



United Congregations of Metro-East  
a peace & justice institution

# The Newsletter of UCM

Fall 2008



- PO Box 166 • 1657 Fifth Street
- Madison, IL 62060

- phone 618-451-1458
- fax 618-451-1493

- www.ucmetroeast.org
- kaud@hotmail.com

## United Congregations of Metro-East Faith & Democracy Public Action Meeting Thursday October 30, 2008

“Justice is what love sounds like when it speaks in public,” (Michael Eric Dyson). 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. The issues being addressed are jobs & training for low-income workers, minorities and women; guaranteed, quality, affordable & accessible healthcare for all; diversity in O’Fallon housing and school district staff; the impact on global warming by our cities (led by Alton Cluster); and keeping the Madison County Sheltered Care open. UCM believes that by working in faith and fellowship members can transcend their differences to call forth into the world 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”.

**Carol Juen**

**Thursday, October 30, 2008,  
7:00 – 8:30 pm  
New Life in Christ  
Interdenominational Church  
689 Scott Troy Road, Lebanon, IL 62254**

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

## News from the UCM Alton Cluster

Members of the Alton Cluster are excited about bringing denominations and ethnic groups together for a day of activities that gives witness to our commonality through **faith, fun and bargain shopping**. Sound like fun? Here’s the details:

**Cool City Treasures – a Community-wide Sale  
Saturday, October 11<sup>th</sup>  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

**Old St. Patrick’s School – Fifth and Central  
in Alton  
Handicrafts, artwork, retail products, gently-used  
items and more.  
LUNCH/Snack Items for sale**

Proceeds will support the social justice mission of UCM. The event is also a salute to Alton, the first **Cool City** in the Metro East. Mayor Sandidge has joined over 1,100 mayors across the country committed to reduce global warming pollution in their cities. Members of the UCM Alton Cluster believe that care of the environment is a moral and Biblical commitment. That care for creation needs to be brought to the center of congregational life and mission. Worship, learning, discipleship and advocacy make up the formula for greening our congregations.

A **Green Academy** of learning is under way this fall at the First Unitarian Church and through the Oblate Ecological Initiative. Class offerings are *Voluntary Simplicity* and *Food for the Future*, respectively. A new semester of classes will be offered early in the New Year.

For information about Alton Cluster activities call **Jan Hines** at (618) 377-8257.

Please make copies of this newsletter for your faith community’s Board or Leadership members.

## JOBS NOW ... or never!!! Update

UCM's JOBS NOW Task Force has recently taken actions to see that Illinois does not waste a once in a life time opportunity for local participation in the building of the new Mississippi River Bridge and related projects. UCM has gained support from the Greater Madison County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, which adopted a resolution at its July 24<sup>th</sup> meeting to support the UCM JOBS NOW provisions.

UCM's relationships with the Black and Hispanic state legislative caucuses, our sister Gamaliel affiliates of Metro-Chicago and other allies are paying off. A bill to generate funds for Illinois Works Capital Projects passed the Illinois House September 10<sup>th</sup>. 1% of the funding will be for job training for low-income, minority, and women apprenticeships leading to journeymen status. It is awaiting Senate consideration.

On August 12<sup>th</sup> leaders from UCM and other Gamaliel Affiliates in Chicago and Springfield had a productive meeting with IDOT Secretary Sees. Since then we learned that MODOT and IDOT have agreed to our request to follow the successful methodology of our earlier I-64 agreement for the new Mississippi River Bridge. Because of the I-64 agreement over 60 low-income people of color and women were trained and are now working. **Ron Trimmer**

## O'Fallon UCM Works on Diversity

UCM leaders joined with Mayor Graham, school board members, superintendents and citizens to implement best practices to increase racial diversity within the staff of the schools. The mayor, O'Fallon City Council members and UCM congregations are also working to protect the rights of O'Fallon citizens who may be dislocated by the closing of the Rock Springs Estates and the building of condominiums. The work focuses on maintaining economic diversity in O'Fallon housing. Exciting plans for both will be shared at the Public Meeting on October 30<sup>th</sup>.

## Cheryl Sommer Receives Award

Cheryl Sommer received one of the Partnership in Justice Awards given by the O'Fallon Metro-East Branch of the NAACP. She was recognized for her work in the community to promote justice and equity. She is Pastoral Associate at St. Clare Catholic Church, active in the St. Clair County Cluster, and on UCM's Executive Committee. Congratulations Cheryl.

**Johann Ellerbrake**

**Social Justice Opportunity**  
**"Project Homeless Connect"**  
**Wednesday, December 3 – 10 am to 2 pm**

The "Continuum of Care" agencies of Madison County Community Development are planning their first Project Homeless Connect (a national initiative). Homeless individuals throughout the county will be brought by buses and vans from shelters, agencies and the streets to a gymnasium complex in Maryville Illinois. There, stations will be set up so individuals (and families) will be able to get medical/mental health/dental screening, legal assistance, find clothing, have a meal, get a bag of food, get a haircut, and an array of other services – all in one place.

They are hoping to attract between 75 – 100 people who are currently homeless. **The Project Homeless Connect planners are asking the faith communities for VOLUNTEERS** to work as "buddies" – escorting the clients from station to station – or to serve meals, to help in the children's carnival area, in the clothing room, the food room, and in other capacities. For a volunteer registration form or for further information please contact **Mary Johnson** [mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com).

Please let the members of your faith community know about this opportunity to serve.

## Voters to Decide Sheltered Care Home's Fate

The issue asking for a public advisory vote on the question of the continued operation of the Madison County Sheltered Care Home will be on the November 4<sup>th</sup> ballot.

The petition drive, which collected over ten thousand signatures, was organized shortly after the Madison County Board voted in April 2008 to close the Sheltered Care Home. This vote came after the Board had invested more than two years and expended four hundred and seventy five thousand dollars in planning for a new facility.

The backers of the Sheltered Care Home believe that because the voters have twice approved the minimal tax that supports the operation of the Home, once in 1982 and again in 1988, they are entitled to vote on the continued operation of that Home.

Supporters for the Sheltered Care Home include AARP, Friends of the Shelter, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, family members of the residents, as well as UCM.

**Gary Groeteka**

Send articles for the next newsletter to Mary Johnson  
[mejohanson@mindspring.com](mailto:mejohanson@mindspring.com)