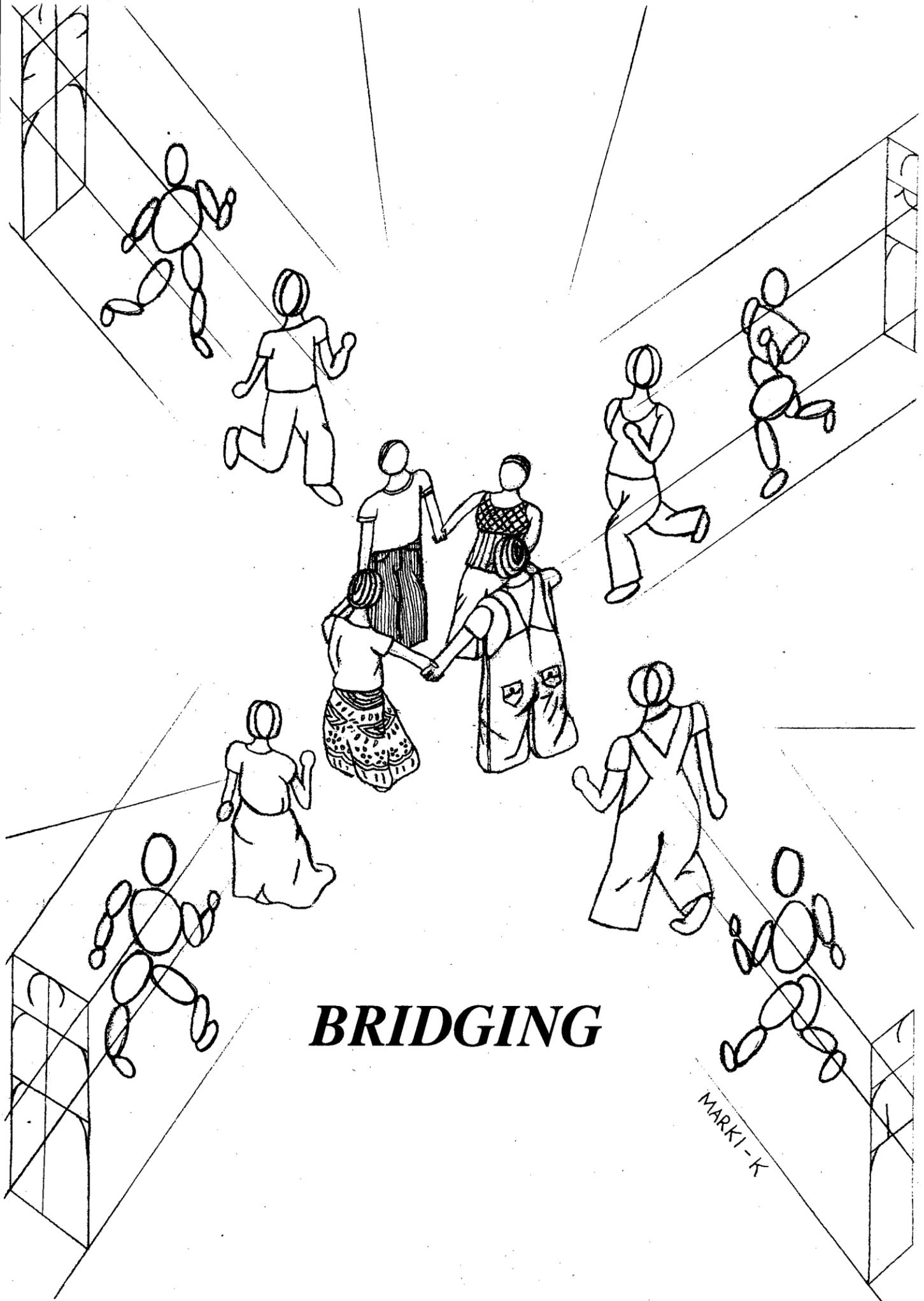


# SYNAPSE

*A Point of Contact  
Where Information  
and Energy are  
Exchanged*

The Continental  
Newspaper of  
Young Religious  
Unitarian Universalists

Volume XVI  
Issue I  
Spring 1998  
Printed in the USA.



## BRIDGING

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:**

**TRASH IT!**

*'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. Coolio!*



**YRUU at the UUA**  
25 Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02108

Address Correction Requested

**Nonprofit Organization**  
U.S. POSTAGE  
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Permit No.8652

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Julie and Bryan Beck  
12623 LA ENTRADA ST  
SAN ANTONIO TX 78233-6329



Printed on recycled paper

Spring 1998

# Letters to the Editors

4-11-98

Hey Youth Officers!

Happy Earth Week! Earth week is my project right now! At school, we're selling Earth grams (we made them by blending up recycled newspapers), doing announcements, planting a peace garden in the courtyard, a letter-writing campaign to our Senators, and (my pet project) a speaker on overpopulation. I heard him at a YRUU function at my church, and arranged for him to come to school. We're also 'papering' the school with posters and signs on lunch tables. Everything is going great! Thought you guys would want to know!

Take care,  
Megan Hanson  
White Bear Lake, MN

\*\*\*\*\*

4/21/98

Dear Synapse,

My youth group is doing social action and having cool discussions. We've been volunteering at a homeless shelter (we've never before been brave enough). Also we've been discussing what's wrong in our community and what we can do—I've thrown out having rallies and such—but I don't think we're quite brave enough to go political. Also, my Spanish club has been writing protests and marching

in protests for the Mexican restaurant that just got busted for being mean to the workers (and more). So we're informing our school for Latino awareness month (April).

Love,  
Natalie Ceperley  
Woodinville, WA

\*\*\*\*\*

June 4, 1998

Hey Synapse readers!

We just want you to know that it is OK to submit things to Synapse. For the last four issues we have had to solicit the bulk of submissions. So we are officially stating: "Don't shy away from sending us stuff!" We will try and include what you send to us in one form or another. Just because we are the big bad newsletter at the top doesn't mean that we get flooded with submissions. So let this be a beckoning to you. Answer our call.

