



United Congregations of Metro-East
a peace & justice institution

The Newsletter of UCM

Summer 2010



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EADS BRIDGE JOBS RALLY: DIVIDED NO LONGER, WE ARE COMMUNITY

What: A Community Jobs Rally

Where: In the Middle of the Eads Bridge, the Bridge to Diversity

*(If inclement weather, meet at City Hall,
301 River Park Dr., East St. Louis, IL 62201.)*

When: Saturday, July 24th, at Noon

*(Park in the parking lots of the Casino Queen, 200 S.
Front St. E. St. Louis, IL 62201 or Jazz Spot, 400
Washington Ave., St. Louis, MO 63102, at 11:30 AM,
walk or ride to the middle of Eads Bridge.)*

Why: JOBS for Local, Low-income, Minorities and Women on the new Mississippi River Bridge Project

We will be on the Eads Bridge for the sake of metropolitan businesses, unions, **workers and families** on both sides of the Mississippi River. The challenge goes to all UCM member churches, other churches, business leaders, union leaders, political leaders, community leaders, and residents from both sides of the river to participate in the Eads Bridge Community Rally. Contractors and workers from our communities can provide the best workforce for the 21st century. We must seek and require full participation of businesses and workers from within our local communities as we build the new Mississippi River Bridge and adjoining highways.

We ask that you join with us on July 24th to show your support for fair and equal opportunities for persons within our communities. Contractors and workers on construction jobs should reflect the communities in which they work, just like the I-64 Highway Project. This was a true success story with nearly 30% of the work being done by low-income, minorities, and women from the local communities. However, I-64 is now finished; and many of the contractors and employees are now unemployed.

For this reason, we must look at the history of diversity of the general contractors and the businesses who hire workers. If workers do not reflect the communities in which the project takes place, then contractors cannot bid or work the job unless they enter a training program that insures their employees will reflect the community.

We must stand up for fairness to our communities. Join us in supporting total community participation in bid letting, training, and hiring on the New Mississippi River Bridge.

AD BOOK CAMPAIGN

*AN INVESTMENT IN UCM IS AN INVESTMENT IN
YOUR COMMUNITY*

by

Matt Matheny

UCM is excited to begin its annual ad book campaign. The Ad Book will be incorporated into the Report to the Community for the Public Action Rally on October 10th. As in the past, we are selling advertisements to local businesses, individuals, and organizations. Ads start at \$50 and go up to \$400. This is one of our major fundraisers for the year, supplying 25% of our operating budget. We appreciate any support! Be on the lookout for the ad book on our website, www.ucmetroeast.org as we update our web presence. For more information, please contact the UCM office: (618) 451-1458 or ucmetroeast@hotmail.com.

UCM President's Message
by
The Rev. Charles Burton

The Board and Staff of the United Congregations of Metro-East (UCM) thank everyone for their continuing support of our mission to be a faith-based voice of justice for all people in Southwestern Illinois.

Our ad book, which includes UCM's annual report to the community, is our largest fundraiser. Income from the ad book is critical in maintaining UCM as an effective and efficient organization for positive and systemic change in the Metro East.

As we reflect on another busy year for our membership, we look forward to new partnerships and new opportunities to further the cause of social responsibility and justice. People know us through our work in both Madison and St. Clair counties. The name UCM has come to mean fairness for all. We have a tested and effective organizing strategy, based on the Gamaliel Foundation's methodologies. The mission of Gamaliel is to assist local community leaders to create, maintain and expand independent, grass-roots and powerful faith-based community organizations so that people can impact political, social, economic and environmental decisions.

Like many other areas of the country, our Metro-East communities continue to face a profound and protracted economic crisis. East St. Louis and surrounding communities continue to suffer from record unemployment. Therefore, UCM continues to support apprenticeship training for the construction trades. Over 150 local residents have been trained in pre-apprentice programs. They should now be hired to build the new Mississippi River Bridge and the adjoining new highways. This hiring will begin to address the significant unemployment in our region.

