

FALL 1997

# SYNAPSE

A  
Point of  
Contact  
Where  
Information  
and Energy  
are  
Exchanged

Volume XV,  
Issue II,  
Fall  
1997.



15 Years and  
Counting



Hi. Feel free to use this handy form to ensure your Synapse satisfaction. FYI: We give names and addresses from the Synapse list to UU-affiliated groups upon request.

## TRIM IT!

Whoa! I don't need two copies of Synapse! Please send my one copy to the address below. Thanks.

## ADD IT!

Yes, I would like to receive Synapse! Here is my name, address, and birthdate.

## I'VE MOVED!

I no longer reside at the address printed on this cover. I have written my new address in the space below. Please make a note of it.

## MY DISTRICT IS:

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'Bye, 'bye Synapse. I no longer wish to receive this oh-so-wonderful publication. Please remove me from your mailing list.

## CHANGE IT!

I sure would like the correct information on my mailing label. Please note the corrections I made to the right and enter them into your database. Namaste!

## I LOVE IT!

Things just couldn't be better. I am mailing this back to you just for the hell of it.



YRUU at the UUA  
25 Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02108



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Fall 1997

# Letters to the Editor

Dear Synapse,

As the anniversary of our wedding on Star Island approaches I have been thinking of YRUU a great deal and wanted to take this opportunity to make an announcement to our YRUU friends; the community most important to us.

Eric Snider and I, Esther Smith, were married last June 22 on Star Island approximately five years after we met at "Adventure Con" in Bean Brook State Park, NH. We miss conferences and conferees dearly and are grateful for years of love and understanding.

Should anyone want to write, our address is:

6 W. Oak Ave.  
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Thanks,  
Esther Smith

within a logic integrated to process information, enabling their minds to interpret the intelligence within the atoms and molecules. Imagine a culture trained to a level of consciousness making them able to recognize the influence they have on what they observe by the very fact of observing.

What kind of dwellings and cities would there be? What would be the norm for dress, behavior and attitudes? Would aesthetics be a matter of fact without a name?

What about gender? Men doing home making and nurturing their families? Women being managers and states persons with a touch of feminine/masculine grace?

Thank you for the features in the Fall '96 Synapse,

Yves Haury  
Edinboro, PA

Dear Synapse,

I've been involved with chairing local and district groups since 1963. Currently, I'm on a break but I love you folks, so I keep in touch through Synapse. The last issue was wonderful!! It proved to be a thoughtful, more balanced and inclusive issue. I liked that it presented a less cliqueish view and had a more accurate feel about what you [YRUU] do and who you are.

Thanks,  
Claudia Jarratt  
Harvard, MA

Dear Synapse,

I'm a Japanese student interested in the Unitarian church. If there are any Japanese-speaking Unitarian youth out there, I would love for you to get in contact with me. I don't know much about Unitarianism and would like to learn more through corresponding with a Unitarian in the United States. If you don't know Japanese I would still like to hear from someone, even though my English isn't so great.

If interested, please write me at the address below.

Sincerely,  
Yukiko Mori  
c/o Hiraiwa, 29 Ikedono-cho  
Kamigamo, Kita-ku, Kyoto-city  
603 JAPAN

Dear Fellow Synapse readers,

As the editors of Synapse, The Youth Office would like to thank you for your wonderful input and suggestions. Your feedback is always encouraged and welcome.

So keep those submissions coming! That's what Synapse is all about: Exchanging information with each other so we can learn more about the wide world of YRUU.

In faith,

Alison & Marc

Dear Synapse Editor,

Thank you for giving me, when needed, the opportunity to share, within the correspondence, quotes from Gender Justice: the focus of the Fall 1996 issue of Synapse.

"Gender Warrior" is an excellent title for any individual confronted by the angry reaction of the loss of privileges granted to males stereotyped as dominance, confrontation, and aggression, with its code of attitudes and dress, preferably battle dress.

There are many references made to the gender of the soul, most of them being feminine. Fred Alan Wolf, Ph.D states in his book *Spiritual Universe*, "All fetuses begin female, then we find that the femininity of the soul has much to do with the feminine principles of structure and creation." I see spiritual energy as both feminine and masculine simultaneously.

Consider a culture based not on exploitation, but on sustainability. A culture educating its children

## There's a New Youth Programs Director in town: Jennifer Harrison!!

Hello there everyone, I'm Jen Harrison, the new Youth Programs Director at the UUA. I am so very excited to get started on this grand adventure with all of you.

Here's a few things to know about me. I grew up in Vermont where I got involved in LRY at the age of twelve and then lived through the transition to YRUU. It has been

an amazing process to watch YRUU birth itself out of LRY and grow into a well organized, well staffed, downright awesome organization of people. I recently have been working in Seattle, WA organizing junior high and high school programs at University Unitarian Church. Part of the joy of doing this work is getting to share my passion for the history of the youth movement in this denomination. My UU roots go back five generations and I am a second generation LRYer/YRUUer.

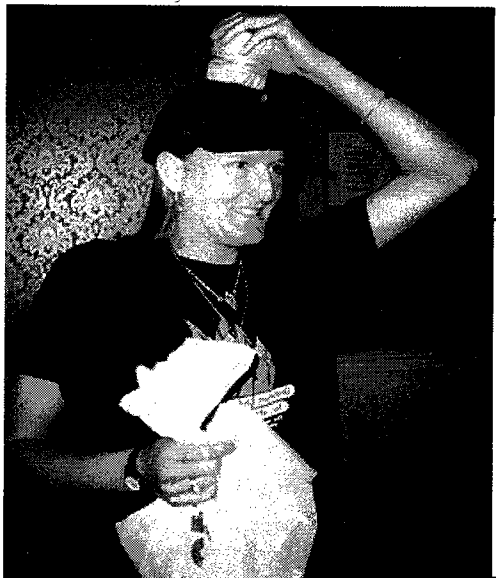
In college, I discovered that my interests were mainly in Religion and Women's Studies. During the summers I worked on highway crews building bridges to help pay for college. When I wasn't studying, I was busy organizing with student groups. Some of my grassroots work includes being a trained political organizer, as well as community-based and campus organizing.

I love to travel, speak French, make a mean tie-dye, write in my journal, juggle, play Frisbee, garden, do carpentry, read, watch birds, ride my motorcycle and go for hikes.

The opportunity to work with the UU youth of this continent and watch YRUU grow into the next millennium fills my heart with energy. The youth I have met so far in my work have inspired me to walk the path which has brought me here. I look forward to the challenges and changes that lie ahead.

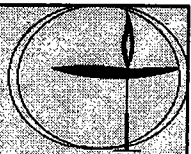
With love,

Jen



Photograph by Mandy Jacobson

Jen being her silly self at a Steering Committee Meeting



## About Synapse...

Synapse is a publication of Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU), the youth organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Subscription is free. Two issues per annum.

**Staff:** Jen Harrison, Marc Loustau, Alison Purcell, and Anne Fleming.

**Mechanicals:** Proofreading, edits, and layout by Youth Office staff.

**Editorial Policy:** Articles for Synapse are chosen from among those submitted by Unitarian Universalist youth, adults working with youth, and other interested parties. Articles are chosen on the basis of content and quality, with some preference given to new authors. All written materials are subject to editing before publication, and graphics may be enhanced. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editors or the majority readership.

**Submissions policy:** Each submission must have a name and address attached. Multiple submissions are accepted. When submitting photographs, please include the name of the person who took the photo to provide proper credit. The following submissions limits apply:

**Articles:** One per issue of each of three types: news, theme, reflective.

**Poetry:** One poem per issue.

**Graphics and Photographs:** No limit. Black and white photos or line drawings preferred.

The above limits do not apply to letters to the editor. Submissions not used will be kept on file for possible use in future issues. Name may be withheld upon request. If you wish to be notified prior to publication, enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

**Advertising:** Rates vary depending on size and type of organization. UUA affiliate and associate organizations are given preference by the editors. Also, non-camera-ready or odd-sized ads have special rates. Advertisements should not be construed as endorsements by the Youth Office, YRUU, or the UUA. The editors reserve the right to refuse any advertisement. Contact the Youth Office for specific rates for your organization.

