



Special Report

Voting for Sunday Plate candidates on June 6th!

Unitarian Universalist Church, Bloomington IN
May 28, 2010

Dear Congregation –

A few short years ago, our congregation voted to donate 25% of the non-pledge Sunday plate contributions to a local agency or project. The recipients have been Monroe County United Ministries (MCUM), Community Kitchen, Shalom Center, The Center for Justice and Mediation, Stepping Stones, Martha's House, and this past year Volunteers in Medicine (VIM), Crestmont Boys' and Girls' Club which by the end of June will have received over \$7000 as their portion of the Sunday Plate contributions. This year's candidates are

Big Brothers Big Sisters submitted by Mayan Earthheart
Lotus Education and Arts Foundation submitted by Deb Hutton
PALS— People and Animal Service Learning submitted by Jennifer Livesay

At the June 6th 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. More information is available at the Social Justice table. Representatives of the nominated agencies were present on Sunday morning, May 30th. We hope you heard them and asked questions after the service. The Complete applications are available on the website <http://sites.google.com/site/uucbsjfunfunds/> The information is more extensive as well as informational.

Everyone is invited to the Congregational meeting; it is an opportunity to participate in our congregational decision making process. Only members can vote; 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 6th, 4p.m.

Jackie Hall for Social Justice



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Nominated by Mayan Earthheart

Big Brother and Big Sister volunteers provide children with appropriate consistent personal connection, supervision and guidance, life skills training, career and cultural enrichment opportunities, a sense of self-worth, and perhaps the most important – they encourage *goals and hope for the future*. It is done by matching local youth with screened and well-trained community adult and high school volunteer mentors. They affect change in a child's life not only in the immediate but also life long outcomes.

They know that strengthening connections to families will enhance the outcomes for all. That is why they look at creating ways to engage and reach out to families, Littles and Bigs and their "Littles waiting for a match", or First Friends program as they describe it. They try to create "extension" and "outreach" activities

to enhance and increase impact. Activities are based on the 40 Developmental Assets that lead to positive youth development, researched by the Search Institute, and embraced in Monroe and Owen Counties. The City of Bloomington Housing and Neighborhood Development Department's Five Year Action Plan prioritizes funding programs to help at-risk youth as a "high" priority and demonstrates a gap of 3000 at-risk children needing services.

The goals of BBBS are to reduce factors that place youth at risk of delinquency, substance use, adolescent pregnancy, dropping out of school, and other social problems. The positive outcomes are shown in the research and evaluation that shows 61% of the students that participated in the programs improved in their attitude toward school, 40% improved in their ability to avoid substance abuse and 57% of the students improved in their school performance. Other statistics demonstrate improved relationships with their families (75%), improved school performance (75%) 95% show a marked increase in self-esteem.

BBBSCI does not charge for any of their services and rely solely on donations, fundraiser, and grants from Foundations, businesses, or Government grants. Expenses for 2009 were about \$ 538,000, budget for 2010 is set for about \$530,000. Bowl for Kids Sake is the largest fundraiser, accounting for about 1/3 of their budget and was about \$45,000 below target. Approximately 90% of their budget goes directly to programming, ie. match support & match activities.

Poverty afflicts children disproportionately in our society and the current recession has pushed the number of children in poverty in Indiana to nearly one in five. While funding sources have decreased the number of children being referred to Big Brothers Big Sisters is at record highs.

The welfare of Bloomington's children has always been a top priority of our church. Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs are proven by research to have impressive positive effects in helping youth to better academic achievement, decreased drug use, increased quality of life and improved self-esteem. Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Central Indiana has long been one of the leading advocates and service providers for children in Bloomington and has always maintained standards of the highest integrity. Choosing Big Brothers Big Sisters to receive our 25% donation Sunday plate funds is a sure way to benefit hundreds of low income children in our community who most desperately need the more opportunities to enjoy their childhood and succeed in life.

Mayan Earthheart



**LEAF Lotus Education and Arts
Foundation**
Nominated by Deb Hutton

The Lotus Foundation was established in 1994 to present the annual **Lotus World Music & Arts Festival**. Since that time, Lotus has become recognized for its presentation of exemplary multicultural programming designed to build cultural understanding and tolerance. The Lotus Festival offers a varied program highlighting cultural diversity: concert performances, free educational artist workshops, free artist presentations, free participatory arts activities, and a free visual arts programming. Lotus programming is designed to engage all members of the community, regardless of age, abilities or background. These activities strengthen Lotus' relationship with a variety of service groups, and are designed to encourage participants' investment in both the community and events. Some 200 people were involved in Lotus outreach activities in 2009.

Free public programming engages new audiences and people otherwise unable to attend ticketed Lotus events. The **Lotus Blossoms World Bazaar Family Day** offers an array of free hands-on activities highlighting diverse cultural traditions; specifically promoted to family- and child-service agencies across Bloomington, the

2009 Family Day attracted 700+ children and their families.

Lotus' 2009 final budget was \$375,000. Only half of this is income earned through ticketed events and fees; the remainder was raised through a mix of event sponsorships, individual donations, fundraising events, and grants. Major support for Lotus activities is provided by the City of Bloomington, Indiana University, the National Endowment for the Arts, the 60+ local businesses that sponsor the Lotus Festival, and individual donors who contribute to the annual *Friends of Lotus* fund.

