

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville

Social Justice Council and Project Team Annual Reports 2010-11

The Charter of the Social Justice Council was approved by the Board on Nov. 17, 2010, after a process of writing and going through several revisions and presentations to the Board.

For the activities fair sponsored by Program Council, Social Justice Council created a display about our social justice work centered around a theme of giving gifts of justice. IHN and Interweave prepared sections of the display. We won the award for best decorated table, and later used the funds we won to provide a cake in the Social Hour one Sunday to thank the volunteers who do the social justice work.

Social Justice Council presented several Social Justice Forums during the year. Each centered around a speaker or film with discussion, and the congregation and the public were invited.

Social Justice Council members helped plan and carry out monthly Helping Hands Sundays activities prepared jointly with Rev. Leah and RE.

Social Justice Council arranged and paid for UUFG to be listed as a sponsor of the annual Susan B. Anthony Luncheon and the annual United Nations Day. Various members of the Social Justice Council maintained relationships with other organizations involved in social justice work and kept the congregation advised of opportunities to participate.

ACTION NETWORK

In December, the Social Justice Council hosted a special meeting of representatives from all ACTION Network congregations, in the UUFG Social Hall. We organized a potluck dinner, with holiday decorations. For the program, we requested that a representative from each congregation share briefly about how their spirituality helps them in their social justice work and Pat Rayos led the group in discussion of goals.

ANTI-RACISM

- Worked with Rev. Leah and RE to do a Helping Hands project with the children, making signs to carry in the MLK Day Parade.

- Brought together UUFG's unit of children and adults in MLK Day Parade in downtown Gainesville, including pre- and post-discussions led by Rev. Garmon using the Experiential Guide developed by Rev. Joyner
- Led UUFG's participation in Dismantling Racism Change Team programs affiliated with Gainesville's Office of Equal Opportunity, some of us serving on the Team or as facilitators of Study Circles and Action Teams, or as members of Study Circles
- Presented a Social Justice Forum featuring informal discussion with Cecil Howard, the Director of Gainesville's Office of Equal Opportunity.

Alice Primack

GAINESVILLE COMMUNITY MINISTRY

UUFG supported Gainesville Community Ministry through both money contributions and donations of food for their pantry.

INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK (IHN) UUFG Team

Our congregation hosted a total of 12 families consisting of 12 women, 2 men, and 24 children, during four one-week hostings. The hostings were August (8-15), October (10-17), January (23-30), and June (12-19). Two Key Coordinators organized the hostings for each week. With the help of the Chairs for each volunteer role, fifty to seventy UUFG members volunteered to help during each hosting. In addition to sheltering our IHN guests in our Religious Education classrooms for the four weeks, we provided gas for the transportation van, a total of about 600 meals during the four weeks of hosting, and donated \$30 to add to the pool of Christmas gift certificates for the families. As a special welcome for our IHN children, our Religious Education leaders placed a gift package for each child in the RE classrooms.

In October we joined the other IHN congregations in the Tenth Annual Fore the Families Golf and Walk Challenge fund-raiser to cover operating expenses for IHN of Greater Gainesville. The golf challenge was to see how many holes of golf one could play in a day. The walk challenge was a 3-mile walk. Six UUFG golfers participated in the Golf Challenge, three UUFG members participated in the Walk Challenge. Many of our UUFG members supported our challengers with donations, and with donations from the other IHN congregations a total of about \$43,000 was raised.

The Co-Chairs for evening and dinner hosts resigned. We currently have one chair for each of the following volunteer roles: set up/break down, dinner and evening host, food preparation, overnight host, staples, and laundry. We would like to have Co-Chairs for each of these positions. Also, we need Co-Chairs for Transportation and Computer assistance as well as another Key Coordinator.

Meetings with Key Coordinators and Chairs were held as needed to prepare for the hostings. One or more Key Coordinators attended the monthly meetings with Key Coordinators from the other host congregations and staff of IHN of Greater Gainesville.

Bonnye Greene, UUFG-IHN Team Coordinator

INTERWEAVE

UUFG has hosted Interweave monthly programs typically located at UUFG including a dinner gathering and community building. This year we also had a very impressive presence at the Pride Celebration down town Gainesville where UUFG members joined the Gay Price walk and UUFG/Interweave displayed a tented table. Some of this year's programs include transgender discussion groups, member/guest speakers featuring discussions about how we became a welcoming congregation, a special showing of Put This on the MAP including participation from area high school support groups focusing on teen support and acceptance, and personal stories. We have also supported community events such as public showings of movies/documentaries focusing on gay/lesbian issues.

