

Off Court Street



● Winter 2011

the newsletter of **ucm: center for spiritual growth & social justice**
at ohio university

In these challenging economic times, UCM is extremely grateful for the ongoing support of our local community. We have two exciting fundraising events this quarter and hope to see YOU there! And please remember, wherever you are, to buy, dance, & eat local!

Jazzin' for Justice

Friday, February 25
6:30pm – 8:00pm
Jackie O's Pub & Brewery

Suggested donation at the door - \$5 - \$20

*Happy Hour and Dance Benefit
featuring the gypsy jazz & torchy tunes of*

The Coolville Hot Club

Jana's Soulful-icious Supper

Friday, March 11, 6:00pm @ UCM
Suggested donation \$25 - \$50 Reservations required.

*Jana Durham whips up a meal of her signature
Southern cuisine to support UCM.*

Menu features:

Corn Cakes
Garlic Roasted Pork Loin (only non-vegetarian item)
Seasoned Anasazi Beans and Rice
Baked Sweet Potatoes
Coleslaw
Mustard Greens with Turnips
Apple Crisp

Alternative Spring Break Trip to the US-Mexico Border

March 20 – 27

UCM will be hosted by Borderlinks to learn about human rights, free trade zones and activists on both sides of the border.

Contact Evan Young for
more information at
ucmevan@frognet.net

*Please consider making a
donation to support this trip!*

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UCM CALENDAR:

MONDAYS

INTERFAITH IMPACT –
weekly student group,
UCM, 7:00pm – 8:30pm

TUESDAYS

VEGAN COOKING - Vegan
(no animal products) meal and
cooking demonstration,
donations welcome.
7:30-10:00, UCM

THURSDAYS...

**INTERFAITH BIBLE
STUDY** – weekly through
Feb. 24 Church of the Good
Shepherd, 12:10pm

THURSDAY SUPPER –
weekly free meal open to all
UCM, 5:30pm

SATURDAYS...

SATURDAY LUNCH –
weekly free meal open to all
UCM, 1:00pm

SUNDAYS...

**INTERFAITH YOUTH
CORE** – steering committee
meeting, 7pm, UCM

FEBRUARY 17

**GIRLFRIEND'S GUIDE TO
ACTIVISM**
Leah Vincent, OU Women's
Center, Noon

FEBRUARY 25

**JAZZIN' FOR JUSTICE
FUNDRAISER**
6:30PM – 8:00PM

MARCH 11

FUNDRAISING DINNER
JANA AND SOULFOOD

MARCH 20 - 27

**ALTERNATIVE SPRING
BREAK**
US-Mexico Border

MAY 11

SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARDS

THE NEED FOR INTERFAITH COOPERATION AT OU

RUE KHALSA,

Interfaith Youth Core Fellow and UCM Intern

It starts with a simple question. What if students of all faiths and traditions took action together to make this world a better place? What if religion was used as a force to unite us and not divide us, at Ohio University and throughout the world? A common value in almost all religious and philosophical traditions is the belief that fulfilling one's highest purpose comes in the service of others.

This past fall, we asked this very question in an event: the "What If? Speak In." On November 10, over 70 students, faculty and local religious leaders came to the Speak In (held in Alden Library). After a panel discussion that featured Sikh, Muslim and Christian professors discussing the need for students of all and no faith backgrounds to come together in service, students left the event inspired to create a climate of religious pluralism at Ohio University. Students and faculty shared stories about interfaith cooperation they had seen or heard about throughout the evening, and discussed personal "faith heroes" such as Gandhi who inspire them.

I, along with the rest of the Interfaith Steering Committee, am partnering with United Campus Ministry to spearhead the interfaith movement on this campus. Our goal is to make cooperation among diverse faith communities the new social norm at Ohio University.

We have selected the issue of local and international water pollution to organize around, as we believe that access to clean water is a fundamental human right. This winter and spring, we are going to channel our common desire to serve others by cleaning up local streams polluted by acid mine draining practices and raise money to send personal water filters to Haiti.

I believe that in order to combat complex and daunting issues on the global horizon such as overpopulation, scarcity of resources, global warming and massive poverty, cooperation and coordination among the world's religious communities will be absolutely essential. Though there is severe conflict throughout the world today where religion plays a major role, from the Middle East to central Asia, from North Africa to the Balkans, I believe that it is only a matter of time before cooperation among members of different faiths as opposed to vicious conflict becomes the norm.

