



United Congregations of Metro-East
a peace & justice institution

The Newsletter of

UCM

Summer 2008



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Support Needed for the Shelter Care Home

The Madison County Nursing Home was torn down and sold in 1998. Money from the sale of the nursing home was earmarked to build a new shelter care home. The public voted on a tax referendum for expenses for the operation of the present shelter care home. Money was spent on architectural designs for the new shelter care home. Bids were to ready to begin when the Chairman of the Madison County Board decided to get rid of the shelter care home and to contract out the care of the residents instead of building a new home. There were three meetings (one last fall and two this spring). One was to get bids for the new shelter care home, the second was to accept or reject the bids, and the final one was to close the home. Masses of citizens attended all three meetings. Letters and phone calls were made in favor of building the new shelter care home. Many citizens made speeches expressing the need for a new shelter care home. Petitions were signed by citizens and sent to the Board expressing the citizens' desire for the building of a new shelter care home. All the king's men (except six) voted to reject the bids and close the shelter care home. The voices of the people were not heard!

Since we, the people, were not happy with these results, we have been getting our fellow citizens in Madison County to sign petitions to put the future of the shelter care home back in the hands of the voters in the general election on November 4, 2008. So far, the response has been wonderful. The people have been very favorable and happy to sign. Many people who were not home when we called but heard we were there about the shelter care home, contacted us to sign our petition and even offered to take petitions for others to sign. Wow! How great it is to know that there are so many caring, compassionate people in our communities that want to help those fellow citizens who are not as fortunate as us and do not have a voice.

However, **we do have to get over 6000 people to sign our petitions** for the vote to go to the people on the November 4 ballot. We also need people to talk to fellow citizens who have not read or heard about the dilemma and dispute over the shelter care home. Once the facts are explained, people will often join our forces in favor of building a new facility. It is really fun to get out and talk to your neighbors about the shelter care home and get them to sign the petitions. You get a good feeling knowing your doing God's work in "loving one another" and "caring for the least of these." **Please contact the UCM office: (618) 451-1548; Mary: (618) 797-6162; Helen: (618) 931-2098; or Linda: (618) 931-4817** and we'll get you started. We need your support and loving and caring spirit in this endeavor. Thank you!

Linda Aud

Granite City Wal-Mart Expansion

UCM is collaborating with a coalition of unions and concerned individuals known as Granite City First to fight the proposed expansion of the Granite City Wal-Mart into a Super Center. In addition to the negative impact that Wal-Marts across the United States have on the environment, traffic, and crime, a Wal-Mart Super Center in Granite City would pose an unwanted threat to good jobs at unionized local grocery stores and many small businesses in the area.

We have been canvassing to ask Granite City residents to send letters to the Granite City Planning Commission and City Council members to let them know that they are opposed to rezoning the proposed land from agricultural into highway commercial in order to expand the current store into a Super Center.

Please contact the UCM office to **volunteer for a two-hour canvassing shift during the Patriots in Park** event in Wilson Park, Granite City from July 2nd - July 6th.

Katie Parkinson

UCM Alton Cluster

The Alton Cluster is gaining momentum, reaching out in ecumenical style to congregations in our area. Our global warming focus led to a successful workshop – **Caring for Creation by Going Green**. It featured an eco-spiritual worship and a session on greening our congregations and community. A presentation on **Cool Cities**, a Sierra Club initiative, led to Alton being first in the Metro East to become a Cool City <http://coolcities.us/>. Mayor Sandidge signed the proclamation committing Alton to take action to reduce heat-trapping emissions, lower energy bills, save taxpayer dollars, and protect our environment. Cluster members are working with the Sierra Club and city officials to form a “Green Ribbon Committee” for action.

A commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King’s Assassination was sponsored by the Cluster at Trinity Lutheran Church. Over 100 people participated in this inspiring service of confession, gesture of reconciliation and dedication. Attendees had the opportunity to sign a declaration to work together in fellowship for mutual understanding, love and change in Alton.

Green Academy plans are under way for fall when UCM Alton Cluster congregations will sponsor discussion series for small groups. The courses will provide an enjoyable, supportive setting in which to examine personal values, engage in stimulating conversation, create meaningful community and consider ways to take action towards creating a more sustainable future. The first course to be offered is *Voluntary Simplicity*, using the curriculum produced by the Northwest Earth Institute (NWEI) www.nwei.org.

For more information on Alton Cluster activities contact **Jan Hines**: phone (618) 377-8257 or jhines@csinet.cc.

UCM O’Fallon Cluster

The **O’Fallon Cluster** has been working with the O’Fallon Branch of NAACP to increase the diversity of teachers and administrators in O’Fallon schools. Over the past few years there has been a steady rise in the percentage of minority students attending O’Fallon schools. In 2007, minority students comprised 26% of O’Fallon Township High School students. Unfortunately, as the percentage of minority students increased, the number of minority teachers and administrators has remained at 1-2%.

