberg municipality to take a forward-looking, general approach to sustainable development in a project that involves local residents. Engagement on humanitarian issues and the all-pervading problems we now face in the world around us may also increase interest in important issues at local level. The project therefore represents a step towards the realisation of Varberg’s plan: Vision 2025 “Swedish West Coast’s creative hotspot” and a sustainable future.

In this brochure, you can read about a number of different paths towards achieving the above project objectives. VARBERG CALLING for Peace provides a forum for voices that would otherwise not be heard and these will become part of the story, as together we create a new peace movement in both Varberg and Sweden.

Come to Varberg, share our vision!

Christina Josefsson, Head of the Culture and Leisure department, the City of Varberg

There are two big events this year: “Rosenfred – a tribute” from June 25th to 27th, and the International Peace Forum from October 23rd to 25th.

Rosenfred – a tribute

The first of these events is on the date of the 100th anniversary of the Peace Summit and is intended to bring together all the voices and involvement of children and young people in a public dialogue on peace and human rights. It includes a live action role-play called “Our duty” involving around 30 young people who will accurately recreate the Peace Summit, act out the historical events and so make their own mark on the story. Live action role-playing is often described as a kind of improvised theatre without an audience. It can be used to explore and tell a story from the inside and is also a tangible way of getting people involved in the history of the city of Varberg. A number of camps will also be organised on the subject of peace in politics and drama, involving young people from the local area and further afield.

“There is so much going on during these three days. We will be holding discussions and workshops on peace and human rights, along with cultural events, music and street theatre, and most of the activities will take place in the centre of Varberg,” says Hellen Smitterberg, who is the project manager of VARBERG CALLING for Peace and is coordinating the “Rosenfred – a tribute” and International Peace Forum events.

Ten resolutions for peace were passed at the Peace Summit in 1915 and these were then sent all around the world. Part of “Rosenfred – a tribute” will involve creating ten new resolutions for our time. During the spring, young local residents have been working to draw up new suggestions for peace resolutions, and these will be developed and presented during the anniversary ceremony. A large public discussion will also be organised the same day, based on the resolutions. Theatre, music and workshops, all with an emphasis on interactivity, are also key parts of the “Rosenfred – a tribute” peace festival.

