



the communicator

THE NEWSLETTER OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST WOMEN'S FEDERATION

November, 2006 | Vol 24, Issue 4

Thanking Our Donors

We would like to extend our thanks to those of you who have so generously responded to our fall fundraising appeal, which went into the mail at the beginning of November. If you have not yet responded and would like to make a gift before the end of the year, a remittance envelope is included in this issue of *the Communicator* for your convenience. Remember: all donations to UUWF are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

UUWF Funding Cycles Begin

The second funding cycle of our UUWF Grants Program is off to a promising start, with 10 proposals submitted by the October 15 deadline. This program funds innovative social justice projects that directly affect women and girls and contribute to positive social change, as well as initiatives that challenge the root causes and consequences of gender oppression or that highlight and celebrate women's achievements. UUWF's Margaret Fuller Awards Program, which funds accessible projects in UU religious feminisms and has the same deadline, has received 12 proposals. Announcement of grant recipients for both programs will be made shortly after the beginning of the new year. For more information about both programs, go to www.uuwf.org or contact the UUWF Office.

Lanning Funds Available

The Lanning Fund is a restricted UUWF endowment that benefits the widows and daughters of deceased UU clergy. Over the years, this fund has been used to provide for tuition payments for retraining, for health insurance premiums, for stipends to provide cultural activities, and to alleviate a burden of debt for an individual with limited income, just to cite a few examples. From 2001 to present, the fund has assisted approximately 40 widows of Romanian Unitarian ministers. For guidelines and applications, contact the UUWF Office.

What Does Help Look Like? Learnings from the Gulf Coast

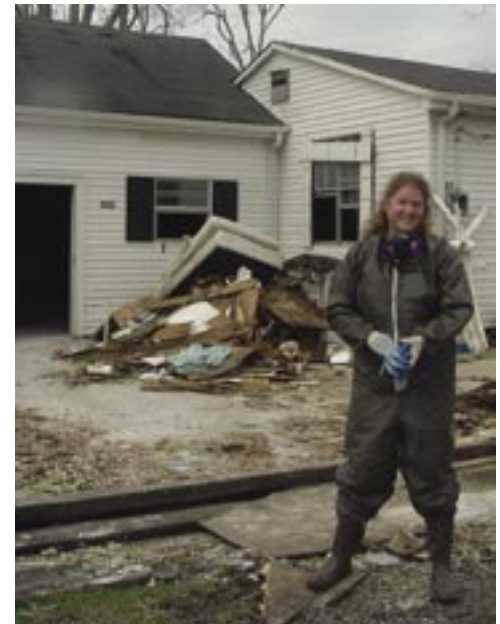
by Rev. Wendy Von Zirpolo
Minister, UU Church of Marblehead, MA

When Hurricane Katrina hit, something stirred in my soul. I knew the stirring would only be quenched by delivering my body physically to the devastated shores. I lacked an articulation of what that stirring meant in religious terms, and yet my journal entry read, "This would be my pilgrimage." Today, six trips later, I have arrived at a very clear sense of why we are called to participate in trauma response, what our responses mean to our faith development, and how our efforts spread our saving message. What follows is my pilgrimage revisited and a call to acts of faith for us all.

October, 2005: Sponsored by the UU Trauma Response Ministries Team, I fly to Lacombe, LA, to offer Sunday services, dedicate a baby, and provide pastoral care. Congregants are reeling with the aftershocks of the storm, assessing damages, rebuilding and frustrated. Much of their time is spent trying to locate friends and relatives and grieving losses of life, relationships and property.

November: I leave Massachusetts with a van full of donated supplies and head for the Gulf Coast. The van includes inscribed hymnals from Massachusetts Bay District congregations, sheets, pots, pans, a chainsaw, crutches and a walker, dishes, flatware, and my favorite: 12 clarinets, two trombones, two keyboards, a saxophone and a French horn (needed by a band teacher in Lacombe)! Joining me is Annette Marquis, who spent two weeks in Mississippi in September. We deliver most supplies to a free market in Waveland, MS, the chainsaw goes to the president of the Gulfport congregation, and the hymnals are shared with ministers in Louisiana and Mississippi.

