

Voices of Women



Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Connection

Fall 2007

Lake Geneva Fall Retreat 25 Years of Girlfriend Getaways

Just google "girlfriend getaways" to find out how Madison Avenue has been treating the idea of women traveling together as if it were a *new* idea!

Lake Geneva Fall Retreat, November 9-11, Williams Bay Wisconsin, has been the best bargain in girlfriend getaways for twenty-five years. The George Williams College/Aurora University Retreat Center on beautiful Lake Geneva has been the site of the fall retreat for women since 1982. Sisters of the Rockford Illinois UU Church started the gathering for the women of their congregation. A convenient location for travel from Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan and the Chicago area, now this UU Women's Connection Retreat draws women from central and southern Illinois, Missouri and as far away as North Carolina.

Planned in 2007 by the women of North Shore Unitarian Church in Deerfield Illinois, the weekend features popular UU composer, musician, lyricist, performer and peace lover, **Shelley Jackson Denham** whose *Affirmation* song lyrics have been woven throughout the weekend.

Shelley's keynote performance Saturday will challenge women to look thoughtfully at their lives and reflect upon profound spiritual questions: *Who am I? What is sacred to me? How shall I live my life?* Shelley will also do an afternoon workshop.

Other workshops and weekend activities include time with new and familiar girlfriends to write, reflect, walk the lakeside, craft and learn, sing and drum or just listen to the rhythm of life without the ordinary daily distractions. Sign up for a Saturday massage when you arrive and begin to relax in the gathering room. Opening Ceremony Tea, 7:30 pm on Friday evening, will have women in their favorite hats to celebrate twenty-five years at Lake Geneva. For more information contact co chair, Sage Hagy at csageh@comcast.net. To print the brochure registration form visit our website: www.uuwomensconnection.org.

A special thanks to the women of the Rockford Illinois congregation for their part in creating this popular retreat for women of their congregation, then extending an invitation to other women of the CMwD twenty-five years ago. Also thank you goes to the countless women who have planned and executed this special fall weekend on the lake over the years.

Finally, thank you to the women at North Shore Unitarian for the 2007 planning and for guiding us through this beautifully conceived weekend. Come. Celebrate. *Feel the Rhythm*. November 9-11, 2007.

Local Retreats in the CMwD.

North to south, the four retreats listed below are planned by women of local congregations.

* **North Shore UU**, Deerfield, IL, Oct. 20, 2007

Sage Hagy, csageh@comcast.net

* **Unity Temple. UU, Oak Park, IL**, Women's Connection Women's Retreat, Feb. 15-17, 2008 Jenny Earlandson 708/524-1215 or rearland@uchicago.edu
Location: Warrenville Illinois Cenacle

* **UU Rockford, IL. Wild Women's Retreat**

April 18-20, 2008; Heather Johnson 815/378-2363 or Debby Gaines 815/985-7025

Location: Lake Geneva, William's Bay, WI

* **UU Carbondale, IL Women's Retreat**, Feb. 29-Mar. 2, 2008. Mary Campbell, mspurple1999@yahoo.com

Location: United Methodist Church Camp, Makanda, IL If you would like to share information about your church women's conference, send retreat dates, location, and contact information to:

connections@uuwomensconnection.org.

Allerton 50th Anniversary Celebration April 19-20, 2008, at Monticello, Illinois

Save the date for this one-time event that celebrates the special time at Allerton Institute beginning in 1958 and carried CMwD women through the end of the century. Planning is in progress. An Honorary Allerton Alumni Committee has been called. Check www.uuwomensconnection.org for updates.

UU Women...

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Speak Out! Act Up!

Pat Leitzen-Fye, member of the Stockton UU Church, says she expresses her social conscience by her "own way of being," no matter what her activities. Those activities have included supporting ERA-Illinois, serving on the YWCA board, and the City Council of Freeport.

Pat's social involvement has been informed by early experiences. She left home at age 17 and became a charter member of Ms. Magazine. Getting that in her mailbox every month meant a lot. In college Pat pursued social work which colored her way of looking at things. She saw people living different ways. She is now very much aware of her white middle-class values.

To support ERA Pat went to Springfield and did some neighborhood organizing. In her YWCA work Pat helped address issues of women and families, which evolved into domestic violence programs. On the City Council she explored how to make life better for everybody, with a focus on neighborhoods and housing.

In the past thirty-five years, Pat said, she has been involved in or a member of a lot of organizations and movements. The thread that runs through her activities is the importance of improving community life. The way to get that work done is to "get your feet wet and your hands dirty"!

Another great fundraising idea...

from some of those creative women of the Woodstock Illinois Congregational Unitarian Church.

The Brassiere Bash 2007 will be held at the Dole Mansion in Crystal Lake, IL, on Saturday, October 13. This evening of light-hearted fun begins at 7:00 p.m. with Latin themed food and drink, live entertainment by Tirana Flamenco, life-altering testimonials, and the Brassiere Purse Raffle. Then dance the night away.