In the Spirit,

*Alison Sienna*

## 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:** Alison Purcell, Sienna Baskin, Jen Harrison, Galen Moore, 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 the submitter's 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**

**Deadline for the Next Issue:**

**October 15, 1998**

The Youth Office  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
25 Beacon Street  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 742-2100  
fax: (617) 742-0321  
email: yruu@uua.org  
Web Site: <http://www.uua.org/YRUU>

## Cover Contest!!



Want to show over 10,000 UUs your artistic talent?? Do you dream of making a statement to people all over the world? Here's your chance! We are having a contest for the next cover of Synapse. Just express your love for YRUU in some sort of

artistic form and send it to:

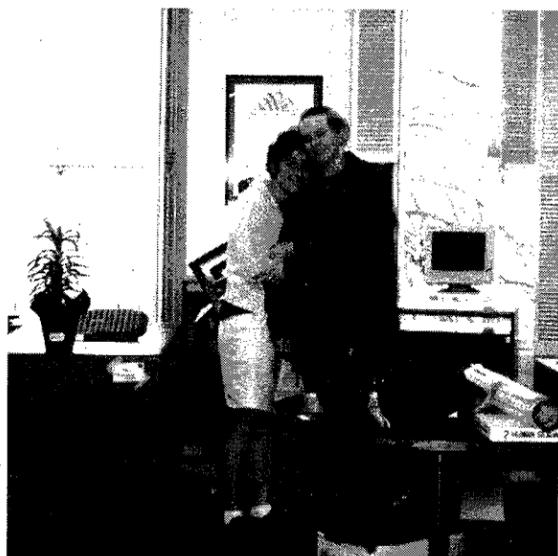
Synapse Cover Contest  
c/o The Youth Office  
25 Beacon St.  
Boston, MA 02108

DEADLINE:  
OCT. 1, 1998

Even if your submitted cover doesn't win, we will still recognize you in the next issue, just for being neat enough to send us your art. (Covers should be preferably in black and white on 8 1/2 x 11 paper).

## Out With the Old . . . In With the New!

The Youth Office has a new home. We left our old office at 53 Beacon St. and moved up the hill to 41 Mt. Vernon Place. This move was by no means an easy process. It was filled with confusion, messiness, and chaos. But from this chaos a new order is emerging, and peace will soon be back in the office.



Sienna and Alison say good-bye to their old office.  
photo by Mandy Jacobson

We just wanted all our readers to know that if you called or emailed the Youth Office in the last few months and received a slow or unenthusiastic response, it probably can be attributed to the jack-hammers above our heads or the smell of paint fumes in the air. We thank you for your patience during this transitional time.

The Youth Office has hired Galen Moore as a part-time summer intern.



Galen at a deli in Boston.  
photo by Jess Clayton

Galen Moore was raised by jackals in the deserts of Namibia. He does not speak English at all, but is accompanied by an animal behaviorologist, who interprets his language of howls and grunts for us. So far, Galen has been invaluable in the office, exorcising evil demons from our office furniture in order to help our posture. Those of you who know the value of good posture will not be amazed at the increase we have experienced in our productivity. We have had trouble adjusting to his unorthodox lifestyle: carrion lunches and live-animal sacrifices have affected our work environment. Whenever we get frustrated, though, we just think of the troubles he must be having adjusting to our human lifestyle, and we make allowances.

IT'S MY LITTLE SLICE OF REBELLION!

## Social Action Project Networking



Hey Social Action Coordinators and other youth activists! Have you ever been sitting around wondering what glorious social action project you could pull off with your youth group or district YRUU community? Let's make our job easier by sharing info about successes and failures!

Next time you work with an organization (like the UUSC or Habitat for Humanity) call your C\*SAC, Emily Stainer, and she will send you evaluation forms. Distribute these and fill them out, then send them back to Emily. She will keep a file of evaluations from all over the continent.

Next time you're thinking of working with an organization, or wondering what to do in Colorado in May, call Emily and she'll send you some projects and copies of the evaluations (see page 4 for Emily's info).

**Happy networking!**



Read about it in the next issue of the **SAC-PAC** (The Continental Social Action newsletter)

## Five Easy Steps to a More Diverse Youth Group

By Eddie Peppers

In youth groups across America there has been a problem with diversity. Most youth tend to make friends within their own race. This is not their fault. The UU church as a whole is a predominantly white church—you don't often see black or Latino members of UU congregation—and it has been that way since the beginning of the UU movement. As an African-American youth, I feel that youth groups should be more diverse. The more diverse the group, the more we as youth can learn from one another.

Now, usually the problem is getting people of different races to attend a youth group meeting and feel comfortable. Another thing that may occur in some youth group settings is that some youth may not know any youth from other races or of foreign descent, let alone knowing how to reach them and invite them to attend a youth group meeting. I remember the first time I attended a youth group meeting. As a black youth, I felt kind of uncomfortable. But, being strong-willed, I stuck with it. Later on, I became the president of the youth group.

Not all youth enjoy going to church, even if there is a youth group. But if youth know a church has an outstanding youth group, they are more likely to give it a chance. Youth feel more comfortable and secure about a group that allows them to make all the rules, vote on what goes on in the group, and determine how things are done. If more youth knew that such youth groups existed, there would be no problem with trying to diversify youth groups.

I've come up with five reasonable steps to having a more diverse youth group. These steps I have come up with are a complete replica of how I was lured into the basement of the Second Unitarian Church of Chicago. **The first step** is to attract youth. Once you have their attention, it is pretty much in the bag, but it will not be easy. One way to attract youth is to advertise. Put up

flyers, memos, pictures, and any other means of advertising explaining how wonderful your youth group is. Put up whatever would seem attractive to you: only youth know what attracts other youth. For instance, my old youth group in Chicago made flyers with pictures of celebrities saying how cool 'way-cool' Sunday school is, and about how all youth with nothing to do on Sunday mornings were welcome to attend ('way-cool' Sunday school is the name of a project we started in Chicago to make religious education more appealing to youth). The best way to attract youth is to try and

make the youth group seem as if it's a group of friends that meet every Sunday in a designated spot in a church, discuss different issues, and participate in social justice and social action projects.

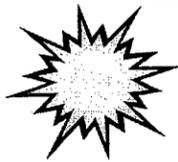
Now, you are probably thinking, "Where am I going to find these youth of different races?" There are schools, libraries, game rooms, and other places where youth like to hang out. Pick any one of the numerous hangout spots and pass out flyers, hang flyers, memos, and/or pictures showing off your cool youth group, or youth room.

