

Reflection on Why It Matters: A Symbol of World Peace

Opening Day 13 July 2019

St. Paul - Changsha China Friendship Garden of Whispering Willows & Flowing Waters

Isn't it a glorious day to be together - along the shores of Lake Phalen, perched on a bank overlooking a lily pond, surrounded by weeping willows, nestled into a hillside in front of a granite frieze carved with the symbols and emblems of the Hmong people, standing under the gracefully curved roofline of a pavilion fashioned in the Changsha style, whose colors blend yet pop playfully alongside the natural wildflowers, trees and grass?

Aren't we lucky to be here? Aren't we lucky that so many people, working so many years, across so many miles made it possible for us to be here today, celebrating this beautiful creation? They worked so hard, dedicated themselves so passionately, not only to celebrate the cultures of the Hmong and Chinese people, but also to create a symbol of world peace.

World peace begins with two continents coming together in peace – Asia and the Americas. It begins with two nations coming together in peace – the United States and China. It begins with two cities coming together in peace – Saint Paul and Changsha. It begins with two cultures coming together in peace – the Hmong and the Han. It begins with two people coming together in peace.

Two people coming to the garden, walking up to the pavilion together, finding happiness and love, or seeking solace from pain and loss. Two people seeing the same expressions, sensing the same feelings, comprehending the same thoughts in each other, even if they differ in color, shape, age, gender, or class.

Our hope is that you will visit and return to this garden, to find peace, love, solace, and understanding. To be inspired by the peace, tranquility, art and beauty of this place that has been so lovingly created by diverse and distant communities and given to our community for years to come.

Thank you.

-Written by Karen H Ashe and Caroline H Van,

Daughters of Prof. C.C. Hsiao, Co-Founder of the MN China Friendship Garden Society