Submission and Advertising  
Due Date for the  
Next Issue: April 15, 1998

The Youth Office  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
25 Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 742-2100 x 350, 351, 352  
email: yruu@uua.org



# YRUUers March in San Francisco Gay Pride Parade



© Cathy Cade '97

Zoe (holding banner on left) marches with fellow PCD YRUUers in June

by Zoe Winant

When I got home from the San Francisco Gay Pride Parade late Sunday evening, I was still in awe. I was completely exhausted and overwhelmed by all the amazing, beautiful, original, and remarkably bizarre people I had seen that day. Around thirty YRUU'ers (including myself) represented PCD (Pacific Central District) YRUU in the parade. We marched down Market Street carrying our banner, spraying people with super soakers and singing YRUU songs when the moment presented itself.

The streets were lined with thousands of gay and straight people cheering on the participants and watching the amazing floats roll by. The best part of the parade were the people in drag, sailor suits or bikini's on stilts, elephants, and glittering

trucks. The air seemed filled with sequins, ribbons, and rainbow flags. It was great to see gay and lesbian couples out-numbering the straight couples. I have never been around so much diversity before. It was amazing to see every type of person imaginable, all of them representing queers. This was the first Gay Pride Parade I have attended, but it definitely won't be the last. It is so great to see so many people who support equal rights, and so much diversity in a community you wouldn't expect support from. It was an amazing day that will stay with me always.

Zoe Winant is currently the Newsletter Editor for the YRUU district mailing: "Grust," in the Pacific Central district.

## Introducing... the Brand Spankin' New YRUU Programs Specialist:



**Sienna Baskin**



Hello, everyone! My name is Sienna Baskin and I am thrilled to announce that I will be your next YRUU Programs Specialist. You may have met me at GA in Phoenix, but let me tell you a little about myself.

I was born and raised in South Florida, where my family found a spiritual home in the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Miami. When I became a teenager, YRUU was very strong in my district. It welcomed me to a community where anything seemed possible. Camps and conferences helped me feel comfortable working with people toward a common goal and taught me how to stand up for myself in many settings.

In high school I already knew that I wouldn't be satisfied with a conventional higher education. I found Hampshire College, a very alternative liberal arts school in Amherst, Massachusetts. After two and a half years here I feel very at home in New England, although I don't think I'll ever get used to the overwhelming colors of fall or the bleak beauty of winter.

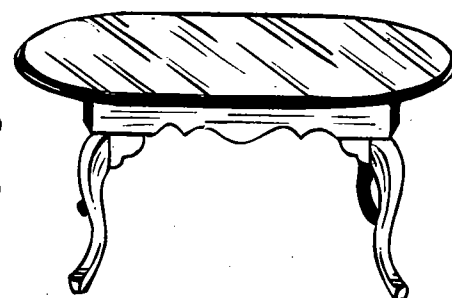


Photograph by Beth Ferguson

Sienna: in her cozy, New England kind of way

In January I will be stepping out of all of this for a year! I feel very ready to leap into being your YRUU Programs Specialist. My life has been deeply affected by the YRUU experience, and now I have a chance to serve this movement that is so close to my heart.

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Apply to Work in  
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# Youth Council 1997-1998

## 1997-1998 Steering Committee

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Duncan Metcalfe 109 Kitt West Boulder, CO 80310 (303) 786-0118 Duncan.Metcalfe@Colorado.EDU	Marki Sveen 9308 26th Street SW Calgary, Alberta CANADA T2V 4G9 (403) 251-1452 sveenR@cadvision.com
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No YCR selected

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**Pacific Northwest**  
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Seattle, WA 98133  
(206) 363-2811  
daisy113@aol.com

## Leadership Opportunities for Youth and Adults

The YRUU Youth Council is the governing body of Continental YRUU. They meet once a year to make policy decisions, pass resolutions, worship, have fun, and decide the direction for the UU Youth Movement for years to come. The YRUU Steering Committee is now accepting applications for the following Youth Council Representative positions:

### There are four At-Large positions for youth:

The youth at-large positions are one year commitments with an option to reapply for a second term at the end of the year.

### Continental Social Action Coordinator:

Duties include disseminating and gathering information from district Social Action Contacts and representing social action concerns of YRUU.

### General Assembly Liaison/Youth Caucus Business Manager:

Duties include attending and managing the business of General Assembly 1997 Youth Caucus and facilitating communication between

Youth Council and Youth Caucus.

### Transitional Age-Range Representative; Representing Junior High:

Provides the viewpoint of an under-represented age group at Youth Council.



### Canadian Youth At-Large:

Represents Canadian concerns on Youth Council and works throughout the year to increase Canadian involvement in YRUU Youth Programs.

### Address your applications to the:

YRUU Steering Committee  
c/o The Youth Office  
25 Beacon St.  
Boston, MA 02108

All Applications  
Are Due:  
**March 15, 1998**

### Adults At-Large

**There are seven positions for adults (ages 25 +) who each serve a two year term. This year there are four adult at-large positions open. UU Ministers, YRUU Advisors, and Religious Educators are particularly encouraged to apply.**

Applications should be typewritten and should include:

**Vital Information:** Name, address, phone number, date of birth, home church or fellowship, UUA district, and a list of people from whom you are expecting letters of recommendation.

**A Letter of Intent:** Why you want to be on Youth Council, the position for which you are applying, what you feel you can offer that position, what you think you can offer the group, any experience you have to bring to the group, what YRUU issues concern you, and your dreams and goals for YRUU.

**Two Letters of Recommendation:** These can be from Ministers, YRUU Youth, RE Directors, YRUU Advisors, teachers, or others with whom you have worked (at least one letter from a youth and one from an adult).



The 1997 Youth Council posing on the jungle gym in Boston Common

## Youth Council 1997: Selected New Resolutions

\*These resolutions are bylaw changes that require approval by the UUA Board of Trustees. The UUA Board approved these bylaw changes in 1996 and all three are now in effect.

- Resolution to place the LRY Endowment Income Under the Direct Control of YRUU

- Resolution for Funding of the YRUU National Social Justice Conference

- Resolution for Endorsing a Youth Advisor Task Force

- Resolution on Establishing Collaborative Relationships Between YCRs and UUA Board Trustees

- Resolution to Produce Three Issues of Synapse Annually

- Resolution to make YRUU a UUA "Sponsored Organization"

- \*Resolution on the Creation of a Canadian At-Large Position

- Resolution on YCR Networking

- Resolution on YCR Accountability

- Advisor Pamphlet Resolution

- Resolution on YRUU Sunday

- Resolution to Create a Spiritual Youth Anthology Part II

- Resolution on the Creation of a UUA Washington Office Youth Intern

- \*Resolution on Changing the Bylaw pertaining to the Composition of the Steering Committee

- \*Resolution on the Removal of Youth At-Large Designations from the YRUU Bylaws



1998 YRUU  
Continental Conference  
August 3 - 9, 1998  
DeBenneville Pines Camp



# Embracing Childhood

## Core Staff Positions:

*The Energy Coordinator facilitates meetings of the Spirit Committee, which is responsible for paying attention to the overall mood of the conference community, and the Energy Committee, which deals with conference rule infractions. She/he also coordinates wake-up, energizes spirit circle each morning, and explains the rules at orientation.*

*The Special Events Coordinator plans all-camp activities, including events such as the Coffee House, the dance, and the Super-Secret All-Camp activity.*

*The Touch Group Coordinator works directly with the leaders of the conference's touch groups. She/he facilitates daily meetings of all touch group leaders to disseminate and gather information and ideas for the facilitation of touch groups.*

*The Worship Coordinator leads the Worship Workshop, which is responsible for planning and running nightly all-camp worship services.*

*The Workshop Coordinator works with the workshop leaders. He/she coordinates the week-long workshops' location and registration, coordinates and publicizes daily "one-shot" workshops led by members of the conference community, and organizes secret buddies.*