Janese Nix, Chair

PEACE PROJECT TEAM

- The Social Justice Council co-sponsored the annual Vets for Peace Winter Solstice Concert in December. We bought an "ad" in the program which told about UUFG's work in peace and other social justice issues.
- Liaison with Gainesville Interfaith Peace Coalition of which UUFG is a member.
- Featured some educational articles in the Millhopper with regard to the UUA Study/Action Issue on Peacemaking. Rev. Meredith did a sermon on this and gave out copies of the Statement of Conscience. In January, the congregation voted at a congregational meeting to adopt the UUA Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking for our congregation.
- Mary Bahr headed up a Social Justice Forum with speaker Scott Camil on the cost of war.

PINERIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT

In September we were invited to expand our work with the children of Pineridge by moving our Pineridge 4-H Club, which had met for several years at UUFG, to the new Pineridge Community Center in a donated apartment in Pineridge. We created the Pineridge 4-H After-School Program to provide engaging academic and enrichment activities for elementary school age children who live in the Pineridge subdivision. Pineridge is a high poverty area and residents are mostly African-American. The 4-H After-School Program met daily according to the public school calendar, 3:30-5pm. We remained affiliated with Alachua County 4-H which provided basic medical insurance coverage for members and volunteers during the after-school activities. More than 40 of the approximately 60 elementary age children living in Pineridge registered for our Program, with 12-20 in attendance on any given day. We formed a relationship with their school, Norton Elementary, which presented workshops at the Center and provided us with some study materials. We began each day with a light snack, helped the children do their homework or study reading and math, and then played games that require thinking or had special activities. Each day ended with a group activity built around a weekly theme and a substantial and nutritious snack. For special activities, one day a week a high school drama teacher and some of her students worked with the children to create and do a presentation for the other children; another day a science professor and some of his students engaged the children in science activities; and another day a school librarian held story time with the younger children. The children earned field trips for small groups which took place throughout the year. Activities were research-based. Records were kept of each child's completion of homework or studying and of their behavior, and children earned points which they could use to choose from a prize box. A weekly Star of the Week award was given for excellence in study, behavior and participation. The Pineridge 4-H After-School Program was staffed with 18 highly qualified and dedicated volunteer leaders and several student volunteers. Background checks were done on all volunteer leaders. Leaders held monthly meetings for training and planning and worked as a team. We received a grant from the City of Gainesville to help fund our work. Toward the end of the school year the Pineridge community president took over provision of a program for the children.

In the fall, a special collection at UUFG provided funds for school supplies to be given to the elementary-school age children by their teachers at Norton Elementary.

For the winter holidays, UUFG members contributed gifts for many of the children. Some Pineridge 4-H members were invited to go to a play at the Gainesville Community Playhouse with volunteers.

Volunteers served on the overall committee which guided activities at the Pineridge Community Center. In the fall, we helped this group to do a new survey of Pineridge residents to determine their needs.

Alice Primack, Chair

UU LEGISLATIVE MINISTRY OF FLORIDA

UUFG screened a showing of the documentary film Broadcast Blues, with a talk by filmmaker Sue Wilson. This was part of a statewide tour by Ms. Wilson, funded by UU Legislative Ministry of Florida and through sales of CDs of the documentary. Social Justice Council purchased several CDs to give away or make available for check-out.

UUSC

In the fall, the Social Justice Council partnered with RE to sponsor the Guest At Your Table collection. During a Sunday service this was featured in the children's story, and then the children gave out the collection boxes. This is an annual tradition in which congregation members take home a box featuring people that the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) has worked with recently. These people are our 'guests,' and we are asked to share our blessings with them each meal by putting spare change in the box. UUSC uses the funds raised through this program to support their human-rights work in the United States and around the world! The boxes were returned to UUFG in January, containing a total of over \$700 which was donated to UUSC. In addition, UUFG participated in the local CROP Walk to raise funds for UUSC and Gainesville Community Ministry.

ETHICAL EATING STUDY/ACTION GROUP

Ethical Eating was the topic of a Social Justice Forum. A vegan dinner was provided by Veg4Life, followed by discussion and planning of activities. Several educational articles were featured in the Millhopper.

IMMIGRATION STUDY/ACTION GROUP

Immigration was the topic of a Social Justice Forum on the DREAM Act. Several educational articles were featured in the Millhopper. At critical times for Congressional votes, congregation members were encouraged to mail letters to representative and senators.