February, 2006: I return as one of nine adults accompanying over 30 youth from the Winchester, MA, Unitarian Youth Group. Led by



Rev. Wendy von Zirpolo, February 2006, Plaquemines Parish, New Orleans

Youth Director Jessica Rubenstein, they offer their hearts and hands to Project H.O.P.E. Located in Violet, LA, this is a grassroots relief project with the motto "solidarity not charity." We spend the days gutting homes in two devastated parishes: St. Bernard and Plaquemines in New Orleans.

March: I return to Lacombe, accompanying a joint youth and adult work group from Winchester. Led by Rev. Mary Harrington, the trip includes relief work for Northshore UU congregants in Lacombe but is also a joint effort with those congregants at Project H.O.P.E.

April: I return to New Orleans to meet with UUA Moderator Gini Courter. We tour Common Ground, Project H.O.P.E. and each of the three New Orleans area churches. We meet with volunteers and discuss needs with Project H.O.P.E. staff. Out of this meeting, possibilities emerge of some collaboration with UUWF. Plans are birthed.

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New Trustees Bring Communications, Financial Development Skills to Board

The UUWF Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the appointment of two new members: **Catherine Onyemelukwe**, Westport, CT, who joined the board in October as Vice President/Development and **Rev. Meg Barnhouse**, Moore, SC, who will join the board in 2007 as Vice President/Communications.

Catherine joined the Peace Corps on graduation from Mount Holyoke College and went to Nigeria to teach German. She met her husband there and they were married a few months after she finished her Peace Corps assignment. They raised three children in Nigeria while she continued to teach, later operating her own garment business. In 1986 she came back to the States for a Master's Degree at Yale. A few years later the couple decided to make their home here, as their children were grown and seemed likely to live in the U.S. They moved to Westport, CT, in 1993 and began attending the Unitarian Church in Westport in 1994, where Catherine has been active with the endowment, fundraising and Social Justice committees.

In 1996 she became head of the local library board just as the library was launching a capital campaign. Her interest in fundraising grew rapidly, and she added professional development training to the volunteer instruction she had received. She began professional fundraising with consulting assignments, then became Director of Development for the Westport YMCA. She left the Y to join Episcopal Relief and Development and then the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, both in New York. She now consults to nonprofits in resource development.

Catherine and her husband visit Nigeria every other year to see family and friends. Their older son is there now with a bank. Their younger son and daughter live in Boston, the latter with her husband and two children.

Meg Barnhouse lives as an "out" liberal thinker in the deep South. The adventurous and sturdy spirit this requires is supported and encouraged by the congregation of the UU Church of Spartanburg, SC, where she is full time minister.



Catherine Onyemelukwe (left) and Rev. Meg Barnhouse are the newest members of the UUWF Board.

A Presbyterian minister for 15 years, Meg worked as chaplain at a women's college, then as a pastoral counselor in private practice while raising two sons. When she was invited to preach at the local UU church, she became aware of what a good fit Unitarian Universalism was with her personal theology. Absorbing the readings in *Singing the Living Tradition*, drinking in pieces by Audre Lourde, T.S. Eliot, Tagore and Mary Oliver, she suspected that she had found her "tribe."

A long-time feminist/womanist, Meg has been advocating for justice for women since working at the Women's Center at Princeton Seminary. Arriving in Spartanburg at age 26 and learning there was no women's shelter in the county, she helped found the Spartanburg SAFE Homes Network, a network of individuals and families who were willing to shelter women and their children in their homes. The organization has grown and flourished, providing a shelter with a large staff and services that receives funding from United Way and many other sources. Meg has a black belt in karate and has taught self-defense classes for adults and children. She is looking forward to working with the UUWF as a continuation of working to strengthen women and girls.

Meg writes songs and books, traveling the country as a speaker, singer-songwriter and humorist. Skinner House has published her fifth book, *Did I Say That Out Loud?*, and she has produced two CDs of original songs, *July Blue* and *Mango Thoughts in a Meatloaf Town*.

Her sons are now 16 and 19 years old, funny, handsome and wise. She says they are people she would choose for friends even if they weren't related.

Spiritual Youth Gets Out the Reproductive Justice Message: With “a little help from our friends”

By Emily P. Goodstein, Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom Program Coordinator

A national program of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom educates, organizes and empowers youth and young adults to put their faith into action. Thanks to a generous grant from UUWF in 2005, SYRF continues to promote the religious reproductive justice message to spiritual young people of all faiths on campuses and in communities across the nation.