## Adult Positions:

*The Adult Coordinator looks out for the adults at Con Con, helping to keep them healthy, happy, and well-adjusted through facilitating daily adult meetings and representing adults' concerns at staff meetings. This person should have a clear understanding of youth-led programming, and a knowledge of the role of adults as advisors.*

*The Chaplain is a spiritual resource for the conference community. This person does not need to be an ordained UU minister, but should have an understanding of the spiritual needs of youth. He/she works with the Worship Coordinators to plan nightly worships for the community. In the past, the Chaplain has led small gatherings such as early morning worships, dream sharing, and reflective discussion times. The Chaplain should be a good listener available to individuals who seek counseling, and is asked to attend meetings of the Spirit Committee.*

*The Logistics Coordinator is preferably from the local area, i.e. Southern California/Los Angeles. This person is responsible for coordinating transportation between the airport and the site, arranging any home hospitality needed before Con Con, setting up a bank account in the local area, and handling Con Con's finances (with the help of the Youth Office). This person will be responsible for recruiting and coordinating the Gopher.*

## Support Staff Positions:

*The Mug Book Editor is responsible for photographing each conference participant, photographing conference events, and editing and laying out the Mug Book, which is similar to a "yearbook" of the conference. The Mug Book is distributed to conferees on the final day of Con Con. This year the Mug Book Editor will lead a small week-long workshop. The participants of the workshop will be the Mug Book Editor's staff and will assist the Mug Book Editor in completing the Mug Book.*

*The Lifeguard is responsible for coordinating swimming times for the conference community, and being present and watchful during those times. This person must be certified in lifeguarding and CPR.*

*The Nurse (an adult position) is responsible for creating, monitoring, and enforcing health and safety standards during Con Con. She or he must be a registered nurse, and must be willing to be available whenever needed during the conference. Before Con Con, the nurse purchases and transports needed supplies for the infirmary, which he or she will staff during Con Con.*

## Workshop Leaders (Youth or Adults):

*Each week-long workshop is composed of four two-hour meeting times, and will have approximately 20-25 participants each. The YRUU Steering Committee is looking for youth and adults to lead week-long workshops that relate to the theme "Embracing Childhood." Core staff, Nurse, and Mug Book Editor will have their travel and registration expenses covered. Other support staff and all Workshop Leaders will have their registration covered, with some funds available for transportation scholarships. Please state your financial needs in your application. Core staff members will attend a pre-site planning meeting in Angeles Oaks, CA March 13-15, for which all expenses will be paid. All staff will arrive at Con Con one night early for final planning.*

## To Apply:

*Send a letter of intent, specifying the position(s) you are interested in, and describing your ideas, vision, skills, and related experience to:*

YRUU Steering Committee  
c/o The Youth Office  
25 Beacon St.  
Boston, MA 02108

Questions? Call the Youth Office: (617) 742-2100  
x351 or x352 or email [yruu@uua.org](mailto:yruu@uua.org).

Applications are due January 15, 1998



Please Cut Out And Send  
To The Youth Office or Your District Office

## Spark The Spirit

May 1-3, 1998

"Spark The Spirit," the Continental Spirituality Development Conference will give 23 youth and 23 adults the opportunity to experience and develop the spiritual and religious aspects of YRUU. At the conclusion of the conference participants will have developed a grasp on ways with which to foster spirituality, be trained to co-lead Spirituality Conferences, and contribute to a comprehensive Spirituality Resource Packet that will be available from the Youth Office.

One youth and one adult, preferably a minister, will be selected by each district to participate in the conference. Conference participants will be trained to co-lead a Spirituality Development Conference in their district. The two leaders that receive this training will be expected to hold a SDC in their district after the conclusion of the conference. The conference will address spirituality within five specific areas: Community, Youth Worship, Personal Spiritual Practice, Bridging, and Worship Resources.

All applications are due in your district office or the UUA Youth Office (25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108) by March 1, 1998. Please print or type neatly. Feel free to type your responses on a separate piece of paper. Be concise, but don't leave out pertinent information. There will be a \$300 travel equalization fee for each participant. Participants will be selected by their district. Some districts may require more information than what is covered on this form.

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Date of Birth:

UU Congregation:

UUA District:

What is your current role in your congregation or district?

YRUU Experience (local, district, and/or continental)

What is your experience leading large groups?

What do you feel are the key elements of worship?

Describe the ideal youth/adult leadership team?

How would you like to see spirituality incorporated into YRUU?

Why do you want to be a C\*SDC Trainer?

Is there anything else that you would like to tell us?



Con Con '97 Ware, MA

# Continental YRUU Is Calling You!





The First YRUU Logo ©1983

# From The Beginning. . . .

## YRUU: Then and Now

by Rev. Julie Ann Silberman

**F**ifteen years ago I was preparing to finish the first semester of my sophomore year in college when the phone rang. That phone call changed everything. I had been selected to be one of the first two youth to staff the office of a new organization, Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU). I remember feeling stunned.

It was a complicated time for me. I was loyal to the organization that had preceded YRUU, an organization known as LRY (Liberal Religious Youth). However, as much as I loved LRY and my experience in LRY I was aware that many of the children who had been in our UU Sunday Schools were not making the leap into LRY Youth programs. Being in the Youth Office at the time of the creation of YRUU was to me the opportunity to change this. I felt that our greatest goal was to create a broader spectrum of youth programs that would successfully address the needs of a larger number of Unitarian Universalist youth.

Today, as I reflect on YRUU, I have completed five years in parish ministry and it seems I have come full circle. I serve on a Task Force on youth for the Ohio-Meadville District to hire the first paid District Consultant on youth this District has ever had. I am thrilled that we have moved to the point where Youth are considered important enough to hire a consultant to serve their unique needs.

Some of the issues that still remain are parallel concerns of 15 years ago. They include the lack of involvement of strong, consistent adults in every congregation who are willing to attend conferences and be with the youth as they learn how to lead in their own right. Also, age ranges are not consistent throughout our association. At the start of YRUU the age range was 12 to 22. With tremendous discussion and thought the Youth Council reduced the age range for Continental YRUU but many of our districts did not, and they still struggle with concerns about younger youth and older youth having different programmatic needs. We still are missing the wider spectrum of youth programming that many other religious traditions offer and that ours offered in eras gone by.

I believe YRUU keeps much of the good of LRY and its other predecessor organizations alive, and adds its own positive contributions to our long heritage of providing for the needs of Youth. I hope it will continue to do so for many years to come.

Julie Ann Silberman is currently the minister of the UU Congregation in Kent, OH

## In The Beginning...

by Colin Bird

Everything was new back in January 1983. When Julie Ann Silberman and I arrived as the first youth staff at the UUA we were confronted with an office piled high with archive boxes and stacked furniture. No one was sure what to expect, least of all the two of us.

The antagonism from old LRYers at our perceived "take over" was hard. Coming from Montreal and the Saint Lawrence district I had not been involved in continental LRY politics, but I had been a leader in my district and all six of my brothers and sisters had been active in LRY. I believed in the youth empowerment spirit of LRY and I didn't want that spirit to be lost in the transition to YRUU.

I saw my role at the UUA as a political one. I was going to fight for the authority of Youth Council and the Steering Committee to set the YRUU budget, supervise the youth staff, and set policy. I was going to make sure that the new district level organizations would be strongly youth-led and that YRUU would continue to be a place for youth who rejected conformity.

That first year in the office we set a lot of important new programs into motion including the first issue of *Synapse*, the first YRUU Con Con and Youth Council, the Youth Advisory and the Local Youth Group Handbook, but I still feel our primary role was to establish YRUU as an organization rather than just a programming office at the UUA.

Did we succeed? Current YRUUers know the answer to this question better than I do, but I think, on the whole, YRUU is fulfilling the vision established through the Common Ground process of an organization by and for youth that welcomes the involvement and support of adults.

Colin Bird currently is director of U.S. programs at the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.



