

Ridgewood Cares is the outgrowth of an interfaith women's Evening Dialogue group, which has been meeting for over 15 years in Ridgewood, NJ, a suburb of New York City. Inspired by the reading of the book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, by Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Nicholas Kristof, and his wife, Sheryl WuDunn, the group has decided to host *Ridgewood Cares: A Festival of Opportunities* on Saturday, November 13, from 10:00 – 3:00, at the Ridgewood United Methodist Church, 100 Dayton Street at Van Neste Park, in the center of Ridgewood.

The purpose of the Festival is two-fold: (1) to **raise awareness** of abuses, atrocities, and injustices committed against humans worldwide and (2) to alert concerned individuals, families, and groups to opportunities to **make a difference**. The Festival will include a wide range of documentary films, a photography exhibit, speakers and presentations on a variety of issues and solutions, dance performances/lessons, the sale of Fair Trade and handcrafted items from craftspeople in impoverished countries, and multiple opportunities to engage personally with local and international aid groups and their representatives.

Ridgewood Cares believes that shining a strong, bright, and focused light on issues such as human trafficking, honor killings, hunger, child prostitution, HIV/AIDS, poverty, and other human rights issues is crucial to the **elimination of social injustices**. But we also believe that **knowledge needs to be supported by action**, so there will be ample opportunities for those who attend to make a difference – through small and short-term actions to large and long-term ones.

The Festival has **opportunities for all ages**:

Children will be able to create their own greeting cards to connect with children in remote areas of the world, learn how to donate care items (shampoo, diapers) to needy infants, and purchase handcrafted gifts for the holidays.

Teens can identify summer volunteer opportunities, engage in service learning programs, and gain valuable insights and education to make them effective proponents for change.

Adults can sign petitions, become sponsors of American and Third World children, learn how to identify and combat injustices locally and internationally, and make micro-loans to individuals who are attempting to start small businesses to support their families and serve their communities in impoverished areas.

Families can provide farm animals to help the needy in South America and Africa begin to feed their families; volunteer to serve the elderly, homeless and/or hungry individuals in their own communities; and give to a worthwhile cause as a meaningful alternative to sending traditional holiday greeting cards.

Religious, school and civic groups can identify resources for educating their members, learn about local and international organizations that are working toward common goals, and enhance their own effectiveness through networking with participating individuals and organizations.

Ridgewood Cares hopes that all who attend the November 13th Festival of Opportunities – individuals, families, local groups, and participating organizations – will be both **inspired and equipped to make a positive response!**