SYRF kicked off its second biennial Student Summit in Washington, DC, in June. The event brought together over 60 college students from SYRF campus chapters and coalition member organizations, plus religious leaders and scholars, for three days of worship, dialogue and networking. The work of SYRF campus activists was highlighted through a campus organizing panel, and workshops featuring organizers from partner organizations showcased SYRF’s commitment to coalition building. The conference also featured an “Interfaith Organizing 101” session, which included guests from the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism and Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks, UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women’s Issues.

After the Summit, students returned to their campuses and communities to implement what they had learned. At the University of Missouri, Columbia (Mizzou) they welcomed their peers back to campus with a “Count the Condoms” event, attracting new members to their already established SYRF chapter. Mizzou students are also working with Missouri RCRC staff on a communication training to ensure their spiritual pro-choice message is heard effectively by diverse groups of young adults. SYRF work in Missouri is expanding beyond Mizzou – interns will soon be hired to begin organizing at the Washington University in St. Louis. We are eager to continue the strong SYRF presence in Missouri and raise the interfaith voice for reproductive justice in St. Louis.

SYRF organizing in the Boston area has also really taken off post-Summit! Harvard Divinity School student Sarah Peck returned to school after attending the conference inspired and



Students get ready for a morning interfaith worship service at Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom’s Student Summit.

eager to begin organizing youth and young adults in her community. Sarah’s experience at the Summit is reflected in her note to conference organizers after the event:

The SYRF Summit... dramatically affected my paradigm and worldview. I felt inspired by the diverse range of young people who gathered together during the conference. I appreciated the range of voices that spoke up in this space. I have lingering memories of lunch conversations between Presbyterians from Ohio and Unitarians from Boston agreeing on the issues of women’s advocacy and the right for every woman to choose what happens to her body...The spectrum of voices supporting reproductive justice at this conference touched me. As I listened to a wide range of presenters speak, I started to imagine the possibilities of bringing similar presentations to Harvard. I appreciated the honesty and sincerity of each presenter and contributor at this summit. I felt as if the summit spoke directly to me as a call to action.

Sarah has mobilized the Harvard Seminararians for Choice (another RCRC program) around reproductive justice issues in Cambridge, MA. In addition, Sarah has formed a strong coalition with other reproductive justice organizations in both the Harvard and greater Boston areas. An event featuring Jessica Arons, from the Center for American Progress, is planned for early November. The event is co-sponsored by Harvard Seminararians for Choice, Harvard Students for Choice, and other local student groups.

As SYRF continues to grow and inspire young adults nationally to become involved in our important work, we are thankful for the support we have received from the UU community. It would not be possible for us to reach the large numbers of youth without your help and constant devotion to reproductive justice.

UU congregations can get involved with SYRF by encouraging youth and young adult groups to

become associated SYRF chapters (associated chapters are also eligible for SYRF grant funding)! There are also many opportunities for SYRF involvement on college campuses – from planning an event to providing information about spirituality and reproductive justice to friends and classmates. To stay up-to-date, visit our website and sign up for our new monthly e-newsletter, The SYRFforecast!

For more information about SYRF or to get involved with SYRF organizing in your community, please visit www.syrf.org or contact the SYRF Program Coordinator at info@syrf.org or 202-628-7700, x15.

E-Mail Addresses Wanted

As part of our efforts to expand our capacity for immediate communication with members, UUWF is collecting e-mail addresses. To place your address on our growing list, send an e-mail to espencer@uua.org. In the subject line, put “Email Address.” In the message, type your full name, complete address and phone number and, on a line by itself, your e-mail address.

Please be advised that we will not sell or release your e-mail address to advertisers. And thank you!

Clara Barton Intern Focuses on Reproductive Justice

by Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks, UUWF
Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues

Washington is always an interesting and exciting place to be, especially when we can celebrate our hard work with a victory. Late in August, the FDA approved Plan B (emergency contraception) for over-the-counter use by women age 18 and older. This decision allows timely access to the drug, increasing its effectiveness in preventing pregnancy. As we celebrate this victory, we need to continue our work to provide young women with over-the-counter access.

Another victory to celebrate is the increased attention given to medically inaccurate abstinence-only programs. The Government Accountability Office (go to www.gao.gov for more information) has released a legal opinion that includes the following language:

"under the Public Health Service Act, the department of Health and Human Services should ensure abstinence education material prepared and used by groups receiving federal funding includes accurate information on sexually transmitted infections and the effectiveness of condoms."

