

2019-2020 Faith-to-Action Recipient Organizations

The following organizations, in alphabetical order, have been selected to receive Faith-to-Action collections from worship services from September 2019 through August 2020:

Agroforestry restoration and sustainable agriculture project, FINCA HEKITI, in Las Marias, Rincon, Puerto Rico

Finca Hekiti is a farm in Western Puerto that has been a beacon for neighbors for teaching sustainable agriculture, agroforestry conservation and self-sufficiency. It suffered immensely from the category 5 hurricane Maria. With winds over 150-200 mph, only 15% of the trees were left standing, and landslides created new contours on the land. After Hurricane Maria, the farmers banded together with other local communities to bring food and water to the interior as they were not receiving any support be it municipal, state, federal, church or otherwise. With donations and support that came from the mainland States, they spread out over Mayaguez, Anasco, Las Marias, Lares, Utuado, Aibonito, the South East getting water filters, non-perishables, generators, inverters, mosquito nets, medications, personal care kits, baby supplies, birthing supplies, tarps, solar lamps, battery run fans, home wares, cisterns, organic seeds, money and more to people in need.

After having spent so much time and resources on helping neighboring communities, as well as fighting a huge hotel and casino project that will devastate their coastal ecosystem, they are now trying once again to raise their farm to be the education center for ecologically and economically sustainable and self-sufficient agriculture in the region. Farmers from the region come to learn, and volunteers who want to participate in service-learning projects also come to the farm to help. They want to focus on longer-term solutions like rain collection systems, solar energy, eco construction, and bio gas systems to rebuild the farm and to continue their work teaching the local farming community how to reduce its reliance on propane, the electrical grid, food imports. Not only do they have classes for farmers, but they also have sustainable agriculture projects for children.

This projects fits well with our church's mission of reparations, and of supporting eco-friendly, sustainable agriculture projects that are being built a grassroots level, thus empowering people in a country that has suffered the effects of U.S. colonialism for over 100 years. Not only did the people of Puerto Rico not receive sufficient official U.S. hurricane relief, they have been left on their own to rebuild their communities with very few resources. We can make a big difference.

Centro Latino de Salud

The Centro Latino de Salud is an organization seeking to help immigrants from Spanish speaking countries, and immigrants from other countries as well, navigate life in Columbia and mid-Missouri. The Centro helps people access legal and health services and provides translation if needed. They offer an after-school tutoring program for children kindergarten through 12th grade. They offer English and Spanish classes. They offer health classes, and the Comedor Popular serves healthy foods and provides opportunities for people in the Latino community to learn about healthy foods and ways to prevent obesity and diseases related to obesity.

Children's Grove Kindness Libraries

Children's Grove promotes a culture of both kindness and positive youth mental health throughout the county. Their Kindness Libraries consist of tote bags filled with storybooks

about kindness that are distributed to all the elementary schools and daycares in the county. This year they will also be working with Parents as Teachers, providing books to leave with participating families. They will also be donating books to the Public Health clinic for children to take home at well-child visits. This promotion of both reading and empathy demonstrates our ability to help heal the world!

City of Refuge

City of Refuge (COR) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization created to help and serve refugees and immigrants in Mid-Missouri. Their vision is to help refugees and immigrants become productive, successful, contributing members of our community. This is in alignment with the UU Church's vision as a "community of radical welcome and deep connection that moves us together to heal the world," and the UU Church's mission of "creating intentional welcome, relational solidarity, and compassionate action in response to injustices."

Each year an average of 200 new refugees come to Columbia, MO. Many of them do not speak English and arrive with only a few pieces of clothing and little money. Staff at City of Refuge evaluate the needs of refugee clients, and provide or arrange for assistance to help meet those needs. Transportation, education, applying for jobs and just learning how to live in an American city are some examples of needs. Volunteers provide tutoring in English.