UCM's Housing Task Force is working for workforce housing – people being able to live in the municipalities in which they work. As a first step, we are pursuing a donation of land by the City of O'Fallon to build a Habitat for Humanity house.

Across our region, thousands have lost, or cannot afford, health care for their families. Ever since UCM's first Issues Assembly in 2002, our members have identified health care as a major concern. UCM joined with the Illinois-based *Campaign for Better Health Care* and other national allies to advocate for health care for all. Our combined efforts resulted in historic health care reform.

UCM has addressed global warming by assisting the Alton Area Cluster in its work with the City of Alton as Alton became the first Cool (environmentally friendly) City in the Metro-East. Two other cities have followed Alton's lead – Edwardsville and Belleville. UCM also supports comprehensive immigration reform that provides work permits and a path to citizenship for those here and contributing, expanding family and worker visas, and smart enforcement.

As UCM helps to create and support policies to address many of these problems, our ad book revenue helps pay our bills so we can continue our work. Please patronize the advertisers and thank them for supporting UCM. Thanks again to our advertisers, friends, congregations, and allies. Without your support UCM could not become, and cannot continue to be, a powerful organization and a force for good in the Metro-East.

Psalm 146:5-9

⁵Happy are those whose hope is in the LORD their God, ⁶who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; ⁷who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.



IMMIGRATION
by
Carol Juen

United Congregations of Metro-East has been working to reform the immigration laws and policies of this country in collaboration with the CRI (Civil Rights of Immigrants) Task Force of the Gamaliel Foundation. The Gamaliel Faith & Democracy Platform states:

The current immigration policies represent a force promoting division and fear. They leave millions of workers in the shadows, vulnerable to abuse because they lack documentation, and unable to fully participate in a country they have helped to build. We will work for a comprehensive approach that provides work permits and a path to citizenship for those here and contributing, expanded family and work visas, and smart enforcement.

UCM joined other affiliates in a campaign to hold prayer vigils around the country at Congressional offices in local districts. The vigils followed the introduction of legislation on Dec. 15th, 2009 by Congressman Luis Gutierrez (D-IL), the *Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's security and Prosperity Act of 2009 (CIR ASAP)*. UCM held weekly prayer vigils at the local offices of Rep. Jerry Costello in Belleville and Granite City during January, February and March. Vigils were held weekly at Rep. John Shimkus office in Collinsville during April. The vigils were designed to give a peaceful and faith-filled witness to the need for immigrant justice and to counter the disrespectful messages being put forth by some anti-immigrant forces. Over the course of the vigils representatives were present from the member congregations of UCM including the Catholic, United Church of Christ, Methodist, and Presbyterian faith traditions.

After exploring various options, our UCM Cluster Housing Taskforce has chosen to start by working with the strengths of our O'Fallon community, which include a strong sense of volunteerism and generosity. We are currently working with Lewis and Clark Habitat for Humanity to build a Habitat house in O'Fallon. We are working with the City of O'Fallon and organizing local churches and volunteers to make this happen. We are also looking at long range policies which will encourage more housing to be built in the price range of our workers who currently cannot afford to live here. This will involve working with city officials as well as home builders and developers.

Link to *Belleville News Democrat* article about housing: <http://www.bnd.com/2010/07/08/v-print/1322398/studies-prompt-housing-debate.html>



**O'FALLON CLUSTER
HOUSING TASKFORCE**
by
**Cheryl Sommer and Monty
Gregory**

O'Fallon Cluster congregations continue to work with other groups in O'Fallon to ensure that there is quality workforce housing available for all who work in, and wish to live in, O'Fallon. We believe that the community benefits in many ways when there is an adequate balance of housing within the price range of all who work in O'Fallon. Businesses also receive a benefit by employees working and living in the same town. Employees who live close to their workplace are less stressed, and stay in employment longer because they do not have to commute long distances.