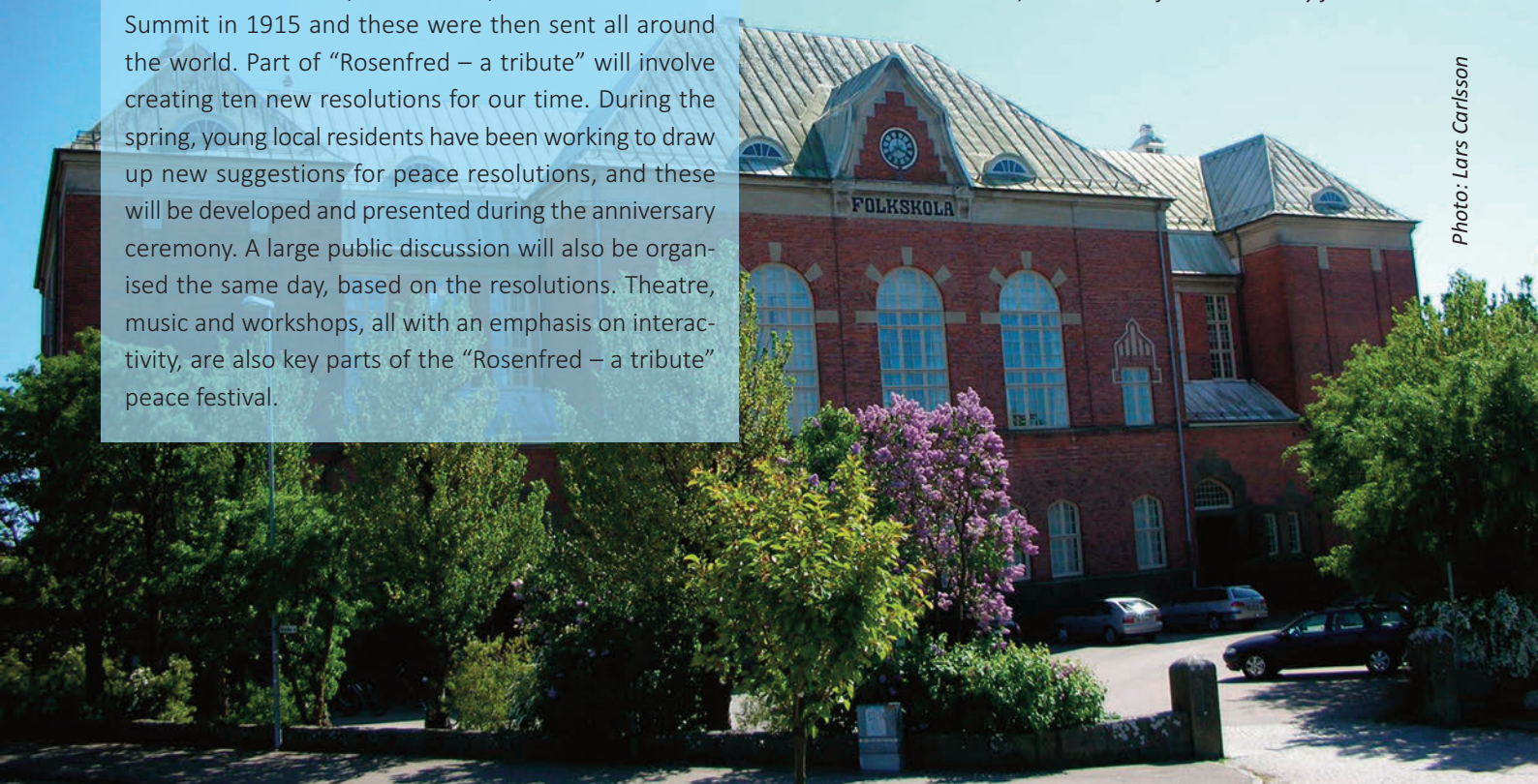
International Peace Forum

To mark United Nations Day on 24 October, an International Peace Forum is being organised – a new platform with invited guests from near and far. This is where the key issues will be discussed. The premises of the local college, Campus Varberg, will become a place for inspirational speeches, debate, panels and intensive work. The Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society is a major partner, in close cooperation with the UN, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and a large number of organisations and institutions in and around Varberg. These groups have also helped to draw up the programme for the three days.

“The programme is intended to inspire the public and participants to continue the work on these issues with commitment, and to help launch a new forum for peace and sustainability,” says Hellen Smitterberg.

Through “Rosenfred – a tribute” and the International Peace Forum, Varberg municipality will not only form opinion on important issues, but will also increase knowledge of and interest in Varberg as a city, at both national and international level. It is also hoped that by the end of the year there will be a growing feeling of pride among Varberg residents – pride in the city’s unique history of peace, as well as in the commitment to peace and human rights in Varberg today.

School of Rosenfred, the place where the 1915 Peace Summit was held, and the site of the anniversary festivities





Many political decisions today are made at regional and national level, which can make people feel disenfranchised and marginalised. This makes it even more important to get people involved and enable them to influence local decision-making processes. We believe that the creativity of associations and individuals can be used to build a better society. So it is important to have a local platform for dialogue and joint decision-making.

The VARBERG CALLING for Peace project provides just such a platform in the form of Open Call. Open Call takes place once a month throughout the year and is a common meeting place for discussion and cooperation, where everyone involved in the project can get together, network and examine a range of issues. It is also a place for sounding out ideas for the project and bouncing them off other people's ideas to help each other's activities to bear fruit.

Open Call is organised at Komedianten, Varberg's cultural centre, which was opened in 2012 and since then has become a natural meeting place for the whole community. It is home to a library, theatre, art gallery with workshop and a welcoming café in the entrance that is always full of people. The cultural centre is also beginning to host creative conferences.

It was at an Open Call at the Komedianten cultural centre that the idea was born for Varberg's traditional cactus planting, which each summer has a theme cele-



brating the anniversary of one of the local associations, to have the theme "Take it easy", as a message of peace to the outside world. Liv Sonntag, Head Gardener for the municipality of Varberg, thinks that Open Call has been a good forum for dialogue with local residents and that it is helping to realise the municipality's vision of becoming the Swedish West Coast's creative hotspot in 2015.

"I think the cactus planting is a good example of how we can work towards the vision in a bold and innovative way. Instead of simply honouring the memory of the 1915 Peace Summit, we want to bring the message of peace into the modern era and reflect on what it means today – in line with the vision. The municipality's green strategy states that traditions must be able to survive and evolve, while at the same time new ones are established, and that is where I think this year's cactus planting fits in well."

Open Call brings together ordinary local residents, people who are actively involved in associations, entrepreneurs and municipal employees in an open dialogue for peace. It is a place where old networks grow and new ones are established. Open Call is an example of how we in Varberg are focused on involving civil society through projects and networks that build on good examples. By doing so, we can highlight the joint responsibility that all parties in Varberg have for ensuring a better, more sustainable future for all.

Creating new ways to bring people together

Peace is so much more than the absence of armed conflict. Peace needs to be realised in families, in residential districts, in towns and cities, between groups and nations, and these different kinds of peace belong together and build on one another. Real peace also means harmony, good relations and caring about one another.