The First YRUU Steering Committee

Common Ground I - a special continental conference convenes to evaluate the state of continental programming within the UUA.

Julie Ann Silberman and Colin Bird become the first YRUU Programs Specialists.

*Synapse* becomes the new continental newspaper printed out of the Youth Office.

1981

1982

1983

1983

Liberal Religious Youth (the predecessor organization of YRUU) is dissolved as a corporation and Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) is born.

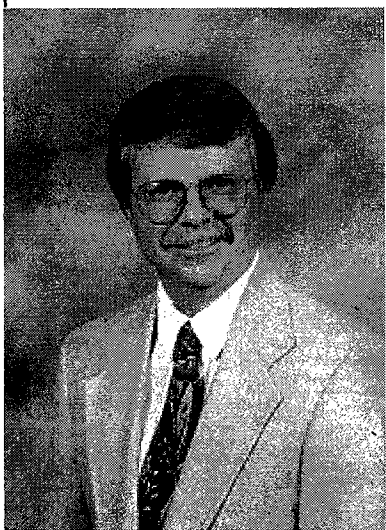
The first YRUU Youth Council is held at Whittier College in Whittier, CA and the first YRUU Continental Conference is held at Camp DeBenneville Pines, Angelus Oaks, CA.

# YRUU

## 15 Years and

## YRUU: FIFTEEN YEARS LATER

by Rev. Wayne Arnason



Rev. Wayne Arnason

**I** was asked to reflect on whether my hopes, dreams, and visions for YRUU have been realized fifteen years after my signature was affixed to its "birth certificate" on January 1, 1983. Those hopes, dreams, and visions were mostly contained within the YRUU Purposes passed at Common Ground I. [ed. note: Common Ground was the week-long gathering of youth and adults in 1981 and 1982 that met to create a new Unitarian Universalist Youth Organization, what was eventually to become

YRUU.] They included our intention that YRUU would foster spiritual depth, nurture the freedom and integrity of the questioning mind, embrace all persons of diverse backgrounds, encourage the development of a spirit of independence and responsibility, and encourage the flow of communication between youth and adults. I believe YRUU has fulfilled all these purposes and more. As an adult at the time YRUU was created, I am particularly grateful and happy about the way that YRUU has accomplished the last of these purposes.

The YRUU staff, Youth Council, the district structures, and the UUA Board have worked hard over these years to fulfill that purpose, sustaining the flow of communication and mutual commitment between youth and adults. The 1995 Youth Focus GA was proof of that fulfillment, and a high for me beyond words. I must admit, I also had a personal vision and a personal agenda in helping to give birth to YRUU. I hoped that one day I would be a parent, and if I was, my child would have a UU youth community to be a part of, a community that could be as important and meaningful as Liberal Religious Youth was to me [ed. note: Liberal Religious Youth existed

from 1954 - 1982 and was the predecessor organization to YRUU].

In the year 1983, six weeks after YRUU was officially born, my daughter Sarah was born too. Last summer, she completed our church's Coming of Age program and joined in the group pilgrimage to Boston, where she visited the Youth Office and was introduced to YRUU. However she wants to be part of it. Whatever it might mean for her, YRUU is there for her. I couldn't be happier.

In 1982, the Rev. Gordon McKeeman, a delegate to Common Ground II and now a member of the church I serve, offered a covenant statement for the dedication ceremony of YRUU. It is a covenant I have continued to use for the dedication of all the children in our church. It is a covenant that I trust will guide the UUA's relationship to YRUU for many years to come. It says, in part:



A Youth worship in the Old Days of YRUU © 1984

..so far as in us lies, we will strive to walk with you in the bonds of love and friendship. We will strive to aid you in all your endeavors toward a higher life. We will strive to aid you in resisting temptations....Whatever may come to you, ..in the spirit of our faith which tells us that "love never faileth" we promise never to close our hearts against you.

Rev. Wayne Arnason is the minister at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Church in Charlottesville, VA

# To The Present



The Current YRUU Logo  
© 1993



The 1997-98 YRUU  
Steering Committee

## My UU utopia

by Mandy Jacobson

Nowadays, it's easy to find people caroling the joys of an effective and empowered youth group or YAC with stories of reformed youth and saved lives. But I must admit, there are times when being heavily involved in local and district YRUU hasn't felt as good as it does now. The times when I've sent other youth home from conferences, the times when the advisors have threatened to quit because they are just damn tired of getting no support, and the times when

events have been missed by my youth group because of lack of organization or communication are not among my favorite memories. These were times I felt like I was the only Unitarian Universalist youth who gave a damn.

Fortunately, I've had a group of people prove me very wrong. They've even helped fix many of my complaints. It's an eight person committee, a mix of adults and youth, who have written a report called the Youth Programs Review. They did research, gathered statistics, and asked people questions about the last fifteen years of YRUU. The committee tackled everything from YRUU structure to advisor support and stapled their commentary and recommendations in a handy-dandy booklet. So here's my advice: READ ONE. I promise it will have relevant information for everyone involved in YRUU from the local to continental level, plus it has some really touching homilies in the back. I've read the report at least seven times, and it has helped me to develop some visions for the future of YRUU.

Right from the start, the review had some very concrete suggestions for the

concerns I addressed at the beginning of this article. In part two of the report, entitled *Adult Support*, it discusses advisor training, advisor resource people, and advisor communication. I can't imagine the difference it would have made to Polly, my overworked and under-assisted local youth group advisor, to talk to other advisors who work with youth. In my vision for YRUU's future Polly talks to advisors across the continent, has people to turn to when she doesn't know what to do, and is not the only adult stuck driving fifteen kids to a conference.

I managed to go through four years of intense local and district YRUU involvement before I ever heard of the Youth Office in Boston, a Youth Council Representative (YCR), YRUU Program Specialist (YPS), Continental Social Action Coordinator (C\*SAC), or any of the rest of the alphabet soup. I thought I was clued in, after all I went to conferences and led touch groups, but I just never got tipped off to the continental scene with its resources, leadership opportunities, and fabulous conferences. To this day, it still baffles me that I was so completely in the dark. So naturally, in my ideal vision for YRUU, we have a wondrous communications network where things sent to DREs make it off their desks, where YCRs actually report back to their districts, where the information in *Spider* and *Synapse* gets posted and hyped in churches, and where youth use their voices to spread Unitarian Universalism.

So, what's my point, you may ask? Am I just going to babble about my vision in continental newspapers? Of course not. But, you have to admit, sometimes all these problems seem overwhelming. That's why I was so glad to read (and re-read and re-read) the Youth Programs Review. It pinpointed problems and offered workable and understandable suggestions on how to fix them. What is the first thing I'll do to fulfill my Utopic vision? Make sure Polly gets a copy.

Mandy Jacobson lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and is the current Position On Appraisal on the YRUU Steering Committee.

## 1983- 1998

## Counting

The first continental wide Leadership Development Conference is held in Dallas, Texas

1985

1989

General Assembly has a Youth Focus in Indianapolis, Indiana. Over 355 youth attend, the largest gathering of YRUU youth ever.

1990

1996

At the 15th Anniversary of YRUU, Youth Council and the Continental Conference are held at the same locations as in 1983.

1997

The Five Year Review Report is completed to evaluate the successes and problems of this new youth organization.

YRUU changes its age range from 12-22 to 14-20

The Youth Programs Review Committee Report, evaluating YRUU now that it is 15 years old, is completed.

## The YRUU Story

by Laura Trumbull

I am reading a story right now. It is a story of endless late nights lying in a tummy circle, laughing until my sides ache. I am reading a story of arriving at a district conference and being rushed with hugs and kisses from far away friends. I am reading a story about an angel wash with one hundred youth and advisors in the silence of the flickering candle light. I am reading about the advisors who are my friends. I am listening to stories about the workshops I've attended, and how they always bring up new and exciting ideas for me to grasp. I am reading about our political knowledge and the drive to support what we believe in. I am reading about beautiful resources that help lift youth groups off the ground. I'm reading a story about General Assembly 1996 and its Youth Focus. Over 300 youth in one place, sharing our ideas, sharing our encouragement, our skills, our love for this religion to every adult we encountered.