Recent studies and Census Bureau data demonstrate that there could be a better mix of housing prices in O'Fallon. Housing is considered affordable when no more than 30% of the household income goes to housing costs, including rent/mortgage, utilities, and insurance. The latest Census Bureau statistics (2006-2008) tell us that 26% of O'Fallon households are spending more than 30% of their monthly income on housing. Recent research by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments demonstrated a potential market for quality homes that would fill the housing needs of lower wage workers. Many times those who work in our community cannot find quality housing within their price range and must commute long distances to work here.



THE ALTON AREA CLUSTER
by
Jan Hines

The UCM Alton Area Cluster was formed in 2007 and works primarily on two local issues: **Caring for Creation** and **Racial Reconciliation**.

The Cluster, along with the Sierra Club, was instrumental in making Alton the first *Cool City* in the Metro East. This involved, among other things, the mayor signing the *U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement* and making the commitment to reduce carbon dioxide pollution in Alton. The Cluster has hosted several educational events addressing climate change.

In an effort to bring people of different cultures together in the community, the Cluster is committed to participating in activities to build up mutual understanding and affection by **praying together, playing together and working together**.

The Alton Cluster organizes an annual worship service to uplift the goal of racial reconciliation in Alton and our region. Playing together has included a potluck dinner and movie nights with an interracial theme followed by discussion. As a working together effort, members of the Cluster helped paint and refurbish the gift shop at the Alton History Museum.

This summer members will be visiting various churches to experience different worship styles and expand outreach within our congregations. A "Dinners

for Eight" program will bring racially mixed groups together for good food and fun.

We will be working with the Alton School District to provide a two week "Summer Institute" for a number of children in first through fourth grades who have been identified as needing additional help in math and reading. Volunteers in this program are members of local churches.

The Cluster will also be working with the Caring Corps of the United Way and other organizations to establish community gardens in the Alton Area. Work has begun on a garden located at Union and Ridge Streets in Alton. Interested participants can contact Pat Murrell at 618-462-4051. To learn more about the Alton Area Cluster, or get involved contact: 618-377-8257.

NEW LEADERS DEDICATED TO JUSTICE

by
Leslie Jones



UCM elected new officers at its June 15th general meeting. The new President is Charles Burton, pastor of Unity Fellowship Church in Godfrey. Rev. Burton is also an attorney who works for the St. Louis School District's Human Resources Department. Johann Ellerbrake was elected as Vice-President. She is a member of O'Fallon United Church of Christ, and a former director of non-profit agencies in the greater St. Louis area. The new Treasurer is John Gomez. He is a member of St. Clare Catholic Church in O'Fallon, and recently retired from the Air Force. Carol Juen is the new Secretary. She is a member of St. Cecilia Catholic Church in Glen Carbon, where she is working to renew the UCM Core Team and form a justice community.

UCM is most grateful for the four years served by its past officers: President Mike Bedesky, Vice President Brooks Hairston, Treasurer Mary Trimmer, and Secretary Doris Robinson.

Under their leadership UCM celebrated many successes, including: I-64 utilizing an increased number of low-income, minorities, and women in the construction trades; health care reform at the state and national levels; a new Drug Court in St. Clair County; securing financial rewards and quality care for the former residents of the Madison County Sheltered Care Home; and Alton becoming the first environmentally friendly "Cool City" in the metro-east. With its new leadership team, UCM looks forward to making a

continued impact and securing more victories in the upcoming years.



UCM HEALTH CARE by Larry Evans

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of my poor people not been restored?" Jeremiah 8:22.