Now that your project is on the move, select a couple of youth out of the youth group and give them the responsibility of contacting any youth that respond to your flyers, and setting up times when they can meet with the group. Once that has been established, decorate your youth room. You might paint the walls in your room and set one wall aside and paint it black so that the youth can scribe their names on the walls. The idea is to make it look "youthish." After the youth room has been put into place, invite the interested youth to a meeting. When you invite the youth, remember to sound pleased that they chose your group instead of that game room. It would be wise to have snacks of

see *Diverse* on page 10

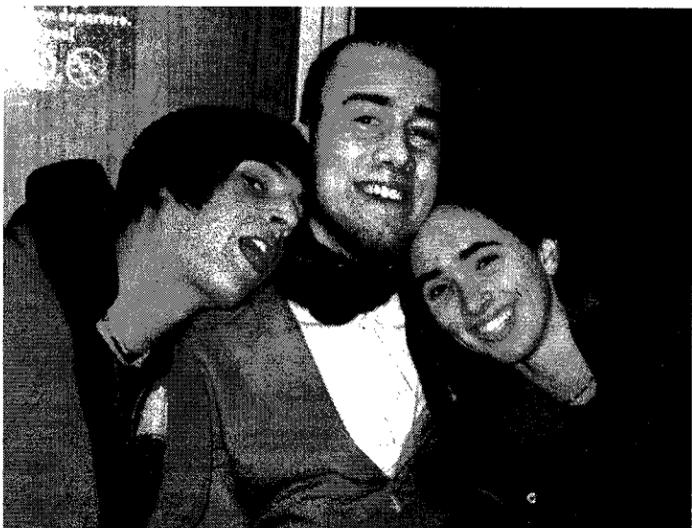
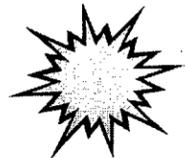


Eddie Peppers on the Pacific Ocean. photo by a youth group parent



## KABOOM!! A New YPS Has Landed!

Austin Putman Hits the Scene Like Never Before



Nathaniel Klein, Austin Putman and Kallista Bley on the Boston subway.

photo by Alison Purcell

Like Superman action figures, I'm fully posable and come with only two sets of clothes, which I find suitable for almost any occasion. Unlike Superman, though, I don't usually fly to get where I'm going. Mostly I take the Greyhound bus. It's less glamorous and takes a lot longer, but at least I don't have to fight solar-powered bad guys.

In real life, I'm a student at Tufts University in Boston, studying International Relations and Advanced Topics in Vocal Percussion. My connection to YRUU started in the Pacific South-

west District. Growing up, my UU Fellowship in San Dieguito, CA, was too small to have a meeting hall, but the youth group got me hooked on UUism for life. At the district level, I found more cool people and bigger challenges waiting. Though I've been very involved in General Assembly, I've never been to Con Con, so I have yet to meet many of you. But I know from those I have met so far, that YRUUers are as fab-o across the continent as they are in my hometown. I'm thrilled that Con Con '98 is at DeBenneville Pines, the home of so much of my YRUU experience. Hope to see you there!

\*\*\*\*\*

Austin will work in the Youth Office Sept. 1, 1998 - August 31, 1999.

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## New Resources Available from the Youth Office:



### The YRUU Songbook and Tape

This wonderful compilation of YRUU tunes has songs from across the spectrum that you can share with your district. The **tape** has 18 songs from the YRUU choir recorded at Con Con '97 and selected songs from the Power Sing with Nick Page.



### The YRUU Games Book

A New Compendium of Youth Group Games. It's just what it sounds like: an exciting culmination of new and old games. Another great thing to have for your district.



### Youth Spiritual Anthology

*The Youth Spiritual Anthology is a resource for creating youth worship. It will include homilies, sermons, poems, and readings about and by youth. It is a valuable resource for planning youth Sunday Services as well.*

## YRUU Resource Order Form

I would like to order # \_\_\_ YRUU Songbook(s) (free)  
 # \_\_\_ YRUU Song tape(s) -- \$5.00  
 # \_\_\_ YRUU Games Book(s) -- \$5.00  
 # \_\_\_ Youth Spiritual Anthology(ies) -- \$7.00

Please send the above to (name): \_\_\_\_\_  
 (address): \_\_\_\_\_  
 (city, state, zip): \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Make checks payable to: "Young Religious Unitarian Universalists"  
 Cut out form and send form to:  
**The Youth Office, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108.**

## ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR YOUTH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE!!

The list below is of all the Youth Council Representatives. Their job is to relay district information to the Youth Office and tell their district about Continental Events. So, if you have any questions concerning district or continental events, contact your YCR today!

*YCRs are listed alphabetically by district.*

**Ballou Channing**  
 Jenn O'Brien  
 (508) 747-3799  
 jenn@adelphia.net

**Metro New York**  
 Gregor Faron  
 (609) 497-0787  
 gregnow@aol.com

**Ohio Valley**  
 Candace Cross  
 (513) 221-4403

**Central Mass.**  
 Aaron Kucharski  
 (401) 765-6779  
 LessTJake2@aol.com

**Michigan**  
 Laura Trumbull  
 (248) 855-4258

**Pacific Central**  
 Eroca Nicols  
 (916) 485-1139  
 rhodea@cwo.com

**Central Midwest**  
 Arnie Birren  
 (608) 233-6693  
 ace08@execpc.com

**Mid South**  
 Chris Trace  
 (205) 339-9556  
 bctrace@dbtech.net

**Pacific Northwest**  
 Meghan Springer  
 (206) 363-2811  
 daisy113@aol.com

**Connecticut Valley**  
 Sarah Pappas  
 (860) 643-8082  
 jembenton@aol.com

**Mountain**  
 Ben Kidder  
 (970) 407-1514  
 benkidder@hotmail.com

**Pacific Southwest**  
 Evan White  
 (626) 798-5304  
 evanwhite@juno.com

**Florida**  
 Chris Helwig  
 (941) 644-6003

**Desert**  
 Evan Lehman-Baker  
 (505) 247-1935

**PrairieStar**  
 Stefanie Knipfer  
 (507) 288-3861  
 Yavin13542@aol.com

**Joseph Priestley**  
 Amalie Andrew  
 (410) 987-6989  
 neuro@welchlink.welch.jhu.edu

**New Hampshire/Vermont**  
 Katie Vercouteren  
 (603) 588-3834

**Southwest**  
 Bryan Beck  
 (210) 656-6343  
 YRUUSlug@juno.com

**Mass. Bay**  
 Abbey Tennis  
 (617) 641-4172  
 tennis@tiac.net

**Northeast**  
 Dana Waichunas  
 (207) 761-1956  
 bellaluna8@juno.com

**Thomas Jefferson**  
 Emily Dornblazer  
 (704) 365-0199

**Ohio-Meadville**  
 Mimi LaValley  
 (412) 784-1833  
 pzdk99c@prodigy.com

**Western Canada**  
 Danielle Picard  
 (204) 888-2861

# Meet Your New Youth Council At-Larges!!

## Transition on a Mission!



**Transitional Age-Range**  
 Melissa Cain  
 (on right with Rose Lynd)  
 208 NW 33rd  
 Oklahoma City, OK 73118  
 (405) 525-5101 or 239-2866

