



UNA★USA

Pasadena Chapter

December 2025 Newsletter

We are wrapping up our work in 2025 and looking forward to what we will accomplish in the new year!

As 2025 comes to a close, the UNA-USA Pasadena thanks you for being a part of our work to advance peace, justice, and wellbeing in our local community and throughout the world. We have had an amazing year filled with inspiring events, coffee talks, and conferences, learned from remarkable leaders, and banded together during a year that was difficult for many in our greater Los Angeles community. We wish you health and peace in the new year and we look forward to more offerings that will bring our members and community partners together to bring peace, justice, wellness, and equality to all in 2026!

Meeting the Moment at UN Day '25

It was a joy to gather with our UNA-USA Pasadena community at our UN Day celebration in early November. UNA-USA chapters around the country celebrated UN Day 2025 with the theme Meeting the Moment: Building Our Future Together. In a moving conversation with Ann Diedrich, our guest of honor, Arn Chorn-Pond, discussed how he is building the future by sharing his experiences and perspectives on the Cambodian genocide and the significance of music. Arn emphasized the importance of empowering young people to meet the moment and advocating for a just future.



Arn Chorn-Pond and Ann Diederich in conversation.

Performances by Paul Livingston, Board member Danny Peterson, and Antoinette Peterson beautifully honored the resilience of our community after a challenging year and presentations by other San Gabriel Valley leaders met the moment!

Attendees also enjoyed food catered by Chef Heidi Alsangak, a partner of the Tiyya Foundation, and heard from her about her experience bringing Sudanese cuisine to the United States. Other participating organizations and individuals that shared their stories included Magrit Polak from Anne Frank LA, Paul Livingstone from Soul Force Project, Danny Petersen from Drumming 4 Peace & Healing, and Nancy Annick from American Women for International Understanding (AWIU), Elias Matar from Lighthouse Peace Initiative, and Bryan Takeda from Hitari-no-Sato and the Kansha Project.



Magrit Polak from Anne Frank LA presenting.

The UNA Pasadena also honored the winners of our annual UN Day Video Challenge, all of whom were local high school students who produced videos showcasing their work in nonprofits. Honorees were awarded \$500 to donate to a nonprofit of their choice. Honorees were NoteAble, Partnership for Success Mentor Club, and Glean On Me. NoteAble, a nonprofit founded by Lauren Poplock, shows the value of bringing music therapy and education to youth on the spectrum. With **NoteAble**, Lauren has worked with Ability First and Westmoreland to demonstrate and introduce a variety of instruments to children. The **Partnership for Success (PFS) Mentor Club**, led by Jack Leichter, Olivia Dabiri, and Robert Panossian, supports **Partnership for Success**, a Pasadena nonprofit that supports partnerships between the Pasadena Unified School District and local independent schools.

Through these partnerships, PFS increases access to unique educational opportunities over the summer and mentors students throughout their academic careers. **Glean On Me**, founded by Apollo Wong, is a community fruit-picking project that aims to combat hunger and decrease food waste in our community by picking and distributing unwanted fruit from local participating areas. All three organizations recognized as Video Challenge awardees used UN Sustainable Development Goals to respond to the moment in their communities.



Lauren Poplock from NoteAble and Ann Diederich.



Students from the PFS Mentor Club and Ann Diederich.

UNA on the Road



UNA-USA Pasadena President Ann Diederich with Madison Peak from the UNA-USA National Office.



Ann Diederich, Ian Eriksson, and Arn Chorn-Pond at the Temple of Understanding.

AWIU Career Opportunities in International Relations Symposium at the Central Library in Washington D.C. (Nov 7). Ann Diederich co-chaired this annual event that provides resources for

The Temple of Understanding's 65 Year Anniversary Celebration in NYC (Nov 8) brought together groups of all cultures and belief systems across the globe to discuss how interfaith and cross-cultural education can address the climate crisis and multiple conflicts around the world. UNA Pasadena Fellow Ian Eriksson met up with Ann

more than 150 young women aspiring to work in international relations and development. Ann was joined by three other UNA-Pasadena members and Madison Peak, the UNA-USA's Community Engagement officer who spread the word about the Youth Engagement Opportunities through the UNA-USA.

Ann Diederich and Char Bland at the UNA-USA Leadership Summit in St. Louis.



Ann Diederich with Dr. Soon Young-Joon at the UNA-USA Leadership Summit.



Diederich and Arn Chorn-Pond, our UN Day '25 keynote speaker.



The Temple of Understanding panel



UNA Pasadena Board Member Char Bland with Ann Diederich.

