



Special Report

Voting for Sunday Plate candidates on June 4th!
From The Social Justice Steering Committee

Unitarian Universalist Church, Bloomington IN
Social Justice Steering Committee
May 24, 2006

Dear Congregation –

A few short years ago, our congregation voted to donate a portion of the non-pledge Sunday plate contributions to a local agency or project. The recipients have been Community Kitchen, the Shalom Center and this past year The Center for Justice and Mediation. Last year we increased the amount from 10% to 25%. This year's candidates are

- ***Stepping Stones*** nominated by Sheri Benham
- ***Martha's House*** nominated by Iris Kiesling
- ***The Center for Sustainable Living*** nominated by the Greens Sanctuary Task Force on Global Climate Change.

At the June 4th Congregational Meeting, a vote will be taken to decide which one will receive our donation. We hope you will read the enclosed information about each agency and come prepared for discussion and voting. Everyone is invited to the meeting; it is an opportunity to participate in our congregational decision making process. Only members can vote, but we hope that all will attend and learn how our congregation makes decisions.

We are proud that our congregation designates 25% of the non-pledge Sunday plate to social justice work in the community!

See you June 4th!

Jackie Hall for Social Justice Steering Committee

STEPPING STONES

History:

Stepping Stones, Inc. is an independent nonprofit that provides transitional housing and supportive services to disadvantaged youth aged 16-20 who are experiencing homelessness. Our mission is to provide a supportive community that encourages youth to make decisions that positively affect their lives.

The organization was incorporated in July 2004. In 2005, we partnered with Youth Services Bureau to obtain a federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant that funds our Supportive Housing Program.

We opened our Supportive Housing Program in College Mall Apartments in August 2005 with capacity for six residents. Since we started our program, we have served twelve youth who were homeless.

Need:

National trends show that young people experiencing homelessness are increasing in number and there is a greater risk for young people to be homeless than for adults. Three groups of young people are experiencing homelessness:

- 1) "System" youth are currently in foster care or transitioning out of it. And youth who have been in the foster care system are more likely to experience homelessness than the general public.
- 2) "Runaway" youth leave home to escape physical and/or sexual abuse, substance abuse, or domestic violence.

"Throwaway" youth are neglected or pushed out of their homes by parents or guardians.

Some of these youth may not consider themselves homeless, but in fact they are. They drift from place to place and are referred to as "couch surfers." Many of them come from dysfunctional home environments where they may have experienced homelessness with their families of origin. These young people are an under-served and overlooked segment of our population. They are in a critical transition period in their lives - the transition from youth to adulthood.

Services:

Housing alone will not prevent homelessness. It must be coupled with supportive services, such as our Independent Living Program. If youth can learn independent living skills while they are young adults, they have a better chance not to join the ranks of chronically homeless adults. Stepping Stones is geared to improved youths' "life chances." We provide programming which gives them the opportunity to live for up to two years in a supportive, structured environment where they can practice their skills while completing their education.

Our programs include:

- Sense of community - Our Community Center, housed in a separate apartment at the complex, is the foundation of the program. It is a place for the residents to have meetings, drop by to chat, do their homework, and come together as a community for weekly gatherings. A Resident Assistant (RA) lives in the center and offers supervision, support, and mentoring in the evenings. The center also houses a computer lab as well as the main office.
- Support teams - Each resident creates a "life map" that outlines key goals and objectives over the next year. In addition to working with each resident individually, we also create support teams which may include community volunteers, IU students, family members, and other social service providers. This helps build a network of support for the resident after s/he leaves our program.
- Person-centered, strength-based approach: We approach each resident as a unique person with their own set of values, challenges, opportunities, etc. We work with them to identify what kind of person they want to be and what kind of life they want to have. If we can help them find inspiration, their "spark in life," they are on the path to becoming self-sustaining adults.
- Self determination – We gear our activities and programming to welcome residents' participation. We promote and encourage a democratic-setting with a strong youth voice that empowers the residents. We believe in "sweat equity" with

residents paying a portion of their expenses, participating in program activities, and giving back to the community.

Summary:

UU funds would help support expenses not covered by the HUD grant such as activities with residents (bowling, movies, YMCA, etc), food for our weekly community gatherings, office expenses, telecommunication expenses (internet, website, fax), and general operating expenses. Since the initial inception of Stepping Stones, we have a history with the church. Members have provided consulting and support, served on committees, and are mentors for our residents. Our first fundraiser, sponsored by the Children’s Task Force, was held at the church in December 2004. The Social Justice Coordinating Council awarded our first grant for \$3,000 that same year. And several members of the church are actively involved in the organization.

Stepping Stones and UU values are complementary. We believe in promoting the inherent dignity and worth of every human being. And we have a strong focus on social justice through our work with this disadvantaged and often overlooked population.

