

Local defenders of clean water receive help from a hero in their field



Regina Brave (second from left) of South Dakota, who was arrested while protesting the Dakota Pipeline in North Dakota, visits Newtown Borough on Wednesday, May 3, 2017, to join other protesters opposing pipelines. The vigil was sponsored by the Coalition for Peace Action Arrows4AmericanIndians, Bucks County Green Party and 350.org Bucks County.

“Water is life”: A group of Bucks County residents wants you to know that.

About 20 of them gathered Wednesday in Newtown Borough, playing music, waving handmade signs and shouting their thanks to the many cars passing by a busy corner in the 100 block of East State Street. They did it to show support for those still fighting against Dakota Access Pipeline at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North and South Dakota, to support the rights of all people to have access to clean water, and to protest fracking locally.

One of the voices among their ranks was no stranger to those protests.

Regina Brave, or “Grandma Regina” as she’s affectionately known, was arrested in February along with others for their part in the Standing Rock protests. Luckily, Brave was spared the violence of being forcefully removed, mainly because, she said, she was against the idea of conflict.

“We stayed in camp and prayed,” she said. “When I first got there I spoke to people because I was against direct action. A lot of people got hurt ... a lot of innocent people got hurt.”

Surrounding Brave were other protesters looking at and speaking to her admiringly. If they touched her it was with great affection and they spoke to her with a high degree of respect.

In addition to protesting at Standing Rock, in 1973 Brave spent time at Wounded Knee as part of the American Indian Movement during their time at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

The group of activists meets to support Standing Rock and to protest the Dakota Access Pipeline. They recently moved from their previous spot in Langhorne to Newtown Borough because it’s a busy spot with traffic at the nearby intersection and customers from the Starbucks across the street.

Ruth Ann Tickel-Logan, president of Arrows, a nonprofit she founded to support American Indians and one of the coordinators of the protest, is friends with one of Brave’s sons, and through him she was able to connect with Brave.

She, along with Cathy Leary, the director of Coalition for Peace Action, have held many of these events, and said that they will continue to do so until their message is heard.

“We’re here to defend the land,” Leary said. “We’re standing in solidarity with the water protectors all over the world.”

Joshua Winthrop, of Northampton, said he hopes the group can raise awareness to the ills of fracking and its potentially negative effects on climate.

“The fact is that oil is not good for our environment, it has immediate negative effects on our environment,” he said.

Michael Doyle, of Langhorne, traveled twice to Standing Rock in December of 2015 and February this year, and said that seeing the plight of the people there inspired him to try and make a difference back home.

“We have a responsibility to do this,” he said.

He was at Standing Rock just a week before Brave was arrested.

She called Wednesday’s protest “awesome” and said the local effort to oppose fracking and support her people was “incredible.”

“Water is life,” Brave said. “We are made of water. Without water nobody can survive.”

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