



# Common Ground

Social Justice Newsletter UU Church Bloomington In

**Faith in Action Forums - Sunday, 10:15 am in the library**

## Rebuild homes in New Orleans (or help those who do)

The Katrina Relief Task Force seeks volunteers to spend the week of September 14-20, 2008, helping to rebuild New Orleans homes damaged by the storms there. The group will work out of the Little Farms church (United Church of Christ; see <http://www.ucc.org/volunteer/hurricane/>), which has a well-developed program allowing volunteers of all skill levels to work productively at this task. The trip, to be led by David Parkhurst, has room for 20 people. Although about 35 have already expressed interest, please add yourself to the waiting list if you are interested, as some now on the list will likely be unable to go when the time comes to commit.

If you'd like to support the project but are unable to go yourself, financial donations to support volunteers with limited funds are welcome.

For more information, or to help in either way, please contact David Parkhurst, 333-2945, [dfparkhurst@comcast.net](mailto:dfparkhurst@comcast.net).

## At the Death House Door—No man should die alone

May 13<sup>th</sup>, MCPL Auditorium, 6:30PM

Join us to view and discuss this special preview screening of a new film by the director of *Hoop Dreams*. It tells the story of Carroll Pickett, the Chaplain for the Texas Department of Corrections, 1982-1995. Pickett counseled 95 inmates executed by lethal injection, and experienced an ideological transformation from supporting to opposing the death penalty. A large part of this shift can be attributed to his work with Carlos De Luna who may have been executed for a crime he didn't commit. *At the Death House Door* tackles, in the most humanizing way, the most pressing issues surrounding debate on capital punishment including: lethal injection, wrongful conviction, morality and religion. Sponsored by: Bloomington Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and UU Friends of Prisoners Task Force.

## Updated Version of "The Real Rules"

In order to provide congregations with the best guidance possible, the UUA has released an updated edition of "The Real Rules: Congregations and IRS Guidelines on Advocacy, Lobbying, and Elections." The new version provides clear, up-to-date information on what congregations can and cannot do, drawing heavily on a binding decision issued by the IRS in June 2007. Most of the text comes straight from IRS publications, with sources clearly footnoted. Please discard previous editions and use the new one! You can access "The Real Rules" and other [key social justice resources](http://uua.org/socialjustice/resources/64711.shtml) ([uua.org/socialjustice/resources/64711.shtml](http://uua.org/socialjustice/resources/64711.shtml)) online.

## Election-Year Resources and Opportunities from Faithful Democracy

### [Faithful Democracy](http://www.faithfuldemocracy.org/)

([www.faithfuldemocracy.org/](http://www.faithfuldemocracy.org/)) is a nonpartisan online clearinghouse made up of national faith-based organizations. The goal of Faithful Democracy is to educate and engage people of faith about the role they can and should play in the democratic process, thereby increasing the number of informed faith-based voters in elections.

The Faithful Democracy website features resources from member organizations on what religious groups can do and how they can do it, including voter registration, education, mobilization, and poll monitoring. The site also features theological reflections from a variety of religious leaders on the connections between civic participation and religious values. The Unitarian Universalist Association helped to found Faithful Democracy in 2004 and remains an active participant.

**For more information contact [uuawo@uua.org](mailto:uuawo@uua.org).** Last updated on Thursday, April 24, 2008.

and her sister Mickayla, who is nine, have decided to paint clouds against a blue sky on the ceiling of their bedroom. "We want to make it be our home," Andrea says. "Not just some place we live." Some features in the Woods' new house include a walk-in closet in the master bedroom, two extra windows pushed together in the living room to give the room more of a "sun room feel," affordable furniture which Andrea will invest in next tax season, and loads of estrogen. The house also comes with an address, and for the first time in all three of their lives, that address is permanent.

## UU Women to build Wednesday, May 14th

Watch the Womens Build website  
See pictures from last year's build at <http://picasaweb.google.com/womensbuild2007>

## Important Election Year Resources

*Article from uua.org website*

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA) is pleased to announce two important resources to help congregations carry out effective, nonpartisan electoral activities in 2008 and beyond.

"Elections are a great opportunity for Unitarian Universalists to get out into the community and make an impact, from registering and mobilizing voters to raising important issues," says Rob Keithan, Director of the Association's Washington Office for Advocacy. "The IRS places certain restrictions on what congregations can do, and those boundaries need to be respected. However, there is a wide range of totally acceptable activities, and I sincerely hope that many congregations will choose to get involved. These two resources should help."