I am now reading an even more amazing story. This is the one where Unitarian Universalism's leadership recognizes YRUU, not only just in terms of our existence, but also as a leading and driving force in this Association. This story is my favorite because it is so different. While the other stories have been written many times, each story a little more unique, this one has a history of fifteen years behind it. YRUU has had much to be proud of that time. However, I am also reading a story about the future and how YRUU can change for the better.

I believe YRUU has become strong enough to handle the problems hindering our community. We need to confront Racism in YRUU. YRUU is not intentionally racist and we can do more to address the issues of Racism and cultural diversity in YRUU. We can not expect Unitarian Universalism

cont'd on page 8

## The Future of YRUU

These entries are excerpts from a survey of YRUUers asking for input concerning the future paths of YRUU.

- I want to see more youth from around the country organizing marches, speeches and rallies. I'd like to make YRUU's voice heard and to see youth put our faith into action. - Duncan Metcalfe, Youth, Greeley, CO
- I think we need more advisor support at the local level! - Dallas Freedman, Youth, Minneapolis, MN
- I want YRUU to help the whole Unitarian Universalist religion grow. - Melissa Cain, Youth, Oklahoma City, OK
- If we're going to be a real continental organization, then we need more involvement from the entire continent, including people who don't necessarily live in Canada or the U.S. - David Ramsey, Youth, Providence, RI
- I'd like to see YRUU get completely on-line. Local, district, and continental websites, mailing lists, conference registrations, everything should be available on-line. Every congregation should have on-line access so individuals without a computer or World Wide Web access could be involved. - Katie Dow, Youth, Maitland, FL
- Every district would employ a youth

cont'd on page 9

## And Beyond





# DEAR UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

## A Needs And Aspirations Survey



We hope you will be intrigued by the survey that starts below. And we hope you will invest a few minutes in filling it out and sending it to us.

**WHY THIS SURVEY?** This survey begins a process that will reach out to all UU individuals and congregations, youth and adults. The process, called "Fulfilling the Promise," will help us move toward agreement about why we come together as people and as Unitarian Universalists and what we hope to accomplish.

**WHO WROTE THESE QUESTIONS?** The survey questions came from individual UUs and especially individual UU youth, like yourself. More than 500 people helped create this survey. We hope you will find your experience reflected in the questions.

**HOW DO I ANSWER THEM?** When you have finished, submit the survey by sending it the Youth Office at 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108. [Or you can call 1-617-742-2100 ext. 670 to request that complete copy of the survey be sent to you.]

**WHAT HAPPENS TO THE RESULTS?** The results will be compiled and shared widely and will provide vital information for the Fulfilling the Promise process, involving congregations, UU district organizations, affiliates, and the entire Unitarian Universalist Association.

**MEANWHILE, IN YOUR YOUTH GROUP,** the questions can also be used as the basis for small group conversations.

*In Faith and Promise,*

*The Fulfilling The Promise Committee*

- How does your congregation make you feel welcome as a youth?
- What does your congregation do that shows you that you (as a youth) are not accepted?
- Do you feel connected to adults in

*your congregation? Why or Why not?*

- Where do you feel most spiritual or worshipful?
- When do you get the most out of a UU worship service?
- What is the most important thing that you feel needs to change about UU youth groups?
- What do you like best about your youth group?
- What could adults do to make your youth group better?
- If a friend asked you to explain UUism, how would you explain it?
- Do you think you will stay a UU as an adult? Why or why not?



photo by Mandy Jacobson

Emily Stainer at Youth Council 1997

**"Are you just sitting around putting off your homework? Well, I'm Emily Stainer, the YRUU Continental Social Action Coordinator and I've got some productive ways to procrastinate and put your UU Principles into action at the same time. Here are some suggestions on how to inform yourself about the opportunities to effect change in the United States and in UU circles."**

- ☐ Subscribe to the Faith in Action Newsletter: Call the Faith in Action office at the UUA and ask to be put on the mailing list. Phone (617) 742-2100 ext. 608 or email mhooover@uua.org.
- ☐ Check your Representatives' voting record via the World Wide Web at <http://lcweb.loc.gov/global/legislative/congress/.html>
- ☐ Exercise your consumer power: Write to companies about your objections and/or support of their policies about animal testing, workers wages, sexual orientation policies, child labor policies, etc. Or simply refuse to buy products from companies with policies that you disagree with.
- ☐ Apply to the YRUU National Social Justice Conference!!!
- ☐ Subscribe to the Unitarian Universalist Washington Office or American Civil Liberties Union list-serves: [Washofc-1@uua.org](mailto:Washofc-1@uua.org) and [Majordomo@aclu.org](mailto:Majordomo@aclu.org)
- ☐ Go straight to the top: Call the President of the United States at (202) 456-1111. Odds are that you won't actually speak to Bill Clinton himself, but you'll at least get an aide who will listen to what you have to say.
- ☐ Call your Congressional Representatives: The congressional switchboard number is (202) 225-3121. Ask for your congressperson or senator. If you don't know who they are tell them where you live and they will connect you to the right person.

Be sure to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached by phone at (413) 493-4749 or email at [elstaine@myholyokey.edu](mailto:elstaine@myholyokey.edu). Remember, anyone has the power to influence the way things are done. Now go for it!

## The YRUU Story

continued from page 7

to become completely anti-racist if the people of its future, youth, are not. YRUU can no longer simply believe we embrace people of color. We need to learn to fully welcome and embrace youth of color.

I don't believe that our problems will ever prevent YRUU from expanding and growing, but I do believe they will prevent us from completely putting our faith in action. YRUU has created a book of events and memories. We started the day of its birth, January 1st, 1983, and continue now with each new story making way for another. I believe "they" were right: that our momentum keeps going; that we are the keepers of our own dreams; and that you can write beautiful stories before you even know that you have started. But now the time has come to edit some of the stories we have written. After we have finished, YRUU can be what it has always wanted to be.

Laura Trumbull is a youth from the Michigan District

☐ The Four Most Frequently Asked Questions About...

## THE FIRST ANNUAL YRUU

**SUNDAY: April 19, 1998**

### What is YRUU Sunday?

The 1997 YRUU Youth Council passed a resolution encouraging all UU congregations to hold a youth-led Sunday Service annually *on the Sunday after Easter*, in congregations that do not have a traditional date for such an event.

### Who does YRUU Sunday?

*Local YRUU Youth everywhere! All it takes to lead or participate in a Sunday service at your congregation is a little guts and a lot of ingenuity.*

### When Is YRUU Sunday?

YRUU Sunday is an annual event happening each year the Sunday after Easter. This year YRUU Sunday will be taking place April 18, 1998.

### How is it Done?

There are several steps to leading a youth Sunday service. In the Youth Office we have many fabulous free resources that outline the elements of a fantastic youth Sunday. Just call the Youth Office to request them.

The Youth Office

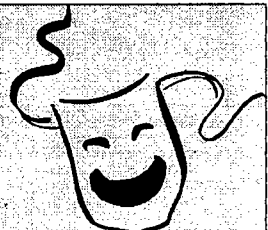
25 Beacon St.

Boston, MA 02108

(617) 742-2100 ext. 351, 352 or 350.

email: [yruu@uua.org](mailto:yruu@uua.org)

More Information About YRUU Sunday On The YRUU Website at [www.uua.org/YRUU](http://www.uua.org/YRUU).





## Finding Similarities in a World of Difference

by Matthew Davis and Joanna Lydgate

The Belmont, Massachusetts UU Youth Group recently traveled to Phoenix, AZ, where we worked on community service projects with participants in the *YouthBuild* organization. Together we painted a local community center and helped rewire and generally improve the condition of a group of low-income housing units.