Melissa Cain is the new Transitional Age Range Representative. Her job is to field the needs of junior high youth across the continent. She has plans to contact junior high youth all over and get them networking. She says, "I want junior high youth to know that they have a say in continental issues and that they should not be afraid to be heard." Although there are pockets of junior high programming here and there, it is not a strong point for most districts. Melissa hopes to strengthen support for junior highers everywhere. If you have ideas or if you are a junior higher with questions/concerns, please contact her.

## GA Bonanza!



**GA Business Manager**  
 Geoff Woodman  
 605 W. Cross St.  
 Ypsilanti MI 48197  
 (248) 646-4053  
 Geoff8878@aol.com

Greetings to all. I am Geoff Woodman, the Youth Caucus Business Manager for this year. I just finished my first year at Eastern Michigan University as a secondary education/english major. For the past five years I have been involved in the YRUU district of Michigan. I served as the newsletter editor, and co-chair of our YAC while in high school. This year I served on the newly formed MUUYAN (Michigan UU Young Adults) steering committee, and next year along with the steering committee I will serve the YAC board as the post high rep. I hope to have a great time with all of you at G.A.

*GA 1998 is in Rochester, NY; June 25-30.*

## Canadian, Eh!!!



**Canadian At-Large**  
 Geoff Schwarz  
 98 Mountain Park Dr. SE  
 Calgary, Alberta  
 CANADA T2Z 1S1  
 (403) 257-1596

Hello, my name is Geoff Schwarz and I'm 16. I live in Calgary, Alberta, and it's great. I just moved here but I've settled in just fine. I'm the new Canadian At-Large. Hobbies of mine include snowboarding, traveling, and music. This picture of me was taken May 16, 1998 in Victoria, British Columbia. I took a ride along the ocean and it was spiffy. I was there for the Canadian Unitarian Council (CUC- The Canadian equivalent to GA) and was the ONLY youth there. Oh well, I met all the adults, and found out some interesting things. So if you want to talk to me about anything, get in touch with me, please! Hope to hear from you soon. Maybe I will see you at Con Con. I'd just like to say HELLO to everybody in Canada and the U.S.A.

Geoff Schwarz  
 AKA Clearly Canadian

## Emily Stainer: Back in Action!

*(Social Action, that is)*



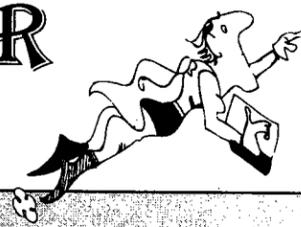
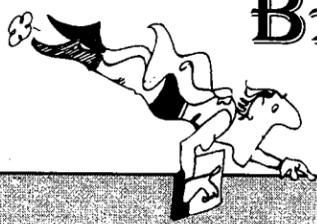
**C\*SAC**  
 Emily Stainer  
 2729 E. 22nd St.  
 Tulsa, OK 74114-3124  
 (918) 743-2760

I am super excited about being a Youth Council At-Large again! In my second term as Continental Social Action Coordinator (C\*SAC), I hope to continue keeping a well updated mailing list (i.e., if you have a new district social action coordinator, tell me) and developing the SAC PAC newsletter into a helpful listing of social action opportunities and ideas. I would love to have articles by YRUUers about the social action projects in their youth group or district. To submit articles to the SAC PAC newsletter, mail them to me. After August I'll be at:

2155 Blanchard Student Center  
 South Hadley, MA, 01075-6006  
 or email to: elstaine@mtholyoke.edu.

## BECOME AN LDC TRAINER

Continental Leadership Development Conference Training



Nov. 13 - 15, 1998  
at the Walker Center  
Newton, MA

### “What is an LDC?”

A district conference with the purpose of teaching leadership skills and facilitating techniques to youth, led by two trainers, an adult and a youth, from outside of the district.

For an application, email us at [yruu@uua.org](mailto:yruu@uua.org), or call us at (617) 742-2100x350, x351, or x352.

### “What is the C\*LDC?”

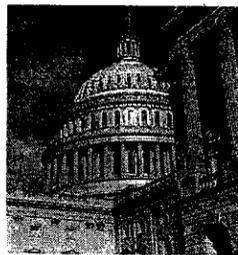
This conference is open to youth ages 14 through 18 and adults ages 25 and up. Participants will be trained to lead district LDCs and are expected to be available to lead at least one training in the next two years.

### “What is an LDC trainer?”

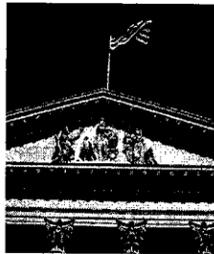
Youth and adults, trained at this Continental LDC, will lead district LDCs. All travel and other expenses to the C\*LDC and any future district LDCs are paid for by the UUA. In addition, leaders will receive a small stipend for each LDC they lead.

**Deadline:**  
**September 25,**  
**1998**

## PUTTING OUR FAITH IN ACTION



The **3rd Annual**  
**National Social**  
**Justice Conference**  
in Washington, D.C.  
February 27-March 2, 1999



YRUU and the UUA Washington Office will cosponsor the YRUU National Social Justice Conference in 1999! The conference will focus on putting hands and feet on our UU principles by learning about political and social issues, becoming familiar with the U.S. political process, networking with other UU youth activists, and culminating in a day of lobbying Congress about social justice issues of concern to the participants.

Ask your YCR, SAC, or the Youth Office for an application, or check our website!