We are working to demonstrate this for others to follow at Ohio University and at universities across the country, proving to the world that it is indeed possible. Some of you joined us in asking: What If? last fall. We truly hope that even more of you will help us prove that we are better together in 2011.

This piece appeared in the Athens News and The Post.

SATURDAY, APRIL 16 – UCM/IFYC STREAM CLEAN-UP WITH RURAL ACTION

Contact Rue for more information at gk184406@ohio.edu
Follow her blog at <http://ouinterfaith.wordpress.com/>

Service-Learning in New Orleans

UCM Executive Director Melissa Wales traveled with OU students over Winter Break 2010 to spend a week doing recovery work with the Center for Ethical Living and Social Justice Renewal in New Orleans.

Reflection by Laura Hyde, OU Sophomore

When I was preparing for New Orleans, Louisiana I had a lot of thoughts and expectations for the service trip. However, the trip exceeded my expectations in more ways than one. In preparation, I had watched the documentary *When the Levees Broke* by Spike Lee and found that there were so many details about the 2005 Hurricane and Federal failure that I had not known. Having been only 14 at the time, I had remained in my own blissful ignorance of the situation, brushing off the travesty as another aspect of the horrors of the world and as yet another event that did not affect me personally. Through this experience I have learned so much about the 2005 disaster, our federal government, and the rich history and culture of New Orleans.

One of the many eye-opening experiences was seeing the extent of the current devastation in the city. Although I am sure that seeing the city of New Orleans immediately after the disaster in 2005 was horribly heart-wrenching, it was a different kind of heart-wrenching to see it all today. Knowing that it has been 5 years, and that there is still so much work to be done, and the extent of areas that have been neglected is awful. A lot of the time it is little things that I wouldn't often think of that the city lacks. For example, many areas still do not have mailboxes, *mailboxes*. I became increasingly disappointed not only in the original federal response to the disaster, but the longstanding one.

Another aspect of the trip that I found moving was being able to talk to people who live in New Orleans and who had been there when the hurricane and flooding took over the city. It is one thing to hear the story told on television, but it is quite another to talk to somebody one on one and hear them share their story. I feel very blessed to have been able to talk to such brave, strong and all around amazing people.

After having been in New Orleans, Louisiana for such a short time, I still feel as though I have a tie to it, as though I am being pulled back. The disaster in 2005 represents a federal failure that could have happened and probably will happen again anywhere in the United States. New Orleans is one example of the extent to which racism and classism is an integral part of our government and society. The story of New Orleans is not just about those individuals, but it is everyone's story. I am very grateful that I was able to go on this trip and learn all that I did. I hope that this experience not only inspires me but also motivates me to take a constantly active role in social justice activism.



OU Senior and UCM intern Samantha Bergstein mastering the nail gun in the Lower Ninth Ward.

AREA EVENTS:

MONDAYS...

PEACE VIGIL – 11:30AM – 12:30PM,
Athens County Courthouse

PEOPLE FOR PEACE & JUSTICE - Monthly meeting (1st & 3rd Mondays of month),
4:30 – 6:00 pm, at UCM

PFLAG (Parents, Family & Friends of Lesbians & Gays)
Monthly meeting, 2nd Monday,
6:00pm – 9:00pm, UCM

WEDNESDAYS...

OPEN DOORS - weekly meeting
(while OU is in session), open to all,
8:00-10:00 pm, at UCM

MARCH 13

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY FESTIVAL

2:00PM – 6:00PM

Baker Center Ballroom
Performances, speakers and
information tables sponsored by
the OU Women's Center.

APRIL 9

ANTI-WAR RALLY AND MARCH

New York City & San Francisco.
Contact ucmathens@frognet.net
for carpool information.

INTERFAITH BIBLE STUDY

**THURSDAYS, JAN 13 –
FEB 24, 12:10PM – 1:30**

Join Rev. Evan Young, Rabbi Danielle Leshaw of Hillel and Fr. Bill Carroll of the Church of the Good Shepherd for a seven-week series about sex and money in the Bible, liturgy and religious traditions. Lunch is provided. For directions please visit www.chogs.org or contact Fr. Bill at 593-6877 or gsrector@gmail.com.

UCM, Pie and Radical Hospitality

By Betsy Kunstel (OU Alum in Women's Studies, currently an AmeriCorps Member at the Learning Center in Morgan County, committed locavore, and plans to pursue a Masters of Divinity degree next fall.)