Funds from the Unitarian Universalist Church 25% program would be directed to support the annual **Lotus Blossoms Educational Outreach Program** and associated Lotus educational activities. The recent drastic cutback in educational funding across Indiana has adversely affected the ability of schools already struggling to provide cultural educational opportunities for their students. Lotus Blossoms helps fulfill the needs of schools and community organizations to address the shrinking opportunities of children across our region. This need is expressed in the growing number of schools who apply to participate in the Blossoms program each year.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington recognizes and embraces human diversity, thereby affirming, defending and promoting the inherent dignity and worth of every human being. The mission of the Unitarian Universalist Church is closely aligned with that of the Lotus Foundation, and together these two entities have contributed enormously to promoting cultural understanding and tolerance in our community.

Sustaining this contribution into the future is critically dependent on our reaching children, helping them to see how their lives parallel those of children the world over, and nurturing their natural curiosity about different people and places. The Lotus Blossoms outreach initiative is the perfect mechanism for this educational process, because it engages children in the joyous discovery of the wonders of the world's people in an active, accessible, and age-appropriate way.

By helping to support Lotus Blossoms, the UUCB community will be proactively investing in building the cultural tolerance and understanding essential to the well-being of our schools, our neighborhoods, and our towns. Lotus and the Unitarian Universalist Church are perfect partners in this endeavor.

Deb Hutton



PALS—People and Animals Learning Services

Nominated by Jennifer Livesay

People and Animal Learning Services, Inc. (PALS) Since its start in 2000 PALS has provided 12,100 therapeutic riding lessons and expects to provide 1,800 lessons in 2010.

PALS serves individuals across the age spectrum with a wide range of physical, cognitive, and emotional disabilities, including amputations, attention deficit and autism spectrum disorders, brain injuries, cardiovascular disorders, cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, developmental disabilities, learning impairments, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, post polio, speech impairments, spina bifida, spinal cord injuries, stroke, vision impairments, and other disabilities. The majority of its clients are children between the ages of 4 and 17 and the next largest group is adults 45 – 64. PALS also works with at-risk youth and has partnered with Girls, Inc., to provide an after-school and summer program. At least 26%

of PALS riders are in the lowest income bracket (\$0 – \$20,000), and more than half come from households that are below the HUD median income. PALS provides scholarships for many of its riders, and will not turn away riders who are unable to pay.

For many people, using the movement and warmth of a horse allows them to achieve therapeutic goals they cannot achieve in any other way. Riding strengthens muscles, improves coordination, decreases spasticity, and improves balance. It improves self-esteem, particularly for young people with mobility impairments. It improves learning skills and short- and long-term memory. Many children who are reluctant to work in traditional physical therapy look forward to their riding lessons and find their therapy on horseback pleasurable, not seeming to notice how hard they are working. Forming a trusting relationship with an animal is often very beneficial for people with emotional or cognitive disabilities, and for at-risk youth.

For some clients, their 30 to 45 minute horseback ride is the only outing they have each week. PALS provides healthy physical recreation, outdoor time, and interactions with another species, for children and young adults who may have little other access to any of these.

The 2010 projected budget is \$177,567. These funds come from donations: 31%; lesson fees: 39% ; grants: 5.5%; United Way: 4.5%; in-kind donations: 6%; fundraisers: 14%

Over 80% of expenditures go to cover program costs, with less than 20% going toward administrative and fundraising costs.

If PALS were to receive the UU 25% Sunday Plate funds UUCB would sponsor a horse costing \$3900 a year and covers food, board, basic care and medical care. A plaque would be on the horse's stall door indicating UU sponsorship and acknowledgement in the PALS newsletter and website. UUCB would also create a rider sponsorship fund. \$2,400 would provide 160 fee reduced scholarship lessons to individuals with disabilities and at-risk youth in need of financial assistance. All of these riders would receive an invoice saying that the scholarship for their lesson was provided by the UU Church of Bloomington.

High quality horse care is expensive, but the benefits that horses provide to therapeutic riders are endless. The actual cost of one therapeutic riding lesson at PALS is \$100, but PALS charges only \$35 per lesson to riders who do not receive scholarships, and provides scholarships to those in financial need. Twenty-five percent of PALS riders receive scholarships.

Through their work with adults and children with disabilities and at-risk youth, as well as their mission to provide high-quality services to everyone regardless of their ability to pay, PALS promotes the inherent worth and dignity of every person. In fostering caring relationships between people and animals, PALS promotes respect for the interdependent web of life. I have been involved with PALS as a parent for a number of years and can attest to the dedication of PALS' paid staff and volunteers, every one of whom goes out of his or her way to make the riders and their family members feel valued. The program is extremely well run, with attention to safety and the therapeutic goals of each individual, as well as to making it a positive, fun experience. Besides my family, a number of other members of the UU Church have also benefited from their involvement at PALS, as riders, volunteers, or parents.

PALS provides a unique service in our community, does it very well, and is a positive force in the lives of many people. As an organization, its goals are in many ways congruent with those of the Unitarian Universalist Church. It richly deserves our support.

Jennifer Livesay