\*\*\*\*\*

*This conference was funded in part by a generous grant from F.U.U.*

## A Busy, Inspiring Time in DC

Review of the 1997 NSJC, by Emily Stainer



NSJCers on the steps of All Souls, a UU church in DC  
photograph by Melanie Griffin

On February 21-24 over thirty youth gathered in Washington, DC for the second annual Young Religious Unitarian Universalists National Social Justice Conference. This diverse group of conferees represented over nineteen states, eighteen districts, and one Canadian province. We

traveled from far and near to learn more about and share our experiences in social justice work. We transcended these differences as the gathering embarked on its purpose of inspiring action and making change.

We started our time together on Saturday evening with bonding games and a meeting with Brad Patterson, the UUA trustee from the Joseph Priestly District. On Sunday morning we were joined by the youth group from All Souls Unitarian Church in DC. We talked about what we had in common, our frustrations and successes as youth activists. We attended the Sunday service at All Souls and heard an inspiring anti-war sermon by Rev. Daniel W. Aldridge, which called on our UUA president, United States president, and all Unitarian Universalists to rethink our position on the potential war with Iraq. In a similar vein, we visited the National Ho-

locaust Museum. We met with a Holocaust survivor, who told us his personal story. We concluded the day with a tour of the National monuments and a very powerful worship service.

Early Monday morning, we rose to hear speakers on campaign finance reform and sweatshops. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's Washington-based staff told us about their work on issues of social justice. These were the issues we would be considering in our upcoming lobbying session, so we all listened carefully. After lunch at Union station, we visited the Supreme Court and witnessed an hour of a trial. We finished up the day with "How To" workshops--one on using the media for social justice work and another on organizing social justice campaigns. We then divided into groups to write a letter to be dropped on Capitol Hill, a press release, and an opinion for the UU web site on the possible war in Iraq.

Tuesday morning, after a briefing on how to lobby Congress, we marched off to meetings with our House Representatives and Senators. Some of us had very successful lobbying meetings, and felt we had impacted the political process, while others left frustrated. We said good-bye over pizza. After four days of intense learning and sharing, we all returned to our homes to put our principles into action using our new knowledge and inspiration.

Emily Stainer is a youth from Tulsa, OK, and the Continental Social Action Coordinator.

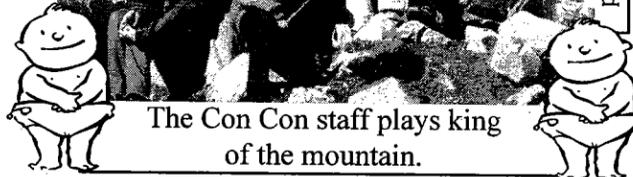
## “embracing childhood”

YRUU's Continental Conference is at  
Benneville Pines in Angelus Oaks, CA!!

August 3-9, 1998



photo by Nathaniel Klein



The Con Con staff plays king of the mountain.

This annual week-long conference for all of YRUU is held in a different location around North America each year. A long standing tradition of the UU youth movement, Con Con is an opportunity for youth and adults from across the continent to play, worship, learn, grow, and love.

# Bridging in...

## Transitions



A compilation of Coming of Age programming and practical guide to planning your own!

To order send \$20 (make checks out to the UUA) to:

The Youth Office  
25 Beacon St.  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 742-2100 ext. 355  
yruu@uua.org

### Who ya gonna call... ...about Junior High YRUU?

Melissa Cain is your Transitional Age Range Representative on Youth Council. It is her job to help out YRUUers aged 12-14, and those who want to support Junior High youth. For more about Melissa, see page 4.

## Deep Junior High Thoughts

by Jessie Eller-Isaacs,  
Outgoing Transitional Age Range Rep.

I went to my first YRUU conference when I was 12 years old. I was awkward, emotional and excited to be entering into a world of amazing love and spirituality, like nothing I had ever experienced before. I was only in 6th grade and yet I understood how rare the community I was being embraced by was. The kids at my school collected stickers and cared about how tight my pants were or how high my bangs. The conference kids were different, they talked about dreams and sang about the moon and stars. They didn't care about my frizzy hair or my awkward body; they loved me. As a junior high level YRUUer I was part of a community in the Pacific Central District that got me through the hardest time of my life. I became the Transitional Age Range Representative (TAR) for Youth Council (the governing

## The Four Components of Successful Coming-of-Age Programs

~Jen Harrison

There are four major rites of passage in a person's life:

- 1.) Beginnings
- 2.) Initiations
- 3.) Partnering
- 4.) Endings

During the Initiation Stage, there are four components that are typically part of this time of transformation:

- 1.) Mentored Learning
- 2.) Practical Testing
- 3.) Enacted Ritual
- 4.) Community Celebration

**Mentored Learning**-Mentored learning teaches the history one needs to be a part of the community. A mentor helps the youth gain a sense of pride in the community and a connection to the past, which helps keep the community alive. A mentor can help the youth learn to recognize his or her role in the life of the community. Mentors work with youth in helping them learn physical skills that will bolster their self-confidence. Ropes courses and physical challenges that encourage a youth to rely on their inner strength and outer confidence provide an opportunity for youth to test themselves. Mentors also provide a personal context for the youth to explore the history of the community. To learn the knowledge base of the community is to explore the principles upon which the community is founded. Many UU churches encourage youth to write a credo statement. Being able to reflect with an older and trusted member of the community makes it easier to process our newly forming values. Part of the mentor's job is to open the eyes of the youth to the social realities of the rest of the world. This means engaging in some sort of social action project. By working as a team on a project that makes a difference in the world, both the mentor and youth can put their faith into action. In the mentor relationship youth can explore their own spiritual development with a caring adult.

**Practical testing**-This is a test of knowledge and skills that the youth will need to enter the adult world. Learning how to balance a check-book, to drive, and getting registered to vote are some of the skills youth in our society typically learn in this time of transition. A good coming-of-age program will

encourage them to be involved in church life so that they understand how our living tradition manifests on a daily level. Ensure there are times for reflective encounters about what they are learning. Reflection gives the youth time to deal with situational ethics. Role playing situations or a ropes course can provide time for deeper understanding of their values. Engaging youth in activities that push them beyond their normal comfort level is an important part of practical testing. People learn more when they are asked to stretch beyond their boundaries. Boundary stretching must occur in a safe and supportive environment. Part of practical testing is providing an opportunity for the group to build community. Having the youth verbally covenant to be together during challenging activities can ensure that each individual feels supported. For example, have each youth say, "my name is...and I choose to do this activity. Will you support me?" and the group answer, "Yes, we support you."