Someone call my Mother. Right now. Someone pick up a phone, call my Mother and say, "What is Betsy's favorite dessert?" ...or, "What dessert would be most likely to drive a stake through Betsy's diet?" I guarantee she'll have one, tiny, three-letter word to share with you. Pie.

I am admitting it here and now. I love pie. I don't just love pie the way I love sweet potatoes, per se, where I can write verses about the perfection of their sweetness and starchiness. I love pie in such a way that I really, truly just want to eat it. I don't want to write about it, I don't want to discuss it, I don't want to analyze it. I simply want to eat it. Any pie that is put in front of me, I probably want to eat. Fruit pies, cream pies, savory pies, cheese pies, double-crust, single-crust, cookie-crust, animal, vegetable, or humanity's creation known as Jello. No matter what kind of pie it is, I'm going to want to eat it. It has been a long time since I last let myself indulge in pie. I am a very well behaved human animal, and I eat things that are good for my body these days. However this weekend, a reason came to pass for me to fill up a dainty, frosted white dessert plate with slice after slice of pie, and indulge to my heart's delight.

This past weekend I participated in United Campus Ministry's First Annual Pie-Bake Off. The event was a fundraiser for United Campus Ministry in Athens, Ohio. What was originally meant to be a competition turned into something even better, something more gloriously communal and more in line with the ideals of UCM. It turned into nothing more than an afternoon of antiquated community fellowship. Gone are the days when someone would spend a Sunday afternoon visiting a friend, or a relative over a pot of freshly brewed coffee and a plate of home baked treats.

In letting go of our rigid standard of required American Christianity, we've also inevitably lost something which is deeply attached to it- **fellowship**. We do not spend quality time with one another nearly as often as we should. This past weekend I had an opportunity to gather with a group of people most of whom I'd

never met, and I was forced to sit down and talk. It was wonderful. There was no television blaring in the background, no one was checking the scores, there was no music playing to distract from a conversation. We were simply groups of people, some acquainted, some not, gathered around tables over plates mounded full of freshly made pie, warming our fingers around cups of coffee and tea, and talking the way human beings ought to.

This originally advertised pie *contest* became something much more community-minded at the end of the day. Competition would've ruined it, I believe. One of UCM's mantras is, "Radical hospitality." United Campus Ministry is an organization that strives to make everyone feel welcome, accepted, comfortable and served...absolutely without regard to difference. They are firm supporters and enablers of interfaith spirituality, social justice, and probably most importantly for this past Sunday, community meals. Nothing could've been more appropriate for UCM's mission of compassionate connectedness than a pie bake-off, turned retro Sunday afternoon visit. Pie is one of my top-ranked comfort foods. It requires no elaborate explanation, but rather its only requirement is to nourish and sustain not only our stomachs but our souls. We are as American as apple pie, after all. We are pie people. Pie makes me reminisce about the dessert finish of my family's Sunday dinners, or loading up trays full of tiny paper plates each donning a slice to be sold at my Church's Christmas Bazaar, or Father's Day, when every year without fail we conjure up a fresh strawberry pie made with just picked warm berries for my Dad. My family dinners, our Christmas Bazaar, and Father's Day all revolve around Sundays. Sundays are days of fellowship, compassion, caring, concern and love. Sundays are pie days. UCM hit this one on the nose.

I am so glad I not only had the opportunity to bake a pie for UCM, but even more so grateful to have spent an afternoon getting to know people I've never met, enjoying the homemade pies crafted with love, care, and all things local by the very folks who were surrounding me in the warm basement of UCM on that chilly, rainy Sunday. Thanks to the generous sliding scale donations made by the participants and tasters, United Campus Ministry raised almost \$400 on pie alone. Thank you to UCM for hosting such a wonderful, heart-warming event. I'm already planning for next year.

Betsy, there WILL be a next year – stay tuned!

INTERN REFLECTIONS

RACHEL HYDEN, PR INTERN

There are times when my heart breaks for this sad, lost world. In a society where people are brainwashed to believe that success is measured by a year's salary, and that possessions determine the quality of our happiness, how can it not? My name is Rachel Hyden, I'm a junior at Ohio University studying public relations, and I have dedicated my life to helping fix our broken world. One step at a time, that's the best we can do. My step: nonprofits.