*YouthBuild USA* teaches inner-city youth construction skills while they do community restoration and building projects. The program also gives the youth remedial/GED and leadership classes. *YouthBuild* was founded in 1978 by Dorothy Stoneman and now has 103 sites in 34 states. The program helps train young people for careers and gives them an opportunity for a better life. *YouthBuild* is a classic example of how one person can make a difference.

The young adults we worked with were between 18-21 years old and were all male, although at other YouthBuilds across the country there are females. They are all high school

dropouts, except for two, who are now working on their General Equivalency Diplomas. Most had grown up in lower class communities, over half have been in gangs. They have dealt with hardships that I have never considered. But the connection between us suburban kids and the



YRUUers in Action: The Belmont Youth Group in front of one of the houses they helped build.

inner-city youth was amazing. They were all so open-minded that we found ourselves becoming friends after only an hour or two.

At each site, we were assigned a "partner." My afternoon partner was named Anthony. I was nervous about working with him, but after fifteen minutes he was enthusiastically telling

me his plans to go to college after graduating from YouthBuild. On the bus ride home a bunch of guys were talking about tattoos. I asked Anthony if he had one. He nodded, then added "And I'm getting another one next week." I asked "Of what?" Anthony responded, "Of my brother's name with two hands holding it, like this," he put his hands together in the shape of a heart. "He died a couple of years ago." I asked, "How did he die?" Anthony looked out the window and replied, "He was in the wrong place at the wrong time." I continued, "You ever been shot?" He nodded and showed me the scar on his arm. "How did it happen?" I asked. He laughed quietly, almost at himself, "I was gang banging."

I gained something from this trip that I never had any idea I would. This trip wasn't about working, it wasn't about sightseeing, it was about realizing how much we had in common with those guys. Anthony is only two years older than me and he has confronted issues that I've never come close to facing in my life. Yet, what amazed me even more was that, when we were talking, I didn't feel any different from him.

Matthew Davis and Joanna Lydgate attend the Youth Group at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Belmont, Massachusetts

Attention Youth Aging  
Out Of YRUU!

Dear YRUUers,

I am an old YRUUer from the Michigan District. Now I represent the young adult age range of 18-35 for C\*UUYAN and I am your acting liaison to help bridge the transition out of YRUU. After 11 years in YRUU I was petrified at the thought of leaving a community that literally saved my life throughout my teenage years. Where was I to go? I was forced to take a leave of absence from my UU community for two years. I don't want any YRUUer to experience that void in their life if they don't have to. I'm here to let you know that there is a community for those of you in transition. It is called Opus. It is similar to Con Con, full of beautiful, new, and interesting people. Every young adult is looking for the same stability, and no matter the age, I've found it extremely useful... that older voice...the new ideas...the safe community....a common ground.

Feel free to call me anytime, with questions or concerns, or e-mail me. I look forward to meeting you at GA and Con Con later this year.

Peace and love always,

Sabrina Harle  
226 Horton  
Lansing, MI 48912  
517-267-8974  
sharle@compuserve.com



Sabrina Harle, the  
C\*UUYAN Liaison to  
YRUU

## The Future of YRUU

cont'd from page 7

with the district YAC to coordinate events, administrate programs, outreach, and maintain institutional memory. -Joann Victoria, Advisor, San Francisco, CA

○ I would most like to see YRUU put more energy into educational activities. Jeffrey Liebmann, Advisor, Pittsburgh, PA

○ I hope we can resolve the issue of Youth smoking at district conferences with a solution that's comfortable for everyone involved. Tia Lawlor, Youth, Fort Worth, Texas.

## The Continental Advisor Trainers Are Coming To Town!

Twenty-three Continental Advisor Trainers, one from each district, have been chosen to attend the 1997 Continental Advisor Training! They will be trained November 21-23 in Boston, MA to provide resources, workshops, and consultations for their district's advisors and youth programs in the upcoming years. Take a look through the list and find your district's advisor trainer. Give them a call before the training to say, "Hi!" or contact them after November 23 and ask them to use their newfound skills to lead an advisor training at your local congregation or for your district!

### Western Canada

Dave Dessens  
517 Oxford St.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3M3J2  
Canada

W: (204) 947-1609  
H: (204) 489-5094  
frspirit@pangea.ca

### Mid-South

Linda Ramsey  
6614 Ellwood Ct.  
Nashville, TN 37205  
(615) 356-3531  
Linda.Ramsey@mcmail.  
vanderbilt.edu

### Pacific Central

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San Francisco, CA 94103  
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johv@sfsu.edu

### Pacific Northwest

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Vancouver, BC V6P3A9  
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(604) 261-7656  
andrew\_tovey@richmond.  
sd38.bc.ca

### Mountain/Desert

Rick Schroeder  
107 N. Hollywood  
Ft. Collins, CO 80521  
(970) 484-8337

### Connecticut Valley

Briggs Saroch  
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Greenfield, MA 01301  
H: (413) 774-3982  
UUBriggs@aol.com

### Prairie Star

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55409  
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### Ohio-Meadville

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### Central Midwest

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Hillsboro, MO 63050  
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### Mass. Bay

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### Ballou Channing

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Gward3@aol.com

### Thomas Jefferson

Terry Murphy  
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South Hopkins, SC 29061  
(803) 695-0206

### Pacific Southwest

Luiza Brown  
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Van Nuys, CA 91405  
(818) 376-1144

### Saint Lawrence

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Rochester, NY 14620-2145  
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### Ohio Valley

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### Central Mass.

Daniel Fasset  
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(508) 448-5305

## How to Minimize Your Possessions and Free Up Your Life

by Sarah Tucker

Imagine yourself floating. Floating in a sea of mail order catalogs. Now imagine yourself in a luxury boat with a cable hook-up. You flick on the tube to find the only channel you can get is the Home Shopping Network. As you fight your way through the increasingly turbulent waves, it begins to rain. Pounded by the torrential rain of credit cards, ATM receipts, and check-books, you miraculously sight land ahead of you. It stands before you in a shining marble glory, beckoning to you with large red and white clearance posters: the mall. You've worked hard all week long for this chance to let loose, and you've finally reached your destination. Today's purchases will probably include such things as clothes, books, CDs, and useless little gadgets. But no matter how silly your little treasures may seem to others, they are your treasures, and yours alone.

My own bout with mall rat fever ended in the purchase of a deluxe Ping-Pong table. When I think of how many hours I worked to pay for that monstrosity, I want to kick myself. Instead of wasting my time playing mindless games, and watching television while wearing expensive clothes I don't need, I could change my lifestyle. I've decided I would rather have time to spend than money. Instead of spending time with my friends and family, I surround myself with possessions, and work long hours to keep them headed my way.

We are a consumer-based society here in the United States, and whether we like it or not, it is likely to stay that way for a long time to come. We live in an age where "things" are being produced quickly and cheaply, but our possessions may not be as "cheap" as we think. While the average American owns 50-75% more prop-

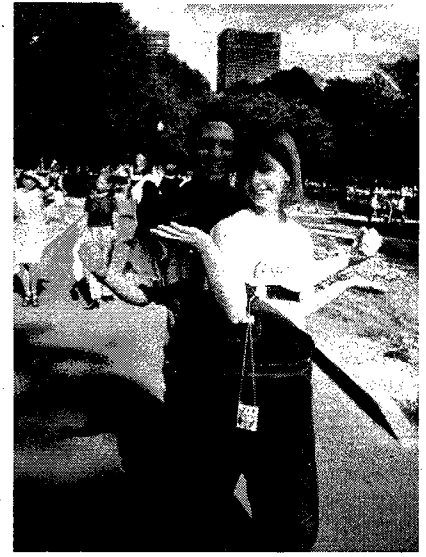
erty than their ancestors, it comes at the cost of a certain quality of life. People tend to get bogged down by all their possessions and it just makes life more complex in the long run.