MARTHA'S HOUSE

Executive Director Jodi Tobias, 917-919 So Rogers Street, Bloomington IN 47403

Martha's House, Inc. was founded in December 2002, incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation in September 2003, and opened the doors on January 1, 2004, to serve the needs of the homeless in Bloomington. Perry Township owns the structure on south Rodgers Street. Community Kitchen of Monroe County, Inc., has operated a portion of the building as a soup kitchen since it was purchased by Perry Township in 1992. A further portion has been operated as a homeless shelter by another agency (Shelter, Inc.) from 1992 until they closed in June 2003. From July 2003 until December 2003, Community Kitchen operated the shelter through a contract with Perry Township until Martha's House could begin operations. Perry Township

and Community Kitchen maintain a strong connection with Martha's House as mentors and partners in endeavors to serve the neediest in the community.

The mission of Martha's House is to provide safe shelter while working to end homelessness. As the only emergency shelter in the area serving all sub-populations of the homeless, Martha's House strives to meet the needs and challenges of these individuals. Residents entering shelter are offered a safe place to reside and a continuum of services to ensure they develop the skills necessary to maintain long-term self-sufficiency.

Martha's House currently operates a 28-bed homeless shelter for adult individuals. Since opening, Martha’s House has grown to provide much more than merely shelter to individuals seeking support. Martha's House served 344 individuals in 2005. This is an increase of approximately 75% in people needing services.

The primary funding sources for its \$400,000 budget (includes adult emergency shelter, supportive housing program and proposed family emergency shelter) comes from grants (including federal, state, and local government as well as private foundations) which account for approximately 45% of the budget. Individuals, groups, churches, businesses and other organizations contribute the remainder of the budget through various fundraisers including events and annual solicitations. In addition, Martha's House was recently awarded a Supportive Housing Program grant from HUD to offer supportive services (including rent and utility) to eleven chronically homeless individuals with disabilities and four families experiencing homelessness.

Martha's House recently completed a strategic plan to expand services to include emergency family shelter and to increase programming options for both families and individuals. Currently, there is no emergency shelter for homeless families in the area. This is an incredible gap in services for those members of the community most in need. The family shelter will have a similar continuum of services as the individual shelter, along with services to children.

Martha's House will open a family shelter for those members of the community in need. However, expansion cannot be undertaken until funding is

available to operate the new shelter. The funds from the UU Church would be used to operate the family shelter in addition to several grants which are pending.

An emergency family shelter is most needed in our community. With our UU donations we can help families in emergency situations obtain help to find more permanent housing as well as receive counseling, hopefully, to avoid the same situation in the future. Herb and I have been involved with services to the homeless for almost 25 years, helping open Helene's House around 1986. Emergency family sheltering has always been the most challenging to provide. Our church's support for Martha's House for family shelter would be most helpful.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. Iris Kiesling

THE CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

The Center for Sustainable Living connects people concerned about a wide range of issues related to sustainability, from recycling to alternative transportation to wilderness preservation to community-supported agriculture, focusing on how Monroe County citizens can take action toward a sustainable way of life for themselves and their children and grandchildren.

The Green Sanctuary Task Force on Global Climate Change is proposing that our congregation vote to become a Green Sanctuary as defined by the UUA Ministry for the Earth. Our task force believes that it would be particularly appropriate for the Church to contribute financially to environmental justice as we make this commitment, and we consider the Center for Sustainable Living to be the most effective organization advancing that in our community.

The Center promotes both education and environmentally aware living and action. It sponsors lectures on topics such as permaculture and peak oil; it hosts the annual Simply Living Fair; it sponsors programs and projects such as Healthy Foods, Community Wildlife Habitat, Habitat Stewards,

Organic Gardeners, Worm Composting, Grow Organic; Bloomington Urban Garden Project, the Community Bike Project, and Bloomington Transportation Options.

In addition, CSL staff-volunteers have been actively working within city government to encourage greater attention to sustainability issues, influencing both the recent Growth Policies Plan and the creation of the Bloomington Commission on Sustainability. This work takes on added importance now that Bloomington Mayor Mark Krizan has signed the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. The Center for Sustainable Living can serve as a vital link between this municipal commitment and grassroots initiatives in the community, which are necessary to make its goals a reality.

The CSL has for the first 14 years of its existence been living essentially hand-to-mouth, dependent upon the energy and time of its volunteers and the income from memberships and the 5% administrative charge for any project funded under its 501(c)(3) non-profit status. The result has been recurring problems meeting basic expenses and the absence of funding to undertake systematic planning for the future.

In 2006 the Center is launching a capital campaign, a one-time effort that will transform the Center for Sustainable Living into a fiscally stable organization whose staff can concentrate their energies on their mission. The Green Sanctuary Task Force proposes that our Church's gift of 25% of unpledged donations be the seed money to launch this drive, whose cost is estimated at \$3,661. Their plan is to raise \$150,000 over the course of the year, with the goal of establishing the CSL as a stable physical center in the community. Money from our contribution left over after expenses for the campaign will be put into the CSL's building fund.

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