

## Vanderbilt professor uses sign to promote peace

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### ERIC SCHECHTER

Eric Schechter believes achieving world peace can start with a honk.

Maybe those who tap their horns at the sight of his giant, cardboard "Honk for Peace" sign are unwittingly crossing some sort of action threshold.

Maybe that effortless act of doing *something*, will inspire them to do more to make their feelings heard. He hopes so, anyway.

Schechter, a 60-year-old Vanderbilt math professor, believes the war in Afghanistan is doing more harm than good. He applauds soldiers who defy their deployment orders. He protests the war to anyone who will listen to him and stands on West End Avenue in front of Centennial Park a couple times a week during the evening rush hour with his homemade sign. He averages three honks per minute.

### A sleepwalker no more

"Most people in this society are too busy to care about politics and what is going on in the world," he said. "We are a nation of sleepwalkers."

Until five years ago, Schechter was one of them.

Then, his parents died. He got a divorce. His children were out of the house. And, he started to read about politics. Then, he met people from the Nashville Peace and Justice Center, where community members gather to discuss peace and social change.

Jane Hussain, chairman of the center's board, said Schechter has become one of Nashville's busiest peace activists.

"He read a book about personalities and found that he is idealistic," Hussain said. "It took him a while to realize that most people are just not that way."

Schechter ran for Congress this year until he was

ousted in the Democratic primary. He hasn't decided whether he will run again. He manages [nashvilleprogressivecalendar.com](http://nashvilleprogressivecalendar.com), which lists almost-daily war protesting events in Middle Tennessee.

Asked what he, personally, gets out of his newfound activism, he replies, "There are 7 billion people in my family, and I care about my family."



**Eric Schechter, a Vanderbilt math professor, sings carols and protests the decision to send more troops to Afghanistan.**  
GEORGE WALKER IV / FILE / THE TENNESSEAN