## A New Jail? Exploring Alternatives to Incarceration in Monroe County

**Saturday, May 3rd - Boxcar Books**

- 11AM - Presentation and discussion of the history of the Monroe County Jail system; features an interview with Hal Pepinsky
- 2PM - Panel discussion on alternatives to incarceration
- 4PM - Movie at the Cinemat: **Yes In My Back Yard (1999)** by Tracy Huling (57 minutes). Examines rural dependence on prisons and probes the impact on the keepers and the kept.
- 6PM - Potluck dinner followed by dialogue with Kai Barrow from Critical Resistance, a national organization dedicated to opposing the prison industrial complex.

Questions or more info? Paula Jean Tonsor, Friends of Prisoners Task Force, [pjtonsor@gmail.com](mailto:pjtonsor@gmail.com); Judah Schept, Associate Instructor, Department of Criminal Justice, [jschept@indiana.edu](mailto:jschept@indiana.edu)

Boxcar Books and Community Center is located at 310A S. Washington St, Bloomington, IN - [www.boxcarbooks.org](http://www.boxcarbooks.org)

### Quilts and Quilts and Quilts Friends of Prisoners, April Report

The men of the P.L.U.S. unit at WVCF want to show their appreciation for the fabrics and money we collected for them in February. So we, Friends of Prisoners Task Force and the Women's Alliance, have requested 5 to 10 quilts for the Shalom Center. We are hoping to interest local media in going with us to collect the quilts so that we can increase the awareness of our community. There are human beings with big hearts behind prison walls.

Speaking of quilts — wasn't the ongoing quilt creation that jail volunteers shared with us during the social justice moment this month a beautiful expression of hopes and dreams and real needs of some of the people at Monroe County Jail (MCJ)! And, please, if you haven't picked up a copy of *Safety Net* from the social justice table, take time to do so—stories and poetry of inmates and ex-inmates will touch your hearts and minds.

We are so privileged to be working with New Leaf/New Life and Citizens for Effective Justice! We supported them in a Criminal Justice Candidate Forum with most of the candidates running for office in Monroe County participating, and a Re-Entry Roundtable featuring speakers Edie Beaujon with a mentoring program in New York's Sing-Sing prison; Marguerite Gravel, leader of a volunteer program in the Manchester, New Hampshire jail; and Indiana DOC's Reentry Director who spoke about state programs. Good

things are happening to alleviate the struggles of victims and inmates — our energy and hope is renewed to hear of plans and success stories from the heart of Bloomington to the east coast.

Thank you so much to the chalice group that organized the book drive for MCJ's waiting room! Over 500 books were collected and will be available for children to either take home with them or to enjoy while they are waiting to visit family members in the jail.

Check out the social justice table for volunteer opportunities at MCJ, join our Friends of Prisoners Task Force, and/or join us for our monthly meetings on second Sundays, between services.

*Glenda Breeden*



### **Andrea Woods** By Jordan Zaslow

Andrea Woods has never had a permanent living situation. As a child, she moved from state to state and from parent to parent and attended six different schools from elementary school to high school. A sense of permanency is a luxury she and her two daughters have never experienced — until now.

The Woods family will be moving into the first home that they will own and Habitat for Humanity is making it possible. "The very first thing we're doing is getting a dog," Andrea says. She explained how none of the places where she and the girls have lived in up to now have allowed pets, unless the animals are kept in a cage. The Woods are going to get a small dog once they move into their new house because for the first time in the girls' lives, they will be able to

have a pet.

The construction of the Woods' home will happen during this year's Women's Build. The concept that drives the Women's Build is "by women for women." Volunteer builders will work on the house for eight days this May. These volunteers will all be female, including Andrea, who must put in 250 hours of work before she, the girls and their new puppy can move in. "That's the neatest thing," Andrea says. "Every day we live there, my girls will look around at the house and see that women built this!"

To emphasize her point, Andrea describes a picture hanging in a building at The Rise, a transitional living center for women. In the picture, women dressed in men's work clothes are sitting on a high-rise metal beam. It is supposed to replicate the classic 1932 photo by Charles C. Ebbets of workmen sitting on the 69th floor of an unfinished building during their lunch break. Andrea's fondness for the picture is summed up in its caption: "Women on the rise." Andrea's mother was very independent and taught her to always have a plan B. Andrea feels that by contacting Habitat for Humanity she is skipping plan A (the plan that involves depending on a husband) and heading right for plan B (the plan where she successfully provides for her children without the support of a husband).

In Andrea's experience, depending on a husband for financial or moral support was never an option. She left an abusive husband and kicked drug addiction. She has been clean for four years and away from the abuse for six years. She and her daughters moved to Bloomington from Northern Indiana to start over. The Woods are already brainstorming ideas for the décor of their new house. Chyler, who is seven years old,