Having more minority teachers and administrators is beneficial to minority students as they see role models who look like them and come from their cultural background. **Having teachers from a variety of cultural backgrounds benefits not only minority students but adds a richness to the entire school.**

Over the past few months we have been meeting with parents, teachers, administrators and other concerned civic officials. While there is a need all throughout the state for more minority teachers, we are working with administrators to seek out a consultant with expertise that can help us attract more minority candidates to apply for teaching and administrator positions.

Cheryl Sommer

Update on UCM 2008 Sustainers Campaign

Two telethons were held: May 1st with 10 volunteers and June 12th with 8 volunteers at Mike Bedesky’s law office. Information and donation forms were sent after each telethon. We had 6 positive responses from the May calls so far. We had one very successful fundraiser, **Trivia Night at St. Clare Church** in O’Fallon. Presently, the Alton, Granite, Madison, and Venice Clusters are planning fall fundraisers.

A Sustainer report was given at the June 17th board meeting. We have actually raised \$17,000 cash from sustainers and one time donations in addition to \$3,000 from Trivia night. We anticipate nearly \$9,000 more from the current sustainers by the end of the year and hopefully will have a few more. At present, no reminders have been sent for any outstanding sustainer payments.

Thank you to all UCM members who have contributed and also to those members who asked others to give. **Already, we’ve made nearly the amount received from last year’s Ad Book. Thank you!**

Mary Trimmer

Save the Date
UCM’s Sixth Annual
Public Action Meeting
Thursday, October 30, 2008, 7:00 – 8:30 pm
New Life in Christ Interdenominational
Church, 689 Scott Troy Rd.,
Lebanon, IL 62254

**GAMALIEL 2008 International Leadership
Assembly (ILA)**

“Faith and Democracy:

**Making Real the Promise of Democracy”
December 4th – 6th, 2008 in Washington, DC**

Last year’s ILA is considered to be the best ILA ever, and this year’s is sure to be even better! UCM’s ILA board representative **Carol Juen**, and ILA past co-chair **Ron Trimmer**, are helping make this happen. It will be held at the new Gaylord National Resort and Conference Center in Oxon Hill, MD located on the Potomac and minutes from the capitol.

Arrangements are being made to secure United Farm Workers Union leader **Delores Huetra** as banquet speaker. Anyone who attended last year’s ILA or watched the Heartland Presidential Forum on Campaign for Community Values in person or on TV won’t forget **Erica Fernandez**. Five foot of dynamite! She was a youth track representative from the Gamaliel affiliate in California (J.O.B. = Justice Overcoming Boundaries). She was Gamaliel trained, a high school senior, and led a successful campaign of thousands that stopped one of the largest mining companies in the world from building a plant in her community and preventing more environmental injustice. In the clip she relates her story and asks **John Edwards** a question. Using the link below ...

<http://www.movementvisionlab.org/blog/edwards-a>
go to the second frame on the web page and move the bar to about 4:50/9:21. It has been suggested that Erica introduce Delores Huetra.

The ILA will include preparation and meetings with the key Congressional leaders, staff, and the president-elect’s transition team. At the follow up to the Presidential Forum, Gamaliel, the Center for Community Change (CCC), and other allies expect to have the president-elect and his transition staff there to address Gamaliel and CCC’s common platform issues such as affordable health care, immigration, and jobs.

To reserve your place, contact UCM Training Table chair **Johann Ellerbrake** 618-632-3158.

Ron Trimmer

JOBS NOW ... or never!!!

Work on the new Mississippi River Bridge and related projects will be starting spring 2010 or before. More federal funds were allocated as part of SAFETEA-LU, the transportation funding bill, than any other project in the United States. SAFETEA-LU included a local workforce investment provision sponsored by Illinois **Senator Barack Obama** and supported by **Senator Dick Durbin** that said that federal transportation projects be used “[to improve] the job skills of low-income individuals, to help leverage scarce training and community resources to help ensure local participation in the building of transportation projects.” The JOBS NOW plan would do that. In the St. Louis area, 18% of the workforce is African-American, but only 12% of construction work is done by African-Americans. The construction work will be in Cahokia, East St. Louis, Brooklyn, and Venice. The state of Illinois seem reluctant to seriously consider the JOBS NOW proposal. UCM will be reminding the state that the **Illinois constitution** states that it was established to

“... eliminate poverty and inequality and assure economic, social, and legal justice.” UCM is ready to take bold action to see that Illinois upholds this mandate and does not waste once in a life time opportunity for local participation in the building of the new Mississippi River Bridge and related projects. It is now or never!

Ron Trimmer

UCM was established in early 2000 with six churches. With technical assistance and training from the Gamaliel Foundation, we have grown to represent over 25 congregations with approximately 25,000 members.

Our member congregations represent the full range of communities in southwestern Illinois: older urban communities and new suburban areas, white, African-American and Hispanic, wealthy and impoverished.

Our coalition is unique: we are faith-based, and yet we transcend the often narrow range of people in individual congregations and communities. We are multi-cultural, made of up many faiths, and inclusive of all ethnic groups and economic classes in the area.

<http://www.ucmetroeast.org>

**Please send all future newsletter articles
(in Microsoft Word if possible)**

to

**Mary Johnson, the UCM Newsletter editor,
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