Columbia Center for Urban Agriculture

CCUA works to connect the people of Columbia with where their food comes from, who grows it, and how to grow it themselves. Their programs range from home gardening support to a production farm which provides tons of fresh produce to local food pantries. They also do extensive programming for school groups and volunteer groups of all ages. Some UU groups which have participated include the Coming of Age youth and Chalice Circles. Many UU members are volunteers and supporters of CCUA. We have done FTA collections for CCUA for several years, always making our donation for the Planting for the Pantry program, which provides no-cost home gardening support to low income families, many of them refugees. The support includes building a garden, providing plants and seeds, and three years of mentoring.

Festival Of Sharing

The Festival of Sharing project provides a structure for identifying critical needs for people in Missouri and around the world and provides resources to trusted agencies for distribution to those in need. 2020 will be our church's 13th year collaborating with participants of other faith groups to help provide these resources. The Rev. Mel West, Retired, inaugurated this project in the 1980s through the newly formed United Methodist Office of Creative Ministry.

The activities culminate with in-gatherings in the fall at several locations around the state. Groups from all over Missouri bring the gifts they have created and collected. Any extra supplies are used for creating more kits and packs.

First Chance For Children

First Chance for Children provides early childhood programs and family resources to foster healthy outcomes for children and families in mid-Missouri. They serve all families in Boone county with children five and under with the Lend & Learn Toy Library and Group Connections. They provide targeted services (home visitation, baby bags with safety items & info), safe cribs,

tangible items to reduce stress, etc., for families experiencing risk who are often left out and left behind.

Hickman High School Chapter of Amnesty International

Amnesty International at Hickman High School works to promote and protect human rights as described in the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. It works to promote immigrants' rights, oppose the militarization of the police, and work with groups like Black Lives Matter. Amnesty students adopt a family at Christmas from the Voluntary Action Center every year and have done so for 25 years.

Honduran Asylum Seeker and His Family

UUCC has officially joined with the Smith family in sponsoring Edler and his wife and two daughters as they pursue their claim of asylum in the U.S. This process is arduous and costly and Edler's opportunities to earn money are very limited for the first many months. The attorney fees alone will be close to \$10,000, plus all the basic life needs of the family will go far beyond that.

Honduras Education Fund

The Honduras Education Fund is being developed to help cover the costs of putting Cito and Keyla, our partners in Honduras, through college. It would help pay for books and tuition for five courses each. The rural river valley of Cangrejal is one of the poorest areas in Honduras. People lack basic sanitation services, education, sources of employment, and access to resources. By supporting Cito and Keyla's education we are supporting options for greater development in the area. Cito and Keyla already give a lot back to their community through their health and education projects. With college degrees in education, they will not only be able to economically support their family, they also plan to help train other men and women in the community in various ways. For example, Cito would like to teach shop classes in his community to help create economic resources for men in the town and they have also talked about helping set up another school in the valley that would be like a secondary school to train more teachers. Thus, by supporting these two young, intelligent people to get their degrees, we are supporting the entire valley. Also, this project represents a small-scale reparations project to help give back to the people of a country that has been pillaged and politically controlled for over one hundred years by U.S. fruit and mining companies (some of which operate within one hour of this valley).

Loaves and Fishes

Loaves and Fishes was started in the mid-1980s by the St. Francis Catholic Worker community and serves a free community meal seven nights a week from 5 to 6 p.m. in the basement at Wilkes Boulevard United Methodist Church in partnership with that church and more than 20 other local faith communities and other organizations.

UUCC provides the evening meal at Loaves and Fishes on the third Sunday of every month. Volunteers in our congregation prepare food for these meals and help set up, serve, and clean up. Our church reimburses food expenses incurred by volunteers as much as possible. Funds received in this Faith To Action collection are placed in a dedicated UUCC account to cover these reimbursements.

Minority Men's Network Educational Foundation

The Network seeks to promote educational, economic, social, civic, and legal progress on the part of African Americans of Columbia and Boone county. The African American population continues to be marginalized and disadvantaged in practically all of these categories, and the Network works to change that reality. Financial aid from the UU church will be used exclusively to enhance the Network's educational fund from which scholarships are given annually to help current local African American high school graduates attend college.