I live and breathe for nonprofit organizations. They are the heart of this country; they *feel* for others. They provide public services in the pursuit of the improvement of society, they call attention to injustices that government overlooks, and they strive to build a civil society. In so many words, they serve others, something our society has completely lost sight of.

Recently I have had the pleasure of working as a public relations intern for two local nonprofits: The Athens Foundation, and United Campus Ministry. Working with these organizations has made it clear that my duty in life is to promote the services nonprofits can provide to society. Whether it be informing the public of grant opportunities with The Athens Foundation, publicizing the dire need for religious pluralism with UCM, or hopefully, one day promoting educational services for disadvantaged children, I know that at the end of the day, I have done my best to serve others.

For me, it's never been about the money. The Beatles had it right when they said that money can't buy love, but I think they forgot to mention that money can't buy happiness either. There is no material possession that will ever give me the sense of fulfillment that serving society has. I intend to spend the rest of my life doing so, and with that, I am content.

Rachel is active in Interfaith Youth Core, helps with press for all of UCM's programs, and has been busy getting UCM's social networking capacity up to speed – check out our new blog at <http://www.ucmohiou.blogspot.com/>, find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter – all of these links can be found on our website ucmathens.org.

Megan is working with Rev. Young to organize local congregations around community needs. She is planning to go to graduate school in International Social Work and Public Health.

MEGAN CASEBOLT, SOCIAL WORK INTERN

In my opinion, the New Orleans service trip this winter was a great success. We got to work with many different organizations, which gave us a well-rounded and interesting experience. The Gris Gris Lab, an organization that focused on alternative medicine and healing the spiritual hurts of New Orleans, was one of my favorite organizations that we worked with. The director of the organization said that she started the Gris Gris Lab because everyone was trying to fix the physical problems in New Orleans but the spiritual problems were being ignored. She thought it was important for these to be addressed. I agree with her. The emotional and spiritual effects of disasters are hardly ever taken into account when rebuilding efforts are taking place, and New Orleans is no exception.

The other three organizations that we worked for were Green Light New Orleans, Animal Rescue New Orleans, and NENA (the Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Empowerment Network Association). Animal Rescue was fun for everyone on the trip. Playing with puppies and kitties is always a good time. Green Light New Orleans, an organization that is trying to convert the light bulbs in people's homes from regular bulbs to CFLs so that the electricity bills will go down. While we were working with Green Light, we got to walk around the neighborhood their office was located in and talk to people about changing their light bulbs. This was a great experience because we actually got to speak to locals about the things that were affecting them. While working with NENA we cleared an old woman's yard, helped frame a house, and cleaned out their storage shed. These things were more like what many in group had expected that we would be doing while in New Orleans, so they enjoyed working with NENA.

The Center for Ethical Living and Social Justice Renewal was a great place for us to stay while we were in New Orleans. The staff at the Center were really nice and they were great about tweaking our schedule to meet our needs. Quo Vadis, the Executive Director of CELSJR, was very intelligent and had some amazing insights into the situation in New Orleans. My favorite staff person was the Diva Chef herself, Jyaphia. She made us amazingly delicious (and vegetarian friendly) meals every single day and kept us entertained in our off hours between work and dinner. Maggie, Will, and Mitio, the AmeriCorps and Avodah volunteers, were really helpful and organized our time in New Orleans really well. The trip was very interesting and fun and I think everyone had a great experience.

To Serve the Spirit - *Evan Young, Campus Minister*

Looking through an old photo album. Really old. And there's a picture of my father, holding a baby that turns out to have been me. And what draws me in to the picture are his eyes as he's looking at me. You may have seen this expression before--part joy, part fear, part awestruck responsibility, part hope and excitement. And all the parts add up to a certain knowledge that, in that moment, everything is changed.

I remember that moment from my own life, when my daughter was born and I held her and looked into her little face. Everything was different, in a good way, a way that was calling a better self out of me. I knew she needed me, would need me from here on, in ways I couldn't even imagine. And I knew, with that same certainty, what I was going to do about it: whatever it takes.

I was reading an article the other day by a colleague in campus ministry. Talking about how students today are concerned about whether they'll have the opportunity, the skill, the determination, the whatever to "change the world." They want to feel like they'll have an impact.

I get this--it's a big world with a lot of problems, and it needs all the changing it can get. Periodically we remind ourselves of this, by celebrating the lives and work of the remarkable people who have changed the world before us. And I think sometimes we allow ourselves to be not inspired, but intimidated by their example.