Fewer possessions means more money saved, more time spent doing what you want, and more overall freedom. With less to tote around, you require less space, and have more mobility. If this sounds good to you, here are a few ways to get started:

**1. INVENTORY** — Make a list of things you need in your life, including things such as: food, clothing, shelter, transportation and recreation. When this list is complete, start making a list of the materials you need to maintain your needs comfortably. For instance, in order to have food, you probably will want a few dishes. But do you really need all of those glasses? Take time to consider things that have more than one use, and those that will last a long time. These items will save you money and space in the long run.

**2. PRIORITIZE** — Look around you. Which possessions are sentimentally valuable to you? Be precise. Get into the mentality by asking yourself: "If my home burned up and I lost everything in it, which things would I miss the most?" Hopefully your first answer would be the people and animals living with you. Next come material things. Whatever these items are, leave them in their place. Remember to be realistic in your assessment.

**3. PILES** — Though this may be the messiest approach, remember that in the long run, your space will be refreshed and organized. Pile all of your clothes in the middle of your room. Every time you wash something,



Reduce your mass by sharing your clothes with a friend, like Meghan Springer and Evan Lehman-Baker pictured above.

put it away in a drawer or closet. Give yourself three weeks to a month and then start evaluating the pile left in the center of the room. When you get to the point where you're considering the jeans the cat puked on rather than what's in the pile, it's time to donate it to a thrift store or offer it to your family and friends. This method works well for just about everything you own.

**4. CHANGE** — Once you have cleared out unwanted, unnecessary things in your life, you must change your habits if you want the liberated feelings to last. Pledge to spend more time than money on the people you care about, and you may start to feel better more often. After all, fewer attachments means more freedom and freedom is sweet.

Sarah Tucker is a youth in Johnson, Vermont.

## How to Develop an Amazing Regional GLBT Conference (and How Not To)

by the SATUURDAY Conference Planning Committee

The first meeting of the Metro New York District YAC's S.A.T.U.U.R.D.A.Y. (Sexually Alternative Teenage UU's Respecting Diversity Among Youth) Conference planning committee was amazing! Facilitated by sophomore Gregor Faron, we met to develop a leadership development conference for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) youth and straight allies that would celebrate creative activism and embolden attendees with the tools to make youth groups, schools and communities safer for GLBT youth and their straight allies. With the help of YRUU Programs Specialist Marc Loustau, we tossed around a wide range of ideas about the focus and structure of the conference. In the process we elected co-chairs, made a timeline, and sorted out the tasks that needed to be done into several categories.

We knew planning a continental GLBT Conference would be tough. Our YAC had recently transitioned into a culture of youth empowerment, and much of our leadership was new. We also had tons of other projects in the works. But we knew the time was right to address this issue, and that we could make a huge difference if we just trusted ourselves to figure out how to do it as we went along. The planning committee met at a bagel shop in New York every few weeks for two to four hours from March to August to hone the structure, outline the three mandatory workshops per day and iron out logistics. We even were able to recruit well known people from around the continent to commit to leading the workshops.

Everything seemed to go pretty smoothly ... except for what turned out to be the most important thing: Publicity. Even though word-of-mouth publicity seemed good, our flyer didn't get out until two months before the conference. We completely underestimated the lead time required for promoting something that had never been done before, and the date we chose, the four days following Con Con, turned out to be a bad idea.

We became extremely nervous in June, after our publicity efforts repeatedly floundered, and in July, with only 15 registrants, we set a minimum number of 30 registrants by the week before to go forward. Frantic phone calls the week before

yielded a final tally of 23 committed youth, and we were forced to make the hard decision of postponing it for a year. Informing the workshop leaders and youth to explain was extremely difficult, as was the despair by some of our youth at having worked so long and hard for such an important effort with no conference to show for it. But now that we have an extraordinary conference planned and workshop leaders committed for July 2-5, '98, we're focusing all our efforts on publicity. Check out our ad (on page 12) for more information, and join us right after GA '98, which will be held within easy transportation distance.

The SATUURDAY Con Planning Committee is made up of youth and adults from the Metro New York District

### Over the Blue Wall

by Jake Bagshaw

Over the blue wall  
and through the rose  
bursting past petals  
to where water sprays  
from shining walls  
I make a tube of where  
I am  
in the starry  
folds  
of mundane  
reality  
I  
rush  
past  
(up hill)  
just  
this one last  
time  
I owe feeling  
to nothing  
but the odors in my nose  
and spangles in my eyes.



### Star

by Elizabeth Martin

With the reckless blossoms of  
weeds  
I grew and lived, I  
swam  
in the redpinkishwhite foam  
of the sea,  
played in the barn and the  
tire dragon.  
Every part of the island, the  
sea-lion basking  
happily in the  
Seaweed. West Rock  
where I met my friends and  
many a  
marshmallow roast  
East Rock in  
The cold crisp air  
scrambled egg  
mornings.  
Eating periwinkles on  
that  
island  
A trip to Appledore  
With the reckless blossoms of weeds.



Youth Showing spirit at Youth Council '97



## In the Spirit



"In the Spirit" is a collection of sermons, homilies, and readings by Unitarian Universalist youth from around the world. This section of *Synapse* dedicated to the celebration of UU youth spirituality and the religious contributions youth make to UU congregations.

## A Summer's Late-night Reflections

by Abi Harper

The following are three emails sent from Abi to a friend during a week in June. Each paragraph is a different day.

Have you ever felt like a faucet ready to spurt a leak at a simple touch? No, not leak, EXPLODE!! I will shatter into a million pieces and land in a million places and you will not be able to call one shard of me your own. I will swirl mud on the sidewalk and not wash it off. That's what rain is for. Destiny rules whatever sits still long enough to become road pizza. Insects live for a few days, but they have enough eyes to see more than we ever could. And if I had a voice like Bono, I would throw my arms above my head and spin around as fast as I possibly could and float into the sky. I would shout the word "acrylic" over and over again and just float. Nothing ought to be clear. I will spread mud from my flower beds to the farthest reaches of my world and never wash it off.

I figured out what I want to be when I grow up. I want to be a water nymph. Of course, before that, I have to grow my hair out, get pointy ears and little boots. And I want a Boston Red Sox hat, too, because then I can wear it backwards. And I want to be a fuzzy preppie, who lives in wool socks and fuzzy sweaters so

I can sit around all day reading F. Scott Fitzgerald while drinking a cup of chamomile tea from a gray earthenware mug. I want to do all of that in my own sweet time and get a tape player that runs on batteries and a tape of Liz Phair and dance out in the backyard until the batteries run down so she sounds like James Earl Jones singing instead. Then I'd sit and stare at the ants building their castles, and I'd help them if they asked me.

I really like the idea of sometimes going out of my way to buy a red wool scarf. A really expensive nice one that I could wrap around my neck fifty times and tuck my chin into it when it turned pink from the cold. And then, my breath and my words would crystallize on the inside of it whenever I talked, and when I went inside, they'd melt on the wooden rack in front of the stove onto the linoleum floor and I would step on the puddle in my stocking feet. But eventually, they would dry.

-Abi Harper is a youth in the Metro New York District



## Calling All Youth!!!



The Youth Office is currently compiling entries for a:

### Spiritual Youth Anthology

This project was mandated by Youth Council and we want YOU to help us make this dream a reality!! This is your LAST CHANCE to send in homilies, sermons, credo statements, art, poetry or any other writings done by or for UU youth. This compilation will become a resource that can be used in worships, services or any other type of spiritual gathering. Please send your submissions by March 15, 1998 to:

The Youth Office  
25 Beacon St.  
Boston, MA 02108  
or email: [yruu@uua.org](mailto:yruu@uua.org)

## Charred Memories

by Bryan Beck

You read these poems, you know, about love and life;  
About their unrequited love, their misery, their strife.  
Well, pretty soon it's the same ol' same ol'  
And you notice your reading is getting dull.  
Well do not worry friend for I will not gripe and groan about the problems I've brought.  
Instead I'll take them and write them down  
And I'll read them one more time and I will not frown.  
You see my dear,  
This lighter here;  
I've got a solution and soon you will learn  
To light up your problems and watch it burn.  
Take a seat,  
Feel the heat,  
For I will never tire  
Watching the fire  
Burn my sorrows away.