**Enacted Ritual**-Ritual marks transition. After a Coming-of-Age ritual, the youth engaged will be treated differently. The ritual should be developed by the group to ensure it has meaning, but drawing on ancient and modern traditions is encouraged. The ritual should be full of drama. Choose activities that you know they will remember. Make it big and fun. Ritual should also be intergenerational involving adults and younger kids from the community as participants, not spectators. The more the ritual is filled with mystery, the more it goes to the heart.

**Community Celebration**-The celebration with the community should honor both the individuals and the group that is coming of age. Create a community quilt to decorate the celebration. The community celebration should acknowledge that the youth are changed by their experience-visually by encouraging the youth to dress up, and interpersonally by encouraging everyone to treat the youth with enlarged respect. The celebration also should include all the generations, ensuring that a community myth gets created for the younger generation to look forward to when they come of age. Most of all, the celebration should be fun, fun, fun!

Jen Harrison is currently the Youth Programs Director at the Youth Office.

body of YRUU) at the age of fifteen. I expected to encounter other youth around the continent who had entered YRUU as I had. Yet, I found that people's experiences "as they so often do" varied immensely. Some kids were from districts where they didn't go to conferences until they were in 9th grade (or at least 14 years old) and some had started at the same age I had.

Currently, Continental YRUU offers no programming for YRUUers younger than 14. It is up to each district to decide what kind of programming they want to have available or not to have any at all. The lack of continuity of junior high programming throughout the continent makes it very difficult to get any kind of networking going between the districts that have established programming. It is my hope that the future Transitional Age Range Rep will begin to

establish communication between the districts whose YRUU includes 12-14 year olds. Districts could work together to solve problems specific to the needs of the younger YRUUers. They might even want to plan inter-district junior high events. I believe that the districts could learn a lot from each other about the different ways to do junior high programming. In July, when I attend my third and final Youth Council, I plan to set up a communication system between the Youth Council Representatives and the Youth Office to network any kind of junior high programming that is working in the districts and local churches. The younger generation of YRUUers are so important. They need communities within districts that will be there with open arms in their times of need.

Jessie is the co-dean of Con Con this year.

# ...Bridging out



**The Post High School Survival Kit**

A guide to helping yourself out of the funk and into a new realm of exploration.

Produced by the Youth Office at the UUA

## A Melancholy Birthday, Hopes for the Future

~ David Ramsey

Growing up, my picture of Unitarian Universalism was of aging hippies and wealthy, elderly long-time church members, disconnected from my life and interests. When I went to Youth Council, and later to conferences in my district and Con Con, I found a dynamic group of young people who had built a community that was welcoming and open. It has been moving and continually surprising to see just how much people grow and learn from the YRUU experience. Two years later, I can say without hesitation that I met some of my best friends at YRUU conferences. Scattered across the country are people that run up my phone bills and occupy my thoughts, people that I can always turn to.

After this amazing experience in which I've met best friends, challenged myself to think in new ways, and joined and reveled in a loving community, I am about to turn twenty-one. As suddenly as I found it, my place in the YRUU community will soon be gone. The birthday that is supposed to be celebrated as we gain our newfound freedom and responsibility, also marks the close of our time in the community that has meant so much to us. At Con Con '97, I talked to several people who were aging out. In their voices I heard feelings of uncertainty and abandonment. Surveys have shown that it is around this age, particularly after high school, that the most UUs stop being involved in UUism or identifying themselves as UUs. It seems a shame that after the powerful experience of YRUU, people feel as though there is no community for them, and that the end of YRUU means for so many the end of UUism itself.

The continental YRUU age range has an upper limit of 20. In my view, this is a good limit. So what can be done to change the confusing and often abrupt process of aging out to a healthy transition into a new phase of involvement in UUism?

Young UUs feel that they have nowhere to turn. In theory, UUYAN (UU Young Adult Network) should be the community in place for young adults. Sadly, every former or current YRUUer that I know who tried UUYAN left the experience disillusioned with the prospects for young UUs. The chief problem with the organization is the age range, which extends from 18 to 35. A married thirty-five year old with three kids, two cars, and a high-paying job doesn't have much common ground with a young person just starting college. I've also heard that UUYAN was little more than a place to "Find-a-Spouse." This is not meant to suggest that UUs in their thirties shouldn't have a structured community or be called "young," but it makes UUYAN an unrealistic place for aging-out YRUUers. The post YRUU generation should recognize this glaring need, and give young UUs the chance to continue fostering the sort of communities that YRUU helped establish.

Also, the current members of YRUU should facilitate the process of aging out. At Con Con '98, there will be a workshop on Post High concerns, and there will be a large Bridging ceremony at GA. I would like to see more happening: more resources about this issue available for the districts and perhaps an At-Large position on Youth Council to specifically represent these concerns and aid the districts in dealing with them.

I am optimistic that all of the intelligent, motivated, and creative young people I have met in YRUU will create a forum for young people aging out of YRUU and for people 18-25 in general. Until then, I can only hope that other people are as fortunate as I am to have strong communities outside of YRUU to turn to as I say good-bye to the friends and the memories that have meant so much to me.

David Ramsey is a youth from Tennessee, and a sophomore at Brown University.

## Finding Your Niche After High School

Are you looking for a college that allows you to live your UU values and incorporate them into your education? Are you looking for something to do in between high school and college? Are you looking for an incredible experience that will change your life more than college ever could?

Or, have you found what you're looking for in alternative higher education and want to share it with other YRUUers?



While I'm working in the Youth Office, I want to put together a resource for YRUUers leaving high school. It would include an index of alternatives to conventional higher education, with reviews of the different experiences by old YRUUers. If you have any info to contribute to such a resource, or ideas for how it could be organized and distributed, please let me know! Sienna Baskin ~ sbaskin@uua.org (617) 742-2100 ext. 352

Tulsa, AZ

## Identity and Community

~ Galen Moore

Only five short years ago, I timidly arrived at my first conference—PCD Elections Con, in February of '93. Now, my time in YRUU is near its end: my last Con Con is fast approaching. It hurts me to know that in less than a year I must leave behind a part of my life that I have loved.

Even in the past year or so, conferences haven't seemed to offer me the free space they once did. I yearn for the old days. I remember how we flung ourselves out into the indolent heat of smoking porches and offered curls of cigarette smoke to a cloudless sky. Somehow, even at conferences, I am now unable to get free like I was in those days.