Beautiful and unique purses designed by local artists and crafted out of brassieres will be raffled and each will have gift packages inside. Raffle tickets are \$5.00 each or 5 for \$20.00, available at the event. Last year's Brassiere Bash raised over \$20,000 for Breast Cancer education and early detection programs. All proceeds will be donated to the Celebremos La Vida breast cancer program at Family Health Partnership Clinic, Woodstock, IL. Tickets are \$40.00 per person.

Send a check (made out to F.H.P.C.) To the Dole Mansion, Attention: BBB, 455 Country Club Rd., Crystal Lake, IL 60014. Include the names of the attendees. Tickets will be held at the door the evening of the event. For more information, or if you would like to donate but cannot attend, call Ellen at 815-404-6312, or visit www.brassierebash.com.

Book Review

Madeline Van Hecke, 2005 Spring Conference workshop presenter, has announced the publication of her book, *Blind Spots: Why Smart People Do Dumb Things* (Prometheus Books, 2007). The workshop had the same title and featured many wonderfully funny and poignant moments. Find it listed on the Good Reads list of the summer VOW. The book is widely available including www.amazon.com and www.barnesandnoble.com. What do reviewers say?

Van Hecke demonstrates how embracing and understanding our weaknesses can not only improve personal and professional relationships, but also entire communities; this self-help is a welcome, highly readable first step.

Publishers Weekly Review

I have no reservations about wholeheartedly recommending this book. Behind each stupid mistake, each wrongheaded viewpoint, is a person every bit as rational as we think ourselves to be. This book allows us to see ourselves more clearly, and assess others more tolerantly.

Wendy Northcutt, Best-selling author of the *Darwin Awards* and creator of www.DarwinAwards.com

Pithy Remarks

From the Ridiculous to the Sublime

I have a new philosophy. I'm only going to dread one day at a time.--Charles Schultz

Laugh and the world laughs with you, snore and you sleep alone.--Mrs. Patrick Campbell

What a wonderful life I've had! I only wish I'd realized it sooner.--Colette

The spiritual life does not remove us from the world, but leads us deeper into it.--Henri J.M. Nouwen

Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.--John Wooden

Even for our enemies in misery, there should be tears in our eyes.--Charan Singh

...Be thankful to the wonder of your Being.

You are a miracle of body, soul and mind.

-- Shelley Jackson Denham
from her song, *Affirmation*

VOW's 40 Years: Historical Highlights

WOMEN OF BIG SHOULDERS 1980-1990s

So busy were the women of CMwD-UU Women's Federation during these two decades! We honor these leaders who shouldered the changes with grace, humor and fortitude and were ever mindful of the importance of "connecting" women.

Allerton Institute, begun before the merger of Unitarians and Universalists, celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 1982. That same year Rockford women opened their fall retreat at Lake Geneva to women of the district. The next spring women of Eliot Chapel, St. Louis began a UUWF gathering at Camp Wyman near Eureka Missouri. There were other projects: women's issues work, conferences, introduction of two feminist spirituality curriculums and computerization of the newsletter process and database. A whirlwind of change and growth presented its victories and challenges.

Winter 1981 VOW called for *new conferences which are close, less expensive and...offer programs at different times...meeting our growing needs with variety and innovation.* Spring of 1982 saw the beginning of the Silent Auction at Allerton's 25th year celebration to provide seed money for the exciting new fall retreat at Lake Geneva. Pat Baker (1980-82) (then, Pat Scanlon) was president for the beginning of the Lake Geneva Fall Retreat and much expansion of programming.

President Marion Baker, (1983-1987) a strong voice for keeping us growing and healthy reported in the fall 1983 *VOW we can happily say that our conference program is expanding: our membership is on the increase and our newsletter is reaching a third more women throughout our denomination. Plus ... the treasury is in healthy condition.* Marion, whose professional and theatrical skill combined with her organizational skill drew in members and leaders and fine-tuned the organization. Ever a hard working president she said in her opening *VOW* message, *let's get our brains in gear, and our sleeves rolled up.*

In 1987 the UUA General Assembly featured a *Connections room*, cited by President Joanne Fought (1987-1991) *as a joint venture of the UUWF and Continental Women and Religion Committee ... a center for making connections around women's concerns.* In 1989 the first Women in Religion Conference was held at North Shore Church in Deerfield, Illinois with Keynote Shelley Jackson Denham. In spring 1991 the first of many trainings for "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" feminist curriculum was held at Milwaukee West Church as a co-sponsored W&R and UUWF project. *VOW* newsletters of the period touted new units, promotion of retreat scholarship and concerns about Allerton Retreat Center's changing policies. Always appreciative of what retreats mean to women,

Joanne promoted them as *connection for all women in the district, and urged women to help facilitate and strengthen our women's web ... expand the circle.*

The opening message of President Ruth Davis (1991-93) recalled the first Allerton Conference on abortion (1968). It was *the first ever held by a group of churchwomen. An untouchable subject at the time ... we felt that we were on dangerous and fearful ground* and she asks membership: *Shall we stay on the tip of the sword?* Was the record turnout reported at Lake Geneva in 1993 the response? Its theme was "Empowerment: Women as Agents of Change."