There is a general focus within VARBERG CALLING for Peace on creating new ways of coming together, as interaction and dialogue between people are important ways of eradicating fear, suspicion and prejudice. Two specific arenas for interaction that have been created as part of VARBERG CALLING for Peace are the series of discussions entitled Your Turn and the Peace of Cake sub-project.

Peace of Cake

Is it possible to make new friends by entering a baking competition? Yes! The Peace of Cake sub-project has worked to bring people together through cooperation. The task was to create a recipe for the cake, which would then become the official peace cake and be sold by the city's confectioners throughout the year. A local bakery donated its premises, where the participants mixed, whisked and baked their various contributions. The contestants included young and old, who had been in Sweden for different lengths of time, and they were all brought together by baking. In conjunction with the competition, an open lecture on moral courage was arranged, with former Harvard Professor and religious expert Brian Palmer.

Many of those involved in the project say that they gained new friends by taking part in the competition, and that they had the chance to learn about new experiences and knowledge from situations different from their own.

Sara Drougge was the coordinator and is pleased with the results:

"This is exactly what we intended with the project, for people who might never otherwise have met to have an opportunity to come together and gain an understanding of one another," she says.

Your Turn

Your Turn is a mobile series of discussions in the form of a relay, where people from the Varberg public authorities are able to meet and talk with the general public, often represented by a young person. The people have not met before and their first task is to choose where to go together, as the discussion takes place in a Volkswagen camper van, or surf van. The choice of vehicle is a playful reference to Varberg's reputation in Sweden as a surfers' paradise, but it also helps to give the discussion an informal and open feel. Process manager Jon Liinason explains why it is such a good meeting place:

"There is a magic and a closeness there that we want to use and share with others. The van is an enclosed discussion area. Our only rule is that all mobile phones are switched off. This creates a closeness that is unusual in today's society."

The discussion is recorded and published on the municipality's website as a podcast, with extracts published every week in the local newspaper. One of the meetings was between Fredrik Ivarsson, pastor of Varberg parish, and Mathew Ssemakula, a young asylum-seeker from Uganda, who has lived at the municipality's refugee centre for the past year. Their discussion covered issues such as the importance of finding new friends across borders and the ability of everyone to make even a small contribution to peace efforts. You can listen to an extract from the discussion below.

The idea of Your Turn is to arouse the interest of local residents in the importance of public discussion and by extension get more people to talk about peace and other important issues in their everyday lives.

"We hope that there will be many productive and exciting meetings in the van during the course of the year," says process manager Malin Bellman.

Anna Frid
Communications Officer,
the City of Varberg



Photo: Johanna Wettus

Inspiring people to create everyday peace

The city's local education centre, Campus Varberg, is today the largest vocational college in the Halland region and is one of Sweden's leading providers of vocational education. The core values at Campus Varberg include knowledge, innovation and creativity, and it was not long before it became involved in the VARBERG CALLING for Peace project.

A good example is the college's events and management course, where a number of students are running their own projects as part of VARBERG CALLING for Peace. Here they tell us themselves about the solid peace work they have done, which has given them valuable experiences.

"We are studying on a three-year events and management course and during February and March we studied a course in 'project-based development work,'" explains Lina Rundbom, one of the students.

"During the course, we had the opportunity to choose from a number of assignments to work on and we five chose 'VARBERG CALLING'. We had to examine and communicate the questions 'What do you stand for?' and 'How can you get strangers to talk to one another?' to the general public."

The assignment came from the two process managers for VARBERG CALLING for Peace, Malin Bellman and Jon Liinason.

"They gave us some good advice before we started. 'Don't think – just do it and see what happens!' they said. So we did. We tried out our ideas on people using quick and easy prototype tests, with the results leading to new ideas."

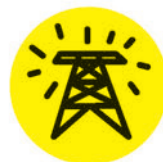
One of the prototype tests was the bicycle in the entrance to the city's galleria. The girls quite simply placed a bicycle "right in the way" and then stood a few metres away to see how people reacted. Contrary to what you might expect, most people did not seem particularly irritated. In fact it gave people something

to talk to one another about as they wondered why the bicycle was there. Another was the mobile "everyday peace cycle café". Loaded up with coffee and pastries, the bicycle was pushed around to various parts of the city, offering coffee and cakes for free.

They asked the people they met how we can create everyday peace. Smile at someone you don't know, pick up litter, and hold open the door for someone were some of the suggestions.

"It really doesn't need to be any more difficult than that," says Lina. "Everyone can do something. The cool thing was seeing how our own energy clearly spread to those people we were talking to."

Annette Wenklo



**VARBERG
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**Varbergs
kommun**



Photo: Malin Bellman



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