Now I look at the memories I've charred;  
All the ones that hurt; the ones that scarred.  
But now I look at the ashes and I reminisce.  
Who'd have thought that I would ever miss  
The bad things that made me complete.  
But now they are gone, and with it, the heat.  
Now I am cold;  
I feel so old.  
I'm incomplete; and ying without a yang.  
At least then my soul and heart sang.  
Whether it was happy or about a love I'd found;  
Even the sad songs were a beautiful sound.  
Once there was a harmony and there was violence.  
Now I listen and it's complete silence.  
So you see, I was wrong; and there's a lesson I've learned.  
Don't bury those thoughts or YOU will be burned.  
Turn back now before you've gone too far  
And just love yourself for who you are.

## Poetry



## Pray

by Loren Anderson

In uneven spasms  
it rushes, pulsing  
to meet the eager life force.

Sweetly kissing,  
softly it whispers  
in the fading ears of the listener  
who cares to be blind.

Eyes now melted and useless,  
ears take in the last refrain  
of low honey murmurs.

Helpless to nothing less,  
tongue corrodes and narrows  
to gentle syllables dropping like rain  
out of existence.

Nothing left but breathless gender,  
faceless and naked  
to hard words that make the  
blissful angry.

Grown stronger by the death  
of bodily corruption,  
it opens to the wet spawn  
who cries in confusion at last  
of meeting itself within  
Nothing more.

Nothing left but  
to bleed  
in a sticky dark silence  
and pray.



## So Loved

by Jennifer W. Tsoi

In this serene place, I find happiness.  
This is our secret place where love is shared.  
Here, we all accept each other.  
This is the only place on earth where I can go and be free.  
Here, I can share with you love and secrets.  
I can find out new things.  
You are my friend.  
Like the sunshine in a spring day,  
you bring me light.  
Oh how glad I am!  
Oh how I thank the Lord,  
I have you for my friend.  
I can share secrets with you.  
I can trust you.  
You can tell me stories.  
The world can rejoice because of our friendship.  
The time we had together was not long.  
But our souls are forever painted red, the color of love.  
No matter how bad I am, what I do, or what I think,  
I am accepted.  
And loved.  
I will miss you.  
I will never forget you.  
But now I must go  
And leave this peaceful refuge.  
Do not cry.  
Please be strong.  
Perhaps we will meet again,  
in another time.





## Gender Justice:



### Women's Rights Are Human Rights

The Fourth World Conference on Women declared, once and for all, that women's rights are human rights. To help bring this message home, The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee recently published *Gender Justice: Women's Rights Are Human Rights*, a six session workshop series. *Gender Justice* is designed to educate and inspire people to promote women's rights. Each of the two-hour workshops is a thought provoking look at some key issues including human rights, gender bias, women's health and reproductive rights, structural adjustment, violence and media stereotypes. The series also provides a wealth of material including excerpts from UN documents, background facts, quizzes and a list of related publications. A *Gender Justice* video with clips on the Vienna Human Rights Tribunal accompanies the book and can be rented for \$10.00 or purchased for \$20.00. The book can be ordered for \$15.00 from:

The UUSC  
130 Prospect St.  
Cambridge, MA 02139-1845

For more information, contact the UUSC at: (617) 868-6600  
fax; (617) 868-7102, email: postmaster@uus.org.

### Youth of Color Mentorship Program



Unitarian Universalist youth of color are encouraged to participate in a mentorship program with the Young Adults of Color Network. This project focuses on building community, retention, life and spiritual support. If you are interested, contact Alyce Gowdy-Wright, UUA Staff at (202)296-4672 or email <UUAalyce@aol.com>.

### A New Instructional Video and Guide is available through the Youth Office:

"How to Start,

Nurture and grow a Young

Youth  
Group"

Religious

Unitarian

Universalist

Learn:

Adult / Youth Co-Leadership  
Community Building  
Fundraising  
Youth Group Planning  
...and more!

Brought to you by  
the San Dieguito  
UU Youth Group!!

To get your own copy of this marvelous new resource, send a check for \$10.00 made out to YRUU to:

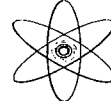
Please include your address, phone number, and the number of tapes you would like.

The Youth Office  
25 Beacon St.  
Boston, MA 02108

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## Ferment



(A Publication of the UU Young Adult Ministries Office)

Subscribe to *Ferment*, the newsletter for young adults. It is free for UU's 18-35 and comes out three times a year. *Ferment* is the *Synapse* for young adults, containing articles of interest, upcoming conferences, activities and opportunities. Send your name, address and date of birth to:

Donna DiSciullo  
279 Western Way  
Princeton, NJ 08540  
(609) 252-1412

or email <ddisciullo@aol.com>

### You're a Young Adult...

...Or you're a few years away from being one. The Continental Unitarian Universalist Young Adult Network (C\*UUYAN) welcomes 18 year olds and up into our community of UU's continuing along their spiritual path. Check out our web page ([www.uuyan.org](http://www.uuyan.org)) and if you have questions, want to organize a young adult group or campus ministry project in your area, or just want to get involved, contact Joey Lyons, C\*UUYAN Steering Committee facilitator at (503) 527-8297 or <joeylyons@aol.com>. If you know of people who are young adults and unconnected to C\*UUYAN, please connect us with them!

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### Announcing...

the First Ever: **S.A.T.U.U.R.D.A.Y.**

### Conference



Sexually  
Alternative  
Teenage  
Unitarian  
Universalists  
Respecting  
Diversity  
Among  
Youth  
Conference

Open to UU youth and advisors from across the continent.

Where: Princeton, NJ  
When: July 1 - 5, 1998.

Are You...

-> Interested in making your school and community safer for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered youth and their straight allies?  
-> Excited about working with a diverse range of youth to work for social change?  
-> Interested in discovering your potential for leadership and support?  
-> A YRUU advisor committed to partnering with youth to help them make their vision happen?  
...Then join us...[heterosexual allies welcome!]

Workshops include:

-Building Safety Nets in Your Community  
-The History of GLBT Activism  
-Networking with Other GLBT Youth Organizations  
-Sexuality and Self-Esteem  
-Leadership Development and Community Organizing  
-Transgendered Identity  
...and many more!!

For more info or a brochure, contact Registrar:  
Michael Shermanheld, phone: 203-226-4612, email: <LedFloyd1@AOL.com>  
Check our website at: [www.angelfire.com/ny/saturday](http://www.angelfire.com/ny/saturday)

### You Could Be the Next...

## YRUU PROGRAMS SPECIALIST

The YRUU Programs Specialist position is a one-year internship in the Youth Office at the Unitarian Universalist Association headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts.

**Responsibilities include:** Working with the Youth Programs Director and the other YRUU Programs Specialist to manage the business of the Youth Office; editing and laying out the newspaper *Synapse*; helping to plan and administer conferences and youth gatherings including Con Con, Youth Council, YRUU Steering Committee meetings, the National Social Justice Conference and Youth Caucus at General Assembly; interacting with other employees of the UUA; participating in business meetings; implementing decisions of the YRUU Youth Council and Steering Committee; and traveling to events all over the continent.

**Qualifications:** Ability to relate well with youth and adults, YRUU experience, leadership experience, good organizational skills, the ability to communicate well through speaking and writing, a sense of humor, and a strong commitment to YRUU and the principles upon which it is based. **The applicant must be between the ages of 16 and 22, inclusively, on September 1, 1998.**

**Terms of employment:** This position is a one-year commitment, beginning September 1, 1998, and ending August 31, 1999. The salary is \$23,000. Moving expenses to and from Boston are paid, and medical insurance is provided. Other benefits include paid vacations and holidays. The new intern is expected to find her or his own living accommodations and pay for all living expenses while in Boston.

**For an application:** Write to The Youth Office, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108; call (617) 742-2100, x350, 351, 352; or email [yruu@uua.org](mailto:yruu@uua.org).  
**Applications must be postmarked or received by March 15, 1998.**