District Train-the-Trainer workshops for the newly released UUWF earth based spirituality curriculum, "Rise Up and Call Her Name," was announced in the next issue of *VOW* and marked the beginning of Paula McCabe's presidency (1993-1995). By the end of her term *VOW* reported more than 50 women in the district were prepared to facilitate the 13-week curriculum. Paula's opening message reflected that after taking the "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" curriculum, *like many of you I found that participation at the local level led to increasingly wider circles of involvement and wider vision.* Allerton Institute themes of 1994 and 1995 "Expanding our Horizons ..." and "A Child of the Universe. A Citizen of the World" reflect this wider vision. In 1994 *VOW* reported "Earth Based Spirituality" was added to the UU principles.

Nancy Babel, (1995-1997) was president when membership survey results showed strong *support for stands on ... issues close to our common bond as women—equality for women and others in the workplace, and women's reproductive rights.* RCRC (Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice) donations demonstrated rising concerns about women's health choice issues. Nancy's final *VOW* message expressed her ability to draw lessons from difficult times by recognizing the importance of the friendships found through the UUWF gatherings where *we build our altars, sing our songs and converse about our beliefs and ideas.*

President Betty Jachim's (1997-1999) opening *VOW* message addressed Continental UUWF financial and organizational concerns. Betty reported in the 1998 winter *VOW* that *district UUWF, Alliance groups, councils, circles or units in a multitude of organizational patterns carry on giving support and opportunities for personal and spiritual growth to district women.* Her final message affirms the importance of *retreats for women of a liberal, open-minded religious points of view.*

In the summer of 1999 Jeanne Fitch (1999-2000) wrote the president *pro tem's* message. What will the millennium bring? Check the Winter 2007 *VOW*.

SAVE THE DATE: June 6-8, 2008

UU Women's Connection Spring Conference

Women of the World: Peace and Sustainability

Hosted by women of the UU Church of Joliet, IL

Please plan to join us at Pilgrim Park near Princeton, IL, to bond and rejuvenate with a community of women. Learn from one another, express your creativity and use your voice to call for peace and sustainability in our world.

If you are interested in organizing a workshop, planning creative activities, offering your artistic talents, please contact committee chair, **Patricia Nolan**, phone (815) 838-4195 or email **Swimchick72@yahoo.com**.

Energetic and Talented

Welcome to Patricia Nolan of Joliet, IL, UU Church, who joins the UU Women's Connection council as Councilor number eight. Patricia has agreed to join the council work prior to the Annual Meeting, when she will be officially elected as a councilor-at-large.

New to Unitarian Universalism she is a long time advocate for women's issues. With many of her sisters at UUCJ she helped organize, produce and perform Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues* as a benefit production for Sexual Assault Services at Guardian Angel in Joliet. She is the Director of Responsible Sex Education for the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health.

Patricia has been a feminist social activist for many years in Chicago and East St. Louis, IL. She volunteers as a medical and legal advocate for domestic violence and sexual assault survivors. In addition, she is part of the Chicago Dramatists Workshop and is writing her first stage play.

Rockford, IL, Third Quarter Meeting

Thank you to the Rockford UU Congregation and the Rev. Colleen McDonald, Minister of Religious Education, for their warm hospitality for the summer quarterly business meeting on Saturday, Sept. 22. Exciting UU Women's Connection plans for this and next year are unfolding.

Saturday evening councilwomen sat in the comfortable church library to hold a **Margaret Fuller Conversation Salon** with thoughtful and open UU women of Rockford. Gracious home hospitality with congregation members and Sunday's fine service during Yom Kippur completed a productive and uplifting weekend.

A little coffee hour historical research paid off, too, yielding names of women who were active in Rockford's Alliance women's group 25 years ago when the group created what is now the UU Women's Connection Lake Geneva Fall Retreat. Join the Silver Celebration featuring guest speaker, performer and peacemaker, **Shelley Jackson Denham**, Nov. 9-11, Williams Bay, WI.

The 2007 Annual Meeting is set tentatively for Nov. 16-17 in Springfield, IL. UU Women's Connection members are welcome to attend. Contact any councilor listed in this issue for details or to give your input into the work of the UU Women's Connection.

Update: Logo Search

In spite of a year of digging up samples, looking for new ideas, thinking and talking, our search is still open. We are, however, laying it to rest for the time being.

