



HEARTLINE

NEWSLETTER OF THE HEARTLAND UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST DISTRICT • WINTER 2003

Health Care Fund Continues

Members of the Heartland District are continuing their financial support for our office administrator **Barbara Hamilton**, who was diagnosed with breast cancer last summer. Barbara has no health insurance, and the costs for her surgery and treatment are expected to total from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

You're invited to contribute to a District Employees Health Care Fund authorized by the District Board. The UUA Director of Church Staff Finance has advised us that contributions count as tax-deductible donations to the district and do not create an employee tax liability.

To contribute to help our valued office administrator meet the crippling debt of treatment for her life-threatening illness, please send a check to the Heartland District Office, 445 N. Pennsylvania St., Suite 330, Indianapolis, IN 46204-1889. Make the check out to Heartland District and indicate that it is for the District Employees Health Care Fund in the memo line. ◆

RE-Vision

By Nancy Combs-Morgan, Lifespan RE Program Consultant

At the recent Fall LREDA Conference in Sacramento, CA, I was moved by

2004 Heartland Fall Training Institute

October 22–24, 2004
Louisville, KY

Watch for further details in upcoming *Heartline* editions and through your local congregation.

Sobonfu Some's presentation, which included an insightful piece on how people in West Africa greet one another. She shared her conviction that all people, *regardless of age*, need to be truly welcomed into any community, and that when we take the time to fully welcome and greet one another there is an *opening of the spirit*. Such an opening of the spirit then becomes a symbolic *opening of the circle of community*. This part of her talk spoke to me and made me consider how we welcome our children, youth, and adults in the RE programs in our congregations.

During a meeting earlier in the week, a group of UUA Program Consultants met with the LREDA board, and in our discussion we began to explore how growth and hospitality in our congregations are directly connected. More specifically, we began to consider how we truly welcome children, youth, and adults.

Here in the Heartland District, I have been asking religious educators what they do in their congregations to be truly welcoming. Many congregations have a RE greeter, who is stationed at the greeter's table before each service. The RE greeter has access to the congregation's RE prospectus and is available to answer any questions about RE programming. Beyond that, I found a wide variation—from RE greeters escorting children and youth to their new class and introducing them, to visiting children being specially acknowledged during Children's Time. At the **UU Church of Farmington** in Farmington Hills, MI, DRE **Kathy Silver** has recruited a youth to write special notes to children and youth who've visited in the last week or so. The note is just a thank-you for visiting, but it also offers help if they have questions. These are some of the nuts and bolts of what we do to welcome our children, youth, and adults to our RE programs, yet before adding a new technique in your community, first explore some of the faith-based reasons we should extend this ethic of hospitality in our RE programs.

When we welcome the stranger, regardless of age, race, nationality, sexual orientation, or physical ability, it speaks volumes for who we are and what we are trying to religiously educate. We have so many visitors in our congregations, perhaps due to so many doors being shut in our society. When we welcome all and ensure that our facilities are truly and fully accessible, we are making an explicit and implicit statement that our faith calls us to open our circle of community.

I'd love to hear what you do in your congregations to be truly welcoming.

District Update

The good news is that our Youth Cluster groups are meeting—the OH/KY Youth Cluster met at **First Unitarian in Louisville** on Dec. 6, and they invited both Middle School and High School youth. If you have youth in your congregations who haven't gotten into going to district CONS, these day-long cluster events are perfect for them. The Michigan Youth Cluster also organized a youth CON in **Birmingham, MI** on Nov. 7–9.

If you are a DRE and would like to get involved in your area cluster, please contact me for information about what's coming up. The cluster meetings are great ways to share information, receive collegial support, and develop new skills. Be sure to put on your calendars that the HUUD RE Committee is planning a **Renaissance Module** before the annual meeting (Wed., March 31–Friday morning, April 2). ◆

Heartline by E-mail!

To receive the *Heartline* newsletter as a PDF file via e-mail (viewable and printable using the free Acrobat Reader utility), contact **Barbara Hamilton** at office@heartlanduu.org.