Since a 2003 Issues Assembly, UCM has been working to provide affordable, quality health care for all citizens. In 2004 the Illinois Legislature passed the "Illinois Health Care Justice Act." Jan Daker, a UCM member, was appointed to The Adequate Health Care Task Force created by this law. Hearings were held in each Illinois Congressional District, beginning on October 5, 2005. The Adequate Health Care Task Force issued its final report on January 26, 2007, calling for expanding health care coverage in Illinois. That recommendation foreshadowed national health care reform – the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010" – which is the most "free market" approach to providing health care on a national level in the world. UCM started working on health care as a local issue with out expecting that early work would have the far reaching influence that it did. UCM is continuing to work through its members, leaders and allies for healthy congregations, communities, and the public. For more information see these websites:

Campaign for Better Health Care, www.cbhconline.org
Families USA, www.familiesusa.org
Kaiser Family Foundation, www.kff.org

COLLABORATION BETWEEN SIUE "RAISE YOUR VOICE" & UCM

by
Matthew Matheny

SIUE **Raise Your Voice** is excited about working with United Congregations of the Metro East during the 2010-2011 school year. Now that summer is here, it gives us a chance to reflect on our events during the past year. In October 2009, SIUE and UCM worked in cooperation to sponsor the 1st Annual Women's Leadership Conference. This was well-attended, with approximately 65 participants from SIUE, UCM, other community members, and students from other universities. In April 2010, SIUE held the 2nd Annual Leadership Conference, with approximately 100

attendees. While we did have a rough time with no electricity on campus, the conference was a success.

During the upcoming school year, SIUE **Raise Your Voice** will be conducting the 2nd Annual Women's Conference in the fall. With the upcoming governor and senate races this fall, SIUE is planning a series of events to register voters, provide a forum for nonpartisan discussions surrounding the issues, and analysis of the elections and their impact on the future of Illinois. In the spring, we are working to make revisions to our Annual Leadership Conference and improve upon last year's performance. Many different proposals are being considered, so stay tuned for details. As always, we would love your feedback and welcome any suggestions. Please feel free to contact Matthew Matheny mmathen@siue.edu with any questions or suggestions you may have.

SIUE Raise Your Voice is on Facebook! Please join and invite your friends.

JOBS TASK FORCE
by
Larry Evans



United Congregations of Metro-East is working toward providing the best work force for the 21st century by promoting increased training and employment of local contractors and area workers through the East-West Gateway Council of Governments, IDOT, Illinois Construction Opportunities, Madison and St. Clair Counties Workforce Investment Programs, and the Construction Preparation Center. UCM is presently seeking the support of state, county and local governments in implementing local hiring agreements for all major transportation projects. UCM supports 30% or more of work force hours being directed toward the underrepresented, until the workforce reflects the community in which it exists. UCM supports 1% of project costs being reserved to provide on-the-job training and support for underrepresented persons. UCM supports compliance evaluation by hours worked, not intent. UCM supports de-registration as a consequence. We need to re-involve every one in each of our communities in building things and manufacturing things in order for America to lead the 21st century with a strong economy.

Save the Date

UNITED CONGREGATIONS OF METRO-EAST PUBLIC ACTION RALLY



Sunday, October 10, 2010

4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church

2160 Delmar Avenue, Granite City, IL 62040-4792

United Congregations of Metro-East (UCM) calls friends, allies, and the public to assemble with elected officials to present solutions to injustices in our communities and to ask for commitments of their support. UCM will be gathering 10 years after its initial beginnings with only 6 member congregations, and now has 26 congregations, representing 23,000 members. The issues being addressed are:

- jobs and training for low-income workers, minorities and women
- affordable, workforce housing
- responsible state budget for schools, social services, state and local governments
- comprehensive immigration reform
- guaranteed, quality, affordable & accessible healthcare for all

UCM believes, by working in faith and fellowship, people can transcend their differences to work for peace, justice and equity for all. UCM is an affiliate of the Gamaliel Foundation which teaches ordinary citizens to unleash the power within themselves to collectively impact social, political, environmental, and economic decisions affecting their lives.

For more information, please call the UCM office at
(618) 451-1458.

Psalm 106:3 Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right.