UNA-USA Leadership Summit in St. Louis (Nov 14-16) brought to light our need as advocates of the United Nations to “Meet the Moment” during a time when the US has withdrawn from or ending funding for multiple UN bodies, including the WHO, and the UN Human Rights Council. Board Members Char Bland and Ann Diederich, attended sessions and met with fellow UNA-USA leaders and UN advocates, like women’s rights advocate Dr. Soon Young-Yoon, to find ways to bolster support for the UN and the SDGs locally. We look forward to sharing more about the summit on Monday, December 15th at 6pm at the Western Justice Center. (RSVP link: <https://forms.gle/YppziLL4H7ebnWgr5>)

UNA St Andrews: UNA outside the USA across the Pond

At its core, the UNA-USA is a mothership for nationwide organizations from UNA-USA Chicago, UNA-USA LA, and UNA-USA Pasadena. These chapters resonate

and embody the mission values that the UNA-USA stands for: *global peace, justice, freedom, and wellbeing.*

But what about chapters that are less formal, those that are student-led, and which are made of the world's next generation of leaders? Outside my work as an intern for UNA-USA Pasadena, I am a second-year MA International Relations student at the University of St Andrews in Scotland, UK. This fall of 2025 I've had the privilege of attending some of UNA St Andrews' events to contextualize how UNA translates within academics, and outside local USA community settings.

The first event I attended was a Pub Quiz (highly common in St Andrews) in a collaboration between UNA St Andrews and the Model UN societies. Societies are like university clubs in the U.S., you can join them as a general member and even run to be part of their committees. The location, The Saint hotel and restaurant in St Andrews, provided a cozy and welcoming environment for attendees. Participants could order drinks and then make their way down into "the bunker" in preparation for the quiz. Each question presented offered a new angle and entertaining subject on world politics: *who is the current First Minister of Scotland? What global leader was pictured on vacation while shirtless? And when was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted?* (How many questions could you readers answer confidently?) Each question you answered correctly on your paper was a "point" for your team, where papers were then exchanged and graded by different teams at the end of each round. St Andrews is an extremely multiethnic, culturally and socially diverse university, and this was certainly manifested in the different undergrads and postgrads who showed face at the quiz.



A poster for University of St. Andrews Model UN.

A few weeks later following the quiz I attended an event collaboration between UNA St Andrews and Women in Politics (WIP). The event was a career panel featuring four or five women, one or two who are lecturers at St Andrews, one woman who worked at the World Food Program based in Rome, Italy, one who worked for UN House Scotland, and another who worked for the Council of Foreign Relations, a Washington, D.C. ThinkTank who was also an alumni of St Andrews. All the women speakers had prior background as civil servants and had lots of advice to offer those in attendance. From working on conflict prevention, conducting research such as on the war in Ukraine, addressing humanitarian crises, to teaching and more, the biggest takeaway for me was how each woman felt they had executed their role and how for some their current position was not one that they had envisioned themselves in. For example, one woman who is a lecturer in the School of

International Relations stated how she'd "always wanted to be a diplomat," until she began to feel that "diplomats don't have as much of an impact" as she had thought. The woman from UNA House Scotland, and a previous Chair of UNA Scotland, also shared how she felt about her role, asserting that what UNA House Scotland is committed to doing is "making a difference," and given her tone and evident passion it was a statement that resonated deeply with myself. Being able to learn about career dedication firsthand from those who truly embody their roles is crucial, especially in international politics. For the young St Andrews alumni working at the D.C. ThinkTank, she shared how her role enabled her to feel as though she "could be one of those people who change things" about the world, something I myself and likely most others in the room felt heavily within our own aspirations.

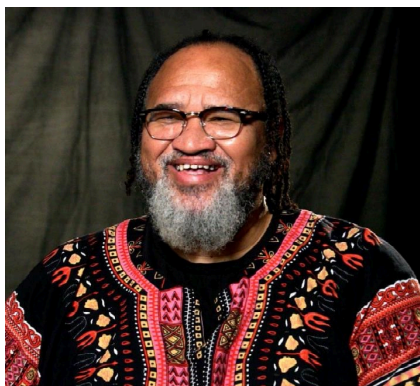
UNA St Andrews embodies the same aspects of diversity, inclusivity, and community-based collaboration as UNA-USA Pasadena, and it's been a great new UNA space to be a part of in my home-away-from-home in St Andrews, Scotland.

Final Event for 2025 at the Western Justice Center (75 S. Grand Ave)

We invite you to join us at our End-of-Year wrap-up and holiday meeting on Monday, December 15 from 6-7 P.M. at the Western Justice Center . The meeting will include a presentation of key takeaways from the recent UNA Leadership Summit in St. Louis, as well as announcements on upcoming programming. Attendees will get to preview events and opportunities coming up for the next year. Light refreshments will be provided. Please join us for this celebratory UNA-USA Pasadena gathering before the start of the new year. RSVP below!