HUUD Board Notes

By Doug Taylor

The HUUD board met December 5-7 in Fort Wayne, IN. The board begins its meetings with worship, mindful of our place within a religious denomination. We also have a check-in to reconnect with each other.

HUUD Board President **Connie Haas Zuber** reported on the UUA District Presidents Association meeting in November. Connie is the vice president and president-elect; she'll become president of this group next year. She relayed exciting news about the Uncommon Denomination campaign that any congregation can check out on

the UUA web site. The district presidents and the UUA will be looking at the district funding mechanism for review: This funding is the rebate to districts for paid staff and programs. Growth was also a topic for discussion: It is predicted that congregations of less than 200 will have difficulty maintaining a successful ministry program due to rising costs.

Good church is intentional: The district's GA workshops will be a congregational showcase of success stories. We'll be reaching out to find thriving congregations with success stories to share.

The board spent time reviewing and keeping policies and bylaws up to date. We also reviewed our goals for the district and had much discussion on

how to make the "ends policies" more measurable.

Connecting with congregations was discussed in some depth. We need to establish links with our congregations and to promote district services. A board member will contact each church and ask about what their church does intentionally well. We will also promote GA registration.

Our financial audit looks good, and the controls we added last year in response to the embezzlement are working well. The auditor gave us a good report. **Mary Andrus-Overley** informed the board that the former office administrator has been convicted and sentenced. Her sentence includes repaying the district for any losses.

We ended the weekend meeting by attending a service at the **UU congregation of Fort Wayne.** ♦

Social Justice Network Marks Anniversary

December 2003 marks the first anniversary of the creation of a nine-church **UU Social Justice Network of Southeast Michigan (UUSJN)**. During the last year, this network of concerned UUs regularly met to exchange information about social justice and community service; surveyed 552 local UUs on social justice issues; took a stand against war in Iraq; and organized a regional Workshop on Civil Liberties. The Civil Liberties Workshop, held during October 2003, was co-sponsored by the Heartland District and the UU Service Committee.

The UUSJN invites UUs to join them for dialogue on strategies, including use of the Internet, for building inter-church social justice partnerships at a **workshop during the April, 2004 Heartland District Conference in Detroit.**

Network plans for 2004 include launching a Web page; focusing on environment as an issue; organizing educational speakers; and planning a workshop on the environment. Contact network co-chairs **Randy Block** at 248-549-5170 or **Ann Chapman** at (810) 231-6744 for more information. ♦

Heartline

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445 N. Pennsylvania Street, Suite 330, Indianapolis, IN 46204-1889
(888) 948-HUUD (4883) fax 317-634-5385 www.heartlanduu.org

District Executive	Mary Andrus-Overley	888-948-4883	de@heartlanduu.org
Office Administrator	Barbara Hamilton	888-948-4883	office@heartlanduu.org
Lifespan RE Program Consultant	Nancy Combs-Morgan	859-276-1585	pc@heartlanduu.org