What I want our students to know is that they *will* change the world. They've changed it already, and they're changing it every day--just like I changed my father's world, just like my daughter changed mine. Just by being there and needing, at the beginning; then by asking hard questions, then by doubting the answers, then by casting visions and dreaming dreams and putting their backs into the hard work what they care about requires. Asking whether one will have a chance to change the world is, I'm convinced, asking the wrong question.

The right question, the one we ask here at UCM all the time, is "*How* will you change the world?" What vision of the world will your time and effort and passion and energy move us toward? Because it's going to move us. We're moved by the free meals that are served, and by the couches that are burned; by the impassioned calls for justice, and by thoughtless consumption and waste. And eventually, at the end of our moving, we can only hope to be satisfied with, rather than ashamed of, our answer to the hard question asked of us by that child we held, the one who needed us in her helplessness: "How did you change the world for me?" Through our work together, let us write our best answer--over and over again, as many times as it takes.

UCM THANKS....

... the following individuals, churches and organizations for keeping the **Thursday Supper AND Saturday Lunch** weekly free meals going strong over Winter Break! The following volunteers provide more than 200 hot, nutritious meals to Athens area citizens during break—including Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Days!

First and foremost, our dedicated interns, Shannon Stewart and Rebecca Pickett. The following organizations and individuals donated their time and food: The Susan B. Anthony Memorial Unrest Home, Athens Friends Meeting, Civitan, Ellyn Burnes, Liana Flores, Gerry and Frances Gilkey, Meg Hummon, Essam Mikhail, Richard Otto, Jenna Perucco, B. J. Price, Ron Rouhier, Michael St. Amor, Seth Teicher, Craig Wienke, and Jean Walunis. Our sincerest apologies if we've overlooked anyone! We appreciate you all.

UCM and MLK

UCM Director Melissa Wales participated in the planning committee for OU's Build Today for a Better Tomorrow MLK Celebration events including the 11th annual silent march and brunch and a panel discussion on Responding to Injustice: The Legacy of Dr. King, at which UCM supporter and human rights activist Peggy Gish received the first annual Art Gish service award. Her late husband, who died in a farming accident last July, was also honored by the creation of The Art Gish Lecture Series to feature faculty whose scholarship focuses on activism.

Peggy Gish is planning to return to Iraq with Christian Peacemaker Teams this spring. Contact Melissa at UCM for information on how to financially support Peggy's peace work in Iraq.

ALUMNI / BOARD SPOTLIGHT

Former program intern (OU '00) and student board member **Heather Moyer** works as a writer in the Sierra Club's legislative office on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. Her partner Amy Sens is an ordained pastor in the United Church of Christ and works for Lutheran Volunteer Corps in Baltimore. They welcomed their daughter, Anne, on August 18, 2010.



Current Board Secretary **Amy Robison** and Scott welcomed Rory Allen Robison into the world on October 19, 2010. Proud mom reports that he was born 22 inches, 9 lbs 2 oz., and VERY progressive!



UCM STAFF

Melissa Wales • *Executive Director*
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Rev. Evan Young • *Campus Minister*
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Jennifer Kelly • *Office Manager*
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STUDENT INTERNS

Samantha Bergstein • Megan Casebolt
Rachel Hyden • Christy Johnson
Rue Khalsa • Rebecca Pickett
Shannon Stewart

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SUPPORTING DENOMINATIONS

OHIO CAMPUS MINISTRIES:

American Baptist Churches
Catholic Conference of Ohio
Christian Church in Ohio
(Disciples of Christ)
Presbyterian Church, USA

United Church of Christ, Ohio Conference
United Methodist Church

LOCAL CONGREGATIONS:

Athens Friends Meeting
Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd
First Presbyterian Church of Athens
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
of Athens (UUFA)

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We depend on individual donors like you for a large portion of our annual operating budget. UCM is a registered non-profit organization.

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New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward during the 2010 Winter Break service trip. Since Katrina, the elderly homeowner has been living in Baton Rouge waiting for her home to be rebuilt. She could face city fines in the thousands of dollars if her yard becomes overgrown, so we spent the day doing yard work. It was quite the jungle, but these determined OU students tamed it! (L-R Julia Flint, Laura Hyde, Samantha Bergstein, Tess Burkley, Megan Casebolt)