



JPD Newsletter

Connecting all Unitarian Universalists in the Joseph Priestley District:

Southern New Jersey, Delaware, Eastern and Central Pennsylvania, Maryland,

September-October, 2004

District of Columbia, Northern Virginia

Vol. 10 No. 1

JPD UUs Tackle Voter Registration for 5th Principle and UUA's Faithful Democracy

"There is work to be done. I'm not talking about simply affirming the importance of voting, nor of simply promising to vote ourselves. I'm talking about mobilizing to get out there and work to prevent the travesty of the last election from recurring. We want to see this nation's promise of democracy restored, and ... to ensure that everyone's vote is counted."

-Rev. William Sinkford, President, UUA

The UUA has formed Faithful Democracy, an interfaith, grassroots effort, promoting civic action as a moral responsibility. It calls on UU congregations to form task forces, focusing on voter registration and education, getting out the vote, monitoring polls, and advocating voters' rights.

All Souls Church, Washington, DC, has organized trips to "swing" states: one in Philadelphia to register voters September 17, and a week-long trip to Tampa, FL in late October to encourage people to vote.

Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA, at a city-suburban, subway-bus terminal, registered 51 voters, 90 percent minorities, on two days. More fall registrations are planned. Members of UU Church of Delaware County, Media, PA also registered voters in Chester, PA in mid-summer.

Eleven Maryland-Virginia-DC churches held summer voter mobilization meetings: Accotink, All Souls, Bull Run, Channing, Columbia, Fairfax, Mount Vernon, River Road, Rockville, Silver Spring and Towson. Voter task forces were also underway at UUs of Sterling, VA, BuxMont UU Fellowship, Warrington, PA, First UU Church of Berks County, Reading, PA, and UU Church of the Restoration, Philadelphia, PA. UUs are on a roll.

(Information on voter registration activities of the churches mentioned above was based on reporting in summer newsletters. Undoubtedly, others will be participating as fall activities get underway.)

Harrisburg UUs Prepare Women in Prison for Life on the Outside

Since December 2001, through its Social Justice project, members of the Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA, have assisted women in prison and their children, helping women to prepare for a life on the outside.

Among the project's goals are: working with existing programs, such as PROGRAM for Female Offenders; increasing congregational understanding of the criminal justice system, how it works and its impact on individuals, families, and communities; enhancing the visibility of the Harrisburg church as a force for social justice in the larger community; and providing follow-up support after traditional programs end.

Its biggest success has been a clothing bank, "Working Clothes for Working Women." Church members donated \$10,000 worth of clothing for the women's job interviews and work. The clothes are stored at Promise Place, a half-way house, supported by the church, for use

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Cherry Hill UUs Back Mosque Renovation

For the past year, Rev. Melanie M. Sullivan and members of the UU Church in Cherry Hill, NJ have supported attempts by a Muslim group to acquire and renovate a building for worship services. The good news: In August, ground was broken, marking the start of complete renovation of a vacant building, a community eyesore, as a newly-created Mosque.

Anonymous flyers, distributed through the community suggested the Islamic worshippers might have links to terrorists. Others opposed the Mosque at Zoning Board hearings.

Along with many other faiths, the UU church formed Coalition for Multi-Faith Democracy, in support of the Muslim community. The opposition faded and the Mosque received Zoning Board approval.

Harrisburg, continued

by women in the work-release program operated by PROGAM and Promise Place.

Church members offer training to women in the program, including a monthly "Time and Paper Management" class and "Creatrics," a workshop of improvisational performances focusing on thoughtful issues with humor.

To inform the congregation, the SJ committee has offered lectures, open to the community, talks by PROGRAM staff and successful graduates of Promise Place, monthly newsletter articles, a play presented in the Sanctuary and available books: *Laughing in the Dark* by Washington Post reporter, Patricia Gaines and *Serving Time, Serving Others*, editors Tom and Laura Lagana, short articles on the kindnesses of inmates, prison staff, victims and volunteers.

(Based on material submitted by Jim Cavanaugh, Unitarian Church of Harrisburg)

Special UU Foodies Help Homeless, Needy

There are special kinds of foodies -- gourmet, vegan, Asian-fusion -- but UUs have their own variety. They are the JPD foodies who monthly stock food pantries, bake casseroles, cook and serve dinners for their communities' homeless and low-income families.

A gold foodie medal goes to Rev. Howard N. Dana, Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, PA, who, true to his word, swallowed a worm when church members met the challenge to collect a ton of food for the Central PA Food Bank.

Nineteen volunteers from UU of Berks County, Reading, PA served 414 from 124 local families: 186, children, 184 adults, 44 over 60.

This spring, UU Church of Annapolis, MD distributed 50 bags of food and gave \$2,092, aiding 20 individuals and families to pay utilities and meet other emergencies.

UU Congregation of Fairfax, Oakton, VA regularly shops for, sorts and delivers food to Our Daily Bread, serving area families.

Towson UU members ran out of freezer space when they prepared 75 Texas hash casseroles for its every-other month stint for Our Daily Bread.

Yes! UUs are special foodies!

What's Happening....

Two acting ministers began service as the summer ended: Rev. Lori Staubitz at UU Fellowship of Southern MD, Leonardtown, MD and Rev. Sandra Fees at UU of Berks County,

Reading, PA....Nancy Shaffer will be ordained at UU of Annapolis, MD, October 10....Mt. Vernon Unitarian Church, Alexandria, VA dedicated its newly-renovated Hollin Hall, now air-conditioned, non-leaking and non-fuse-blowing.UU Society of Mill Creek, Newark, DE, set aside \$1,500 of its operating budget for grants to new churches. Mill Creek got its start through similar help from First Church, Wilmington, DE....River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD launched its program for Green Sanctuary designation and Bull Run UUs, Manassas, VA submitted its application for Green Sanctuary status, having completed the 17 requirements.

What We Care About....Members of UU Congregation of York, PA sewed a Gay Pride Quilt, named "Unity," to be hung in the church lobby. T-shirts, some worn on Gay Pride marches, bandanas, placemats, a neck tie, were used. Leader of the project stitched graffiti words, such as, "pride, acceptance, dignity"....UUs of Cedar Lane, Bethesda, MD are contributing stories of bad taxi experiences (taxis never appear or strand a senior at a doctor's office or grocery store) to be presented as testimony at a County Council on legislation aimed at reforming the local taxi cab industry....Towson UU Church, Lutherville, MD will provide volunteers for a new Day Center, first project of Abraham's Tent, a Baltimore, MD County coalition of agencies, churches. The agency provides meals, medical services, employment contacts and counseling, and literacy classes to homeless men and women.....River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, MD gave \$7,396 from an outreach fund to seven area and UU organizations.

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