In looking at the UUWF newsletter archive we noticed that it was a number of issues until a name was adopted: VOW for "Voice of Women." Then it became "Voices of Women." Perhaps in a like fashion a logo will emerge.

Many thanks to Jeanne Fitch and Patricia Nolan for graphic ideas, and to everyone else who looked up previously-used designs and joined in the discussion.

Check these LINKS:

www.meredithc.blogspot.com Meredith Shonefeld-Hicks' issues blog.

www.archive.uua.org/UUWF/Awards-Grants

find Margaret Fuller Conversations, Clara Barton Internship information, and more.

Clara Barton Washington Internship for Women's Issues

An Interview with Meredith Shonfeld-Hicks

UU Women's Connection website www.uuwomensconnection.org has featured stories this summer about the Clara Barton Internship for Women in Washington D.C. The Unitarian Universalist Association has a history of supporting women's rights. The Clara Barton Internship for Women's Issues was endowed by generous contributions from the UU Women's Federation and other supporters.

A Minnesota native, you attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison, what did you study there and what were your other interests?

I got a B.S. in Sociology and a certificate in Women's Studies. These two fields of study provided a depth and analysis on social issues which I continue to find fascinating and relevant to people's diverse lived experiences. I was also interested in sexuality and sexual orientation... and I worked at the LGBT Campus Center.... I also dedicated much of my time to a student run sexual health organization called Sex Out Loud....

How did you come to consider applying for the Clara Barton internship?

My mom heard about this internship through the Association of Universalist Women at our home church in Minneapolis and encouraged me to apply. The former intern, Kierstin Homblette, was visiting my home church and I had the opportunity to learn more about her advocacy work and talk to her about her experiences in DC....

After two years as the CB intern on women's issues in Washington, what do you feel has been your most eye opening experience?

...learning how Congress works and how individuals can influence this process. My 9th grade civics class did not fully prepare me for the intricacies, tradeoffs and compromises that add up to our democratic process. It also didn't emphasize the role that we as people of faith can play in advocating for just policy. A major part of my work is organizing the Sexuality Education Advocacy Training (SEAT) for UU and United Church of Christ youth and young adults who want to be effective religious advocates for comprehensive sexuality education. After a weekend of lobby training and a legislative briefing these young advocates lobby their members of congress. It is so empowering to hear them tell their stories and represent our faith and principles in action....

You have a special interest in women's reproductive rights. What is the status of these rights for women today?

These rights are being challenged on many levels. Federal programs aren't receiving enough funding for reproductive health services, including birth control, to meet the needs of communities, the Supreme Court is limiting access to safe abortion procedures and the federal government continues only to fund abstinence-only-until-marriage programs which have been repeatedly proven to be ineffective. Millions of women continue to live without health insurance, therefore restricting access to reproductive health care. But a new reproductive justice movement is emerging with young women, women of color and women of faith leading the way....

There has been some cause for celebration lately when the House passed a budget including the 3rd largest funding increase for Title X which serves low income women's reproductive health needs.

What is your career plan now that your CB internship is over?

I am excited to begin my position at Advocates For Youth (www.advocatesforyouth.org) as the State Strategies Program Manager. I will be supporting state coalitions and helping them advocate for comprehensive sexuality education on a state and local level. I will be working to strengthen and diversify these coalitions by continuing interfaith organizing.

Would you introduce us to your successor as the CB intern?

Grace Garner is a recent graduate of Pitzer College with a B.A. in Political Studies. Throughout her life she has been dedicated to social justice and has particularly focused on the struggles which women and people of color face in the United States.... Grace has been a UU since she was eight years old and has participated extensively in YRUU events.... During her summers off from college she worked as a camp counselor for the YMCA and City of Palm Springs.... In the last few years she has produced, directed and acted in the annual production of *The Vagina Monologues* at the Claremont Colleges and is thrilled to be continuing her work to end violence against women while working at the Washington Office for Advocacy....

What advice would you give her?

My advice to Grace is to stay grounded. This work can be frustrating and overwhelming at times but we are making progress and our voices do matter.

UU Women's Connection
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Return Service Requested

It is the steady and merciless increase of occupations, the augmented speed at which we are always trying to live, the crowding of each day with more work than it can profitably hold, which has cost us, among other good things, the undisturbed enjoyment of friends. Friendship takes time, and we have no time to give it.

Agnes Repplier, In the Dozy Hours (1894)

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Time to renew membership dues/support?

Membership/Mailing List Update:

Have you moved? Let us know so you won't miss a thing!

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Church/Group _____

It is if your mailing label shows a date earlier than 10/2007.

Be sure to include a check for \$10 payable to UU Women's Connection with the above information.

Send updates and checks to Treasurer Diana DeWeese, 716 South Douglas Avenue, Springfield, IL 62704.