YRUU is as it ever was, but I have changed. I am adult now, preoccupied with my own peculiar form of life. I yearn for the shining days of my YRUU childhood. But I recognize that YRUU has enabled me to grow up whole, by giving me the free space I needed to find myself.

What I found was my identity: YRUU has taught me to know who I am and what I want. It is a beautiful and terrible gift. My identity is a divining rod that always pulls my life toward the aspect in every event or thing that speaks wonder and beauty to me. Now that I hold this knowledge, I am past being able to find the space that led me to it. Although it has given me a room with a view, identity has cost me the freedom I felt, young and careless in those bygone days of YRUU.

If conference policy could govern the human spirit, we would leave identity in a brown paper bag at the weekend's beginning. We cannot. Only those who are young enough to be careless of self-knowledge can live in that place of beautiful liberty that a conference community can create.

Truly, YRUU must marginalize people like me if it is to give its gift to future generations. It must revolve around its timid newcomers; it is they who may suck the goey middle of YRUU life. All you jaded veterans, five-time Con Con-goers, recall your giddiest, most joyful time in YRUU. Was it not a time when you began to see yourself through the bright eyes of another whose sunny smile shone on all things peculiar to you alone? Did you not begin to deeply feel the importance of YRUU to your life when, as days went by, every thought or action could evoke the flushed voices of these new and wonderful people, telling you that your life is meaningful? YRUU's highest calling must be to teach youth to hear those voices.

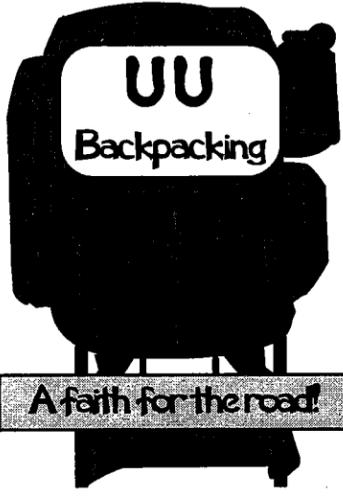
Nowhere outside YRUU have I seen people so good at being themselves. It is all too easy for newcomers to feel overwhelmed and insecure in the face of such explosive energy. Why are many of the newer, younger YRUU folks so excited to be "in the loop"? Because it signifies inclusion in the communal life. YRUU life is the space we create for free self-expression. To many newcomers, that space must often seem to revolve around these loud-laughing YRUU veterans, whose command of a wonderful self-expression seems alien and inexplicable because it is so different from anything they've encountered before.

At their first conference, newcomers to YRUU must find a community that, like themselves, comes to this place of love and freedom with blinking eyes barely opened. A conference's central communal veins must run with that energy. For some of us, conferences are like a comfy old shirt, whose bright colors we flaunted proudly long ago. We must accept the dwindling of our role in communal life. We will take staff positions; we will use what YRUU has given us to make the organization work. Our staff meetings and need for sleep will keep us away from the smoking circles and late-night chats in the kitchen, where new teeth are being tried. The separation will be painful because we will remember how it felt to be there, but it will be necessary in order to preserve the most beautiful and important things about YRUU.

Galen Moore is a youth living in Boston.

Perspectives on leaving YRUU

Introducing... A new curriculum for Young Adults bridging out of YRUU!!



A faith for the road!

For more information, Contact Donna DiSciullo at the Office of Young Adult Ministry: (609) 252-1412 ddisciullo@aol.com 279 Western Way, Princeton, NJ 08540



## Announcing the Outstanding Advisor of the Year: Marianne Schroeder

from the Foothills Unitarian Church in Fort Collins, CO

Congratulations and thanks goes out to Marianne for being an awesome advisor. Here is why she is so deserving of this award:

Marianne has been actively involved in youth work at the Foothills Unitarian Church for over 10 years and currently serves as the adult co-chair there. She is also the adult co-treasurer of the Mountain Desert District Youth-Adult Committee.

She has worked closely with the youth in developing policies, advisor evaluations, fundraising events, and youth advisor handbooks. Marianne has twice been an adult on the ninth Grade Trip to the Navajo and Hopi lands. She is currently the youth advisor for a ninth grade class. Under Marianne's leadership, this class is now painting a 70 foot mural depicting UU history in the Religious Education building.

*"She's quite a dynamo!"*  
- Bobbie J. Poole



*"Marianne embodies the essence of UUism and shares it with all of the youth she advises."*  
- Treasa Lara Sweek

### A Few Words from Marianne

Thanks to everyone who had a part in my getting this award. I love being involved with the youth in our church and our district because we can pursue together the idea of trying to live out our UU principles. Our youth are enthusiastic and open, and contribute so much to our church and our denomination. As in a family, in our church community the youth and adults have so much to teach and to give each other. I'm looking forward to continuing as an advisor and being part of that learning and growing.

*Marianne will be recognized for her excellence at the GA '98 Awards Breakfast.*

# District News

A taste of YRUU across the continent.

## Best District Newsletter --

### "The Paisley Penguin"

#### An Interview with the Editor: Matthew Riederer

by Alison Purcell

**A: Matthew Riederer, your newsletter just won best district newsletter. What are you going to do now??**

**M:** After I finish this interview, I'm going to get back to working on the next issue. This is the most time I've spent away from the *Paisley Penguin* since my mom made me take a shower and eat with the family on Wednesday. I also haven't slept in three days.

**A: We were so wowed by your publication. Where did the name, the *Paisley Penguin*, come from anyway?**

**M:** I am so pleased by your "wowedness." I have no idea where the name the *Paisley Penguin* came from; I inherited it. The extra "e" was my addition. You see, I misread the cover of an old issue and I added the "e" thinking that it was the correct spelling. On the cover of the first issue I worked on, I spelled it "PASLEY PEGUNE" (this is true). So, the people in my district don't worry too much about that extra "e".



Cover of the latest issue

**A: How often does it come out?**

**M:** Who knows?? Theoretically four times a year. I've done three so far.

**A: How do you solicit articles, art, etc.?**

**M:** I used to beg. I'm sure that all you newsletter and 'zine editors know what I'm talking about. I tried lots of things: letters, phone calls, Emergency Broadcast System bulletins, you name it. I mostly just ended up with promises, and then all my friends started avoiding me because I would always harass them about their article. The thing that works best for getting contributions from readers is to put out a cool 'zine. That sort of inspires people and gets them thinking about new ideas that they could work on.