More and more attention is being drawn to the fact that these federally funded

programs are not meeting the public health needs of our communities and are giving our young people inaccurate and manipulative information. We need religious voices to lead the conversation about the necessity of providing our young people with comprehensive, medically accurate sexuality education.

Share your stories, activities and activism with Meredith: mschonfeldhicks@uaa.org

Stay informed! Sign up for periodic email updates about women's issues at www.uaa.org/uuawo

Throughout my first year as UUWF Clara Barton Intern for Women's Issues, I have been continuously impressed with the dedication and commitment to reproductive justice demonstrated by UUs across the country. UUs are working hard to guarantee that women have access to the essential components of reproductive health care. Their efforts include starting abortion funds in their communities, writing letters to Congress after Sunday services, and educating themselves and their communi-

ties about domestic violence. More women are asserting their beliefs about reproductive choice in their conversations with friends and family.

Thanksgiving and the winter holidays are rapidly approaching, and I want to encourage all of you to open up a respectful dialogue with your friends and family about these issues. Know that you are supported by UUs and other liberal voices across the country. Please visit www.uaa.org/uuawo to learn more about Unitarian Universalism and reproductive choice, comprehensive sexuality education, and domestic violence. The site also has information about the 3rd annual Sexuality Education Advocacy Training coming up this March in Washington, DC. Consider joining us to learn more about supporting comprehensive sexuality education in your community.

In addition to your conversations with others, I would love to learn more about what you and your UU group are doing to support reproductive justice. Please contact me with your stories, op-eds and activities and questions. I will be facilitating workshops at various District Assemblies and would like to connect with as many of you as possible. Look for my name in the program or check www.meredithindc.blogspot.com for more information about which meetings I'll be attending. I look forward to hearing from you.

Katrina, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

August: I am part of a delegation that returns to be with our brothers and sisters, UU and otherwise, as the one-year Katrina anniversary is marked. We attend services, listen, don bright blue "Standing on the Side of Love" t-shirts and participate in the Jazz Funeral procession from the Convention Center to the Superdome. I am aware that, just as it was in October, 2005, much time is spent grieving losses of life, relationships and property and yet, hopes abounds (go to uaa.org/news/gulfcoastrelief/1year/detail).

I have learned much in this year. I have learned about showing up and delivering myself to a process in which I hold few, if any, answers. I have learned what it is to ask

"what does help look like?", to listen closely for the answer and then either deliver it or get out of the way. I have learned that Unitarian Universalism looks different in other parts of our country. I have learned that sometimes the best way we can support any and all of our congregations is to be active, effective UUs. Most of all, I have learned that how we choose to respond in times of trauma is a direct reflection of who we are as a faith community.

If we believe we are a religious people offering a saving message to the world, then we need to show up and work with others to save pieces of that world. If we believe we are a religious community offering transformative spiritual development to seekers,

then we need to connect our people with opportunities that directly connect faith and transformational action. And, if we believe, truly believe, ours is a path toward Beloved Community, then we must fully participate and embody an understanding that a wound to one is a wound to us all.

Come now: the world awaits...

If you are interested in learning more about recent relief efforts visit uaa.org/news/gulfcoastrelief/1year or click on "Voices From the Gulf" at uaa.org. This site links to specific information about how to volunteer as well as information about donations. Additionally, you will find links to reflections from Gulf Coast ministers and relief workers.

A Visit with the Busy Bees and Their New Hive

by Carla Feldhamer, Member,
Carbondale, Illinois, Unitarian Fellowship

I was asked by the UUWF to share my experiences from my travels to Zambia in May 2006, when I visited our partner AIDS hospice in Kabwe. There I delivered supplies, renewed friendships and helped dedicate the newly built Busy Bee Cooperative Workshop, made possible by a grant from UUWF during its first funding cycle.

Our fellowship has been involved in a partnership, along with Hospice of Southern Illinois, with Ranchhod Hospice and Orphan Care Center in Kabwe, Zambia, since June 2003. Ranchhod is an AIDS testing, education and end-of-life care center which opened in the fall of 2002.