Heartland Leadership

President	Connie Haas Zuber	260-456-4132	chzuber@comcast.net	Fort Wayne, IN
V.P.-Finance	French Eason	317-876-9862	frencheas@aol.com	Indianapolis, IN
V.P.-Admin.	Doug Taylor	812-949-0411	dougdig@aol.com	Louisville, KY
Secretary	Rev. Emmy Lou Belcher	269-947-3117	uufgetlb@chartermi.net	Traverse City, MI
At Large	Kyle Bagnall	989-839-6908	acanum@cs.com	Midland, MI
At Large	Sally Borden	313-533-1494	sally233@aol.com	Detroit, MI
At Large	Shirley Hoffstedt	616-847-1035	shoffi@altelco.net	Muskegon, MI
At Large	Michael Ohlrogge	734-764-5065	michaeloishere@netscape.net	East Lansing, MI
At Large	Rev. Laurie Proctor	219-744-1867	revldrpr@aol.com	Fort Wayne, IN
Youth Observer	Hannah Stampe	513-681-8973	hcsv13@yahoo.com	Cincinnati, OH
UUA Trustee	Charles Redd	219-456-4356	credd@verizon.net	Fort Wayne, IN
Annual Meeting	Barbara McKeand Stevenson	313-863-6891	barbarastevenson@ciscidetroit.org	Detroit, MI
(Co-chairs)	Gwendolyn Winston	248-443-5679	gwenbwinn@comcast.net	Detroit, MI
Communication	Rev. Todd Eklof	502-899-1337	todd@cliftonunitarian.com	Louisville, KY
District Youth	Hannah Stampe (youth ch.)	513-681-8973	hcsv13@yahoo.com	Cincinnati, OH
	Tim Murphy (adult ch.)	765-643-6147	nightcoaster@yahoo.com	Indianapolis, IN
Extension	Rev. Nana Kratochvil	231-755-2931	huucnana@netonecom.net	Muskegon, MI
Leadership Dev.	Michael Dunaway	734-354-1863	m_dunaway@sbcglobal.net	Farmington Hills, MI
Lifespan R.E.	Kathy Silver	734-433-9504	ksilver192@aol.com	Farmington Hills, MI
(Co-chairs)	Barbara Weber	937-435-5046	blw622@yahoo.com	Dayton, OH
Social Justice	Mary Lou Malone	313-837-7952	mlmalone@flash.net	Detroit, MI
Young Adult & Campus Min.	Rev. Kathryn Hawbaker	888-549-7221	revkat@bright.net	Oxford, OH
Nominating	Barbara Weber	937-435-5046	blw622@yahoo.com	Dayton, OH
UUMARep.	Rev. Norman Naylor	248-524-9339	normbetsy@juno.com	Troy, MI
MUUCRep.	Veronica Smith	313-824-2702	vsmith508@aol.com	Grosse Pointe, MI
MUUCRep.	Susan Porter	317-251-7346	mrsporter@aol.com	Indianapolis, IN

Send news or articles to: Tiffany Taylor, Editor, 1001 Oakland Dr., New Albany, IN 47150; HeartlineNews@aol.com
Address changes: Heartland District, 445 N. Pennsylvania, Ste. 330, Indianapolis, IN 46204; office@heartlanduu.org

Next newsletter deadline: February 1, 2004

News from Our Congregations

*What's happening in your congregation? Send your news to **Tiffany Taylor**, editor, HeartlineNews@aol.com.*

Birmingham Church Publishes Cookbook

At the **Birmingham UU Church in Bloomfield Hills, MI**, a workgroup of eight women, chaired by **Ann Woodman**, spent the past year collecting and collating recipes from BUC congregation and friends. The result is *Food for Thought*, a compendium of the very best recipes the fine cooks at BUC have to offer. The book was published and released this fall with all proceeds from the sale going to benefit the Religious Education department. *Food for Thought* has met with an enthusiastic response from the congregation, not only for the wonderful recipes it contains, but for the quotes from famous Unitarians, Universalists, and UUs scattered throughout its pages. The whole process of its creation was a great community-builder both for the workgroup and for all who contributed to its success by sharing their recipes.

Copies of *Food for Thought* can be purchased from BUC for \$15 in person, or for \$20 sent to you by mail. Contact BUC at 38651 Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304 or 248-647-2380.

Opera Created by UUs to Be Produced in Bloomington

On **February 7-8**, the **UU Church of Bloomington, IN** will produce the opera *A Fire in My Bones* (**Deborah Phelps**, composer and **Rev. Mary Ann Macklin**, librettist). Winner of the 1997 UU Women's Federation Feminist Theology Award, the Opera has since been rewritten and instruments added. Many of the characters will be performed by graduates from the Indiana University School of Music. The Opera is a very inspirational and powerful piece. It is a message that affirms the dignity of all persons regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, and gender. **Tickets will be \$10/adults, \$5/ students and persons with lower incomes.** More information is available from the church: 812-332-3695.

Traverse City Ordains Minister of Music

On October 12, 2003, the **UU Congregation of Grand Traverse, MI** ordained **Kevin Tarsa** as their Minister of Music. Over 100 people were involved in creating and leading Kevin's ordination and reception, reflecting the way he includes so many in his ministry. Children sang the songs he has taught them over the years, and musicians presented a half-hour concert for the prelude to the service. Kevin's stole was designed and fashioned by **MaryAnn Force**, one of the founders of the congregation; it was laid on his shoulders by representatives of the wide range of ages, interests, and talents that have been touched by his ministry.