[RSVP here!](#)

New Leadership at UNA Pasadena



Daniel "Danny" Petersen

Daniel "Danny" Petersen joined the UNA-USA Pasadena Chapter as a board member in October. Danny is a Grammy Award-Winning Artist, Peace Ambassador, and Leadership and Wellness Advocate, Honorary Doctorate, and Founder of Drumming 4 Peace & Healing. Daniel (Danny) Petersen is a multifaceted leader whose life blends ministry, music, business, education, and community transformation into one extraordinary calling. For nearly three decades, he has used rhythm, faith, and innovation to uplift individuals, strengthen organizations, and restore broken communities across the world. Daniel uses music and the African



Danny leading a coffee talk at UNA Pasadena in September.

Djembe Drum to help people overcome traumatic experiences, connect to their inner healing, and rediscover purpose. Through more than 1,500 workshops, performances, and training interventions worldwide, he has impacted audiences on five continents and 10 Countries.

Self-employed since 1995, Danny has built a unique platform as a Grammy Award-winning percussionist, international speaker, corporate trainer, and peace facilitator, impacting over 110,000 people in-person through workshops, ministry events, and high-level leadership engagements.

Danny has already had so much impact on the UNA-USA Pasadena Chapter, and we are thrilled to welcome Danny to this leadership position to continue making great change in our community.



Liv Bjorgum

Liv Bjorgum joined the UNA-USA Pasadena Chapter as a Communications Intern in September. She graduated from UC Berkeley in May with a double major in Psychology and Sociology and researches women's health. Liv loves writing of all types, learning new things, and meeting creative people, all of which make her especially excited to be a part of the UNA!

In the Works for 2026

Screening of documentary ***Respect My Crown*** (end of January / early February)

UNA SoCal Regional Meeting (end of January / early February)

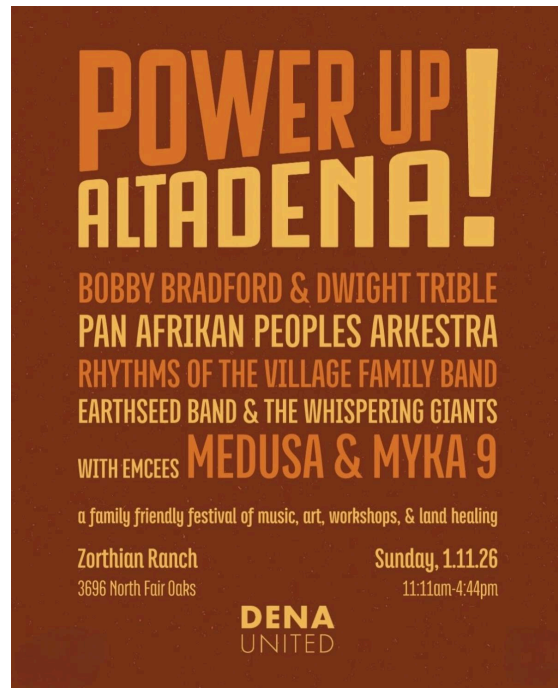
UNA Pasadena Table Sponsorships

- **AWIU International Women of Courage Alumnae Impact Award** –March 3, 2026 (UNA Pasadena Table)
- **Heal Altadena** - A Collaboration with Narrative 4, musicians, artists and stewards of the earth (mid-April)
- **Mayor's Interfaith Prayer Breakfast** (May) - (UNA Pasadena Table)

Soul Force Project Presents Power Up Altadena! (1/11/2026)

Soul Force Project is an Altadena-based nonprofit and community of artists practicing global music to promote change and social justice. This January, join Soul Force Project for Power Up Altadena!, a healing day of community filled with live world music, jazz, and hip-hop, workshops, food, and local vendors. This family-friendly event is free for all Altadena residents and will give back to revitalizing the cultural community of Altadena.

RSVP here!



Welcome to all new Members of the UNA-USA Pasadena Chapter!

Thank you to all our news members of UNA-USA Pasadena Chapter, we're so grateful for your support and involvement.

Matthew Vasko

Welcome to your local UNA-USA community

Not a member yet? Get your UNA-USA Pasadena membership today!

Membership Types

➔ **Standard: \$50**

The standard membership makes up the backbone of our movement. Gain access to all of our events, opportunities, and networking.

➔ **GenUN: FREE**

Ages 14–17. As a GenUN member, you'll gain access to incredible benefits that help you grow as a leader, connect with others, and take action for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

➔ **Young Professional: \$25**

Members ages 18 to 30 may choose this membership to unlock benefits related to advancing their career and professional portfolio.

Why become a member?

Being a member of UNA-USA Pasadena comes with many benefits, including...

- UN career development opportunities and skill building
- Opportunities to serve as a UNA-USA delegate at high-level UN events
- Discounts on tours of UN Headquarters in New York City
- Subscriptions to *PASSPORT* and *UNA-USA Today* publications, and more!

[Click HERE to join UNA-USA Pasadena today!](#)

Stay Up-to-Date with What We're Working On

We constantly have lots of fun events and opportunities for you all, so don't miss out and *give our socials a follow!*

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