During a visit to Ranchhod in 2004, I met a group of women who were sitting on the lawn of the hospice doing craft projects and talking together. I was amazed by the strength of these women, who were raising their grandchildren and children of other family members who had succumbed to the AIDS pandemic.

They all faced tremendous stigma in their villages, but were finding support from each other as they created crafts to be sold at markets. They came rain or shine, sometimes finding shelter from the heat or rain under the trees or in an empty shipping container. These women embraced me and I brought their beautiful faces and spirit home with me to Carbondale.

Priscilla Mwanza, one of the Busy Bees, lost her first born daughter at the age of 20, and is now mother to her three grandchildren and to her late sister's daughter. She also takes care of her 75-year-old mother. Priscilla's husband is dead from AIDS and she is HIV positive. To support her large family, she makes and sells beads and yarn work with the Busy Bees.

As I was glancing through my copy of the *UU World* in September 2005, I saw an announcement that the UUWF was accepting grant applications for projects geared toward helping women who have been oppressed. I immediately imagined how wonderful it would be for the Busy Bees to have a permanent workshop to increase their stability and ability to produce more income to provide for their families.



The Busy Bees of Kabwe, Zambia show off their craftwork and their spirits. You could write more here about the grant and stuff, since we have plenty of space on this page.

The grant was received and building of the workshop commenced on the hospice property. My visit in May was a chance to see the vision becoming a reality. The building was very near completion. The Busy Bees had their craft tables set up outside as they sat on the grass in a circle sewing, knitting and beading while watching their "new home" take form. The day before I departed for home, a dedication party was held that included cake, music, speeches and dancing. The home of the Busy Bees was officially named the Bee Hive!

In addition to their craft activities, the women use drama to educate their villages about stigma, voluntary HIV testing and prevention. They performed during the dedication and I was moved by the message and emotion.

The Bee Hive was completed in August with work counters, storage, a toilet and sink, cabinets, bright blue walls and cheerful curtains. The Busy Bees moved in and are presently well-settled and very happy. Two more sewing machines and an overlock machine have been purchased. A tailor has been giving lessons to the women to improve their skills and they have secured a contract to sew new uniforms for the children at the orphan day care and some

of the outreach clinics. The Stephen Lewis Foundation donated funds to provide bicycles for each of the women, as many of them walk many miles to get to the hospice.

The effort to provide this building for the Busy Bees has truly been collaborative. The grant money has truly changed the lives of many people affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zambia. I will be forever grateful for the generosity and vision of the women of the UUWF.

Sisterhood,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Adele Sargent Hersey, Jeanne Irish, Zada Simning Koblas, Barbara Rames, Barbara Langland Stout Whipple, Association of Universalist Women, First Universalist Church, Minneapolis, MN

- **Izetta Segal**, UUWF, First Unitarian Universalist Church, San Diego, CA
- **Barbara Helinski, Connie Silverio**, Unitarian Universalist Women of Greater Lynn, UU Church of Greater Lynn, Swampscott, MA

For information about the Sisterhood, go to www.uuwf.org or contact the UUWF Office.

www.uuwf.org



UUWomen

*Advancing justice for women
through education and advocacy*

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Welcoming New Members of the Clara Barton Sisterhood

The Clara Barton Sisterhood is a UUWF program named for and inspired by Universalist Clara Barton, who began the work for which she is best known – organizing relief for the victims of war and disasters – when she was over 40. A special category of UUWF life membership for women aged 80 and over, the Sisterhood is a way for women's groups, churches, and other organizations or individuals to honor women for their contributions to church and community life.

Between January 1 and November 1, 2006, the following women have been enrolled in the sisterhood:

- **Doris L. Schwaab**, honored by The Alliance, First Parish UU Church, Arlington, MA

- **Betty Gutmann, Luella Newstrom**, Women's Group of the Minnesota Valley UU Fellowship, Bloomington, MN
- **Jane S. Muniz**, Women's Circle Alliance, First Parish, Brewster, MA
- **Katherine C. Cox**, Joseph Priestley District Women & Religion
- **Jean McCormick**, the Demeters, All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, Kansas City, MO
- **Lois Snyder Hansen**, UUWF, Unitarian Church, Lincoln, NE
- **Carol Haines Anderson, Rev. Sarah Barber-Braun, Drusilla Congdon Cummins, Betty Fullerton Curry, Mary Ewald Djerf**,

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