Missouri Faith Voices

Missouri Faith Voices is a multi-faith, multi-racial, statewide, non-partisan organization that is committed to empowering and transforming the lives of ordinary citizens who have been targeted by unfair policies and practices and oppressed by racial and economic injustice. They create the hope, produce the power, and equip those who are impacted with the knowledge and political will needed to create a just society for all Missourians.

Missouri Rural Crisis Center

Missouri Rural Crisis Center (MRCC) was formed in the midst of the 1980's farm crisis to help support rural farming families in the face of the takeover of agriculture by agribusiness. They are a major promoter of Medicaid Expansion in Missouri, because it is so critical to rural families, and are active in opposing legislation that squeezes out small producers. They have been particularly active in supporting the right of rural counties to pass local health ordinances to protect their water and air quality for the typical practices of large confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). It is on that topic that the UUCC Green Sanctuary group has partnered with MRCC.

Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (MADP)

MADP works to end the death penalty in Missouri by any legal means necessary. It believes that if all persons are equal and have worth, no one should ever be killed no matter what that person might have done in the past. MADP offers acceptance, love, and support of all persons, especially those condemned to be killed by the state for unacceptable past behavior.

No More Deaths

No More Deaths provides support for refugees seeking entry to the US along our Southwestern Border, including providing water in the desert, and legal aid for refugees. The organization also investigates and reports on violations of International Humanitarian Law by the Border Patrol and ICE.

Room At The Inn

Room at the Inn is an interfaith and community effort to provide a warm and safe place to sleep for the homeless in Columbia, Missouri. The shelter rotates between several churches during December-March. UUCC provides shelter for two weeks, starting December 8th this year (2019).

Spay Neuter Project-No Kill Columbia

It is said that a people can be judged by the way they treat their animal companions, and the Spay and Neuter Project embodies a humane approach to caring for all creatures. By offering their services at low or no-cost SNAP also ensures that everybody has access to and can provide the

appropriate minimum care for their animals. The Spay and Neuter Project provides low and in some cases no-cost sterilization for dogs and cats throughout mid-Missouri. It also provides low-cost vaccines and micro-chipping for pets, as well as services for feral trap neuter release cat populations and no-cost care for pets whose owners are homeless or home insecure. Over the past decade the SNAP / No-Kill Columbia program has radically reduced the feral and stray population throughout the Boone County area.

Anybody may obtain services for their pet from SNAP. However, SNAP reaches out specifically to populations who may not have access to veterinary care for their pet (homeless and home insecure). It meets the need for affordable veterinary care and specifically sterilization services for families and individuals who aren't able to afford a vet but want to provide the benefits of spay/neuter for their pet.

The Center Project

The mission of The Center Project (TCP) is to provide resources and a safe space for LGBTQ individuals to meet, to play, and to grow. Their outreach focuses on youth, families, and people living in rural areas. TCP is Mid-Missouri's only community center focused on the needs of LGBTQ individuals and communities. Designed as a safe and open space, TCP supports the under-served sexuality and gender-based groups within the region.

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)

UUSC is a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization advancing human rights together with an international community of grassroots partners and advocates. Their work is consistent with UU principles and the UU Church of Columbia's mission and vision statements.

UUCS Honduras Ministry

The UUCS Honduras ministry is preparing for its fifth trip to the Cangrejal River Valley in Honduras. Each time our intergenerational groups go, the main part of our work is building latrines, which the community always asks for. Latrines are vitally important for human health and environmental reasons. And each time we go, we ask what else the community needs and offer whatever we can offer to meet their needs. Over the years members of our groups have helped in the sewing cooperative, painted the health clinic and the elementary school, done health education high up in the mountains and offered Pap Smears in the clinic. Above all else though we have built bridges of friendship, knowledge and understanding between our group members and the wider UUCS community and the communities of the El Cangrejal River Valley. Over the years, we have seen our children grow up and be changed by what they experienced on our trips, changing the trajectory of their lives. Our work aligns with the mission and vision of UUCS by taking action to be in solidarity with people who have been oppressed by factors that include US foreign policy. Together with our Honduran friends we are working to heal the world, and as a result all our lives are being transformed.