

Press Release for Immediate Use

TRANSFORMING GUNS INTO GARDEN TOOLS WITH A LIVE BLACKSMITHING DEMONSTRATION

ONEONTA, NY — RAWtools Buffalo, a “guns to garden tools” program led by Mark Stradley, will do a presentation and a blacksmith demonstration from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM on Saturday, September 19 at the “Red Door” Church (First United Presbyterian, 381 Main St., Oneonta). Appropriate for all ages. Free event. All are welcome.

Mark Stradley, a school counselor in the Buffalo Public Schools, trained himself in 2019 to be a blacksmith to address the pain of gun violence and to reimagine a world where we prioritize peace over violence.

The event will introduce attendees to the work of RAWtools and its mission of **disarming hearts, forging peace, and cultivating justice**. RAWtools uses blacksmithing to transform donated, destroyed weapons into garden tools and other artistic pieces while encouraging conversations about nonviolence, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding. It also honors individuals who have lost their lives to violence.

During the event, RAWtools will offer a presentation followed by a **live blacksmithing demonstration using a donated weapon that has been rendered inoperable**. Community members attending the event will be invited to step up to the anvil, take the hammer and work alongside the blacksmiths as the destroyed weapon is forged and given new purpose. Many find this opportunity to be healing.

The practice is inspired by the biblical vision found in the books of Isaiah and Micah of people beating their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. RAWtools brings that imagery to life by physically reshaping donated, destroyed weapons into tools that can be returned to communities and put to constructive use.

The “Red Door” Church invites residents of Oneonta and the surrounding communities to attend the event, learn about the work of RAWtools, and participate in the **live blacksmith demonstration**.

EVENT DETAILS

What: RAWtools Presentation and Live Blacksmithing Demonstration

Hosted by: First United Presbyterian Church of Oneonta (“Red Door” Church)

Date: Saturday, September 19, 2026

Time: 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Location: 381 Main St., Oneonta, NY 13820

MEDIA CONTACT: Rev. Dr. Cynthia Walton-Leavitt

607-242-8184 or cynuff@aya.yale.edu