Lansing UUs Get Involved in the Community

The Social Action Committee of the **UU Church of Greater Lansing** under the leadership of **Evelyn Jackson** has been active this past fall in projects benefiting the larger community. Six members have taken active leadership in the Greater Lansing Network Against War and Injustice and helped to extend its focus to include voter registration. Forty volunteers worked with members from eleven community churches in the Eastside Covenant to build a Habitat for Humanity house. Church and committee members continue their support of local area shelters, and **Julie Roy** has been instrumental in moving donated food and personal items to Haven House over the past year. At Christmas time, two special offerings are taken which benefit three local organizations. ◆

HUUD Anne Miller Lifespan RE Award

The Heartland District Lifespan Religious Education Committee announces the activation of the Anne Miller Lifespan Religious Education Award for the Heartland UU District to **honor significant contributions to lifespan religious education**. Nominees will be sought annually for this award. The District LRE Committee will serve as the Award Committee.

The Anne Miller Award for Excellence in Lifespan Religious Education will be presented to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to

religious education for children, youth, and adults over the years. It was originally established by the Ohio Valley UU District LRE Committee in 1989 and was last given in 2000. Now a Heartland UU District award, it will be given at the annual meeting in April 2004.

This award carries **Anne Miller's** name as recognition for her 25 years of dedication to RE. Anne was from the **Louisville First Unitarian Church**.

A nominee for the award should be a UU whose achievements include several of the following:

—Contributed to the quality of RE at the local level

—Raised the quality of RE at the district level through leadership and publications

—Affected more than one society

—Took advantage of opportunities for continuing education

—Has been innovative in the use of RE resources

—Brought dignity to the profession of religious education

Nominations need to include the nominee's name, address, and telephone, along with specific qualities, achievements, contributions, and data that provide the committee with information on the criteria listed. **Nominations for the coming year will be received through February 29, 2004.**

For further information or to submit a nomination, contact **Kathy Silver**, Chair, Heartland District LRE Committee, UU Church of Farmington, 25301 Halsted Rd. Farmington, MI 48335, 248-478-7272, e-mail ksilver192@aol.com or kathy@uufarmington.org. ◆

Visit the Uncommon Denomination Web Site

A new web site with resources from the *Uncommon Denomination* media campaign—including covenant/guidelines, resources on congregational hospitality, and Tier 1 media resources—is up and running: www.uua.org/uncommondenomination.

Dear Heartland UUs:

After the initial shock of being diagnosed with breast cancer in July while undergoing a physical for health insurance, I realized that I wasn't as concerned about recovering from the breast cancer as I was about the financial impact the high cost of treatment was going to have on my future without the benefit of health insurance. Weeks of research to find financial assistance resulted in virtually no help for a gainfully employed, single person.

Blessings come in many forms. I've been very fortunate to have received small grants from Avon Cancer Care and the UUA in Boston. Also, some of my medical providers have discounted their fees.

The most awesome blessing has been the kindness and generosity shown by all of you who have sent in donations to the Heartland District Employee Health Care Fund. As I believe your prayers have helped me to do well physically throughout the surgery and chemotherapy phases of my treatment, your donations have helped tremendously in giving me peace of mind. By mid-January, I should be through with the final phase of my treatment, six weeks of radiation.

*Saying thank you doesn't seem to be enough. I've never experienced such compassion and am totally overwhelmed. **THANK YOU!***

*Warmest regards,
Barbara Hamilton
Office Administrator
Heartland District of the UUA*

Heartland District Calendar

Jan 23-24 Program Council, Detroit

Feb 1 Heartline deadline

Feb 7-8 District Board, Fort Wayne

*Feb 13 Northern Cluster mtg.,
Midland, MI*

*Feb 29 Heartland Anne Miller RE
Award nomination deadline*

*March 1 Spring Chalice Lighter
application deadline*

*March 31-April 2 LRE Renaissance
Module, Detroit*

*April 2-4, 2004 Heartland Annual
Meeting & Conference, Detroit*

May 1 Heartline deadline

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