



# **AIKIDO IN FREDERICKSBURG**

*a 501(c)3 non-profit educational corporation*  
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[Aikido in Fredericksburg](http://www.aikidoinfredericksburg.org) has donated a Peace Tree to the Hope House Festival of Lights Fundraiser. Hope House, is a non-profit transitional facility where previously homeless women and families can stay up to two years. The Hope House program also includes education and financial planning to help end the cycle of poverty.

The Peace Tree is adorned with 1,000 paper cranes folded by Aikido in Fredericksburg students and volunteers. When we think of a symbol of peace, the first thing that comes to mind is often a dove, particularly in Western culture. In the Far East, a more familiar peace symbol is the crane.

In Asia the crane is the bird of peace. Originally it was the sort of peace that comes with prosperity and friendship, such that war is not even considered. The crane took on even greater significance as a peace symbol within Japan right after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In 1955 an eleven year old Japanese girl named Sadako Sasaki was diagnosed with leukemia from exposure to nuclear radiation. She heard that if she folded a thousand paper cranes, she would be granted a wish. She began folding one crane after another, wishing for a well body within a world of peace. Sadly, she died within the year, but her story went out to the people of the world.

After Sadako's death, children joined together to raise money for a peace park in Hiroshima, and a statue of Sadako holding a crane. It is a very moving place. Today there is also a small peace park with a statue of Sadako in Seattle, Washington, and children everywhere fold origami paper cranes in her memory and send them to Japan and Seattle threaded on long strings to be draped over the statue. Sadako's story is used to teach children about the consequences of war, and the power of individuals to bring about change.

Folding a paper crane is like making peace -- some of the steps are awkward. At first it may seem impossible. There is definitely more than one route. Patience and consultation are helpful. And the result, big or small, is a thing of beauty.

Members of Aikido in Fredericksburg echo the words inscribed on the peace shrine at Hiroshima, "This is our cry, this is our prayer, Peace in the World."

