Talking it over

New Mohonk Consultations chair Marty Irwin plans peace conference for November

By Erin Quinn

F

E

A

T

ING IT OVER

rmarty irwin

marty irwin is the new chair of mohonk consultations.

Mohonk Consultations’ tradition of creating gatherings designed to inspire the exchange of ideas through dialogue began a hundred years ago with the Lake Mohonk Conferences on International Arbitration between 1899 and 1916, a series of public dialogues criticized with being one of the forces that gave rise to the United Nations. The beauty of the natural surroundings of Mountain House, perched upon a pristine lake lake in the bosom of the Shawanegans Ridge, coupled with the Quaker tradition of inclusiveness has provided the perfect setting for people of all political, religious and ethnic backgrounds to meet, exchange perspectives, possible solutions and common ground of being part of a global ecosystem and wanting all life to thrive.

Although the conferences have been taking place for a century, the not-for-profit volunteer group Mohonk Consultations was founded by third-generation family member Kirk Irwin in 1980. This created a governing, democratic mechanism whereby the Mohonk Consultations Board of Directors would work collaboratively to help gather people of diverse backgrounds to discuss critical issues facing the Hudson Valley and throughout the world, while at the same time inspiring groundbreaking solutions to these problems.

"We offer a conference every year," said Bree Berg, the long-term chair of Mohonk Consultations who is now turning over his position to Martin Irwin, a lifelong environmentalist, local volunteer and member of the New Paltz Town Board, as well as Environmental Distinguished Achievement Award and a funda forum," Berg added. "This year we're teaming up with Mohonk Mountain House for a three-day event that will allow their guests to register and participate and have several keynote speakers, breakout sessions, networking opportunities. What we want to do is to allow people to become educated, inspired, networked with one another and then act."

Both Irwin and Berg enjoy volunteering with Mohonk Consultations because of the model it has created over the past century. "We've learned that the family was more interested in having a place that people could meet and discuss issues of local and global concern than they were a fancy hotel," said Berg. "Their tradition of bringing together different political, religious, educational and economic leaders, as well as members of the media and inter-