**A: Where do you get it photocopied? Kinko's?**

**M:** Yes, Kinko's. My friend Duncan and I met a cool Unitarian Universalist that works there. Her name is Sarah. But, I don't really get along with the folks at Kinko's that much. Except for Sarah, they're pretty rude and they don't seem to appreciate our business. One time we just made the master copy at Kinko's. We used up two roles of tape and took a long time, but ended up spending only \$3.65. We then we went across town to another store and had them print 300 copies.

If you would like to contribute to the *Paisley Penguin*, send your submissions to:

4830 Tanglewood Tr.  
Boulder, CO 80301  
Riederer79@aol.com

If you'd like to be considered for the next newsletter award, send a copy of your district newsletter to the Youth Office. We love getting mail!

If you are unfamiliar with YRUU lingo, here are a couple definitions:

**Cons:** Events usually held at a church or conference center, where youth come together for a weekend to work, play, and worship as a community. Also known as Conferences, Mini-Cons, or Rallies.

**Youth/Adult Council (YAC):** The governing body of the district, consisting of youth and adult leaders from around the district. Also called **Steering Committee, Council and District Youth Council (DYC)**

### Ballou Channing (BCD)

The Ballou Channing District has hired Betsy Walters as the new district youth consultant. Right now, the BCD is in the process of reforming its YAC, which has been inactive for two years. In BCD this year there was an Art Con in Kingston, MA an Expressing Youthful Emotions Con in Hingham, MA and an Astrology Con held in Barnstable.

### Central Massachusetts

It exists! They have a mailing list, a YCR, and a newsletter. They have risen from the ashes like the phoenix. They have a Leadership Development Conference coming up this fall.

### Central Midwest

The Spring Con went well with 303 people in attendance, and a brand new YAC was elected. There will be a youth on the district board starting next year.

### Connecticut Valley (CVD)

CVD has had programming every single month since November. "Return of the Jedi Con" was at the Springfield Church. The Elections Con was held May 15-17th. There was also a Junior High Con in May.

### Florida

They had an Elections Con to choose a new YAC. The annual Interweave Conference, Conclave, was in Florida this year.

### Joseph Priestley District

The Winter Con was their biggest Con ever. There was a minor rule infraction, dealt with brilliantly by the new Conference Affairs Committee. They are cracking down on cigarette bumming. Funk-a-delic Con is coming up. They're setting up a caravan to do Youth Sundays throughout the district.

### Massachusetts Bay

The Voting Con in March had a huge turnout. They elected a new Steering Committee and are revising their voting system for next year. They need more advisors.

### Metro New York

The UU-UNO Conference in NYC had youth programming. They are excited to host the first SATURDAY (Sexually

Alternative Teenage UU's Respecting Diversity Among Youth) Con, July 1-5, immediately following GA.

### Michigan

Michigan is busy. The Spring Con was held in May where they had elections. The YAC is a mostly dedicated group. They have great adults.

### Mid-South

There was a CartoonCon in May in Atlanta, GA. There is an Election Con in Sept. with a Social Justice theme. The YAC is trying to get the smaller, more rural churches involved and is setting dates for the Spirituality Development Conference. A Beach Conference is in the works.

### Mountain Desert

The February Con was fabulous this year. There was also Mud Con in Santa Fe, NM - it was lots of fun, but was limited to only 70 people. There was an Elections Con in April.

### New Hampshire-Vermont

This year has been transitional; many older youth left and new folks came in. The district board and the YAC jointly planned a Building Bridges Con. This was very successful in building connections between adults and youth in the district. Adventure Con in May was a great success as well.

### Northeast

At a Con in May they had guest speakers about relationship abuse, AIDS, and GLBT relationships. They did a bridging ceremony at the con because so many youth were aging out. They did skits about famous UUs as a fundraiser. An anthology of art and poetry is being created to raise money for sending youth to GA.

### Ohio-Meadville (OMD)

Everyone is a super hero in OMD. There are new co-chairs. Social action is key at every conference. They have a homepage with a bunch of pictures.

### Ohio Valley

Senior high is fine, Junior high programming is non-existent. The advisors need more support and more work needs to be

put into recruitment. They had a Social Action Con where they all donated canned food and clothing. Their district is in transition.

### Pacific Central (PCD)

There is a lot of new blood in the leadership of PCD. The new Council has a lot of energy and new ideas. They rock, as always. The conferences are going well.

### Pacific Northwest

There was a Senior High Con in April. They're discussing rules as a community. They had a really good LDC. New leadership is emerging. Junior High Cons are going well. Many of the advisors are parents of youth. This creates problems sometimes.

### Pacific Southwest (PSWD)

There's a lot happening in PSWD; a winter camp at de Benneville, an LDC, a Pasadena Minicon in April, and one in San Diego in May. Although attendance at cons has been down, there have been many new kids joining. They are planning a joint weekend with UUYAN. They keep talking about a non-smoking con, but it hasn't happened yet.

### Prairie Star

There's a whole new YAC in the Prairie Star district. The age range was capped at 18. Their advisors are good, but need more support.

### Southwest

They are having issues around age limits and smoking. There is a con on racial justice coming up. Young Adult con was in May.

### Thomas Jefferson

The YAC is set up and going strong! This is progress for the TJ district. They had an advisor training in June, SAC-con at The Mountain. They got their first newsletter out, the second one is on the way.

### Western Canada

They had an LDC that went well. They have transportation issues because the congregations are so spread out. The newsletter, "The Coffee Bean" goes out regularly.

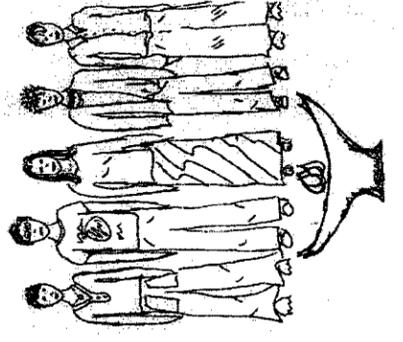
If you have district news for the next issue, let your YCR know! See page 4 for their contact information.

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Though my perspective has changed and will continue to change, the most important part of my UU self is my time in the youth group. I wanted to make sure that others had the same chance I had. I went to conferences to find my support, and at the same time, I was giving support to create a youth group here. These youth that you see in front of you are the result I'm getting ready to make another change in my life. Again, I'm going to leave my church, and change what it means to me to be a UU. The only thing that has remained constant is my pride and pleasure in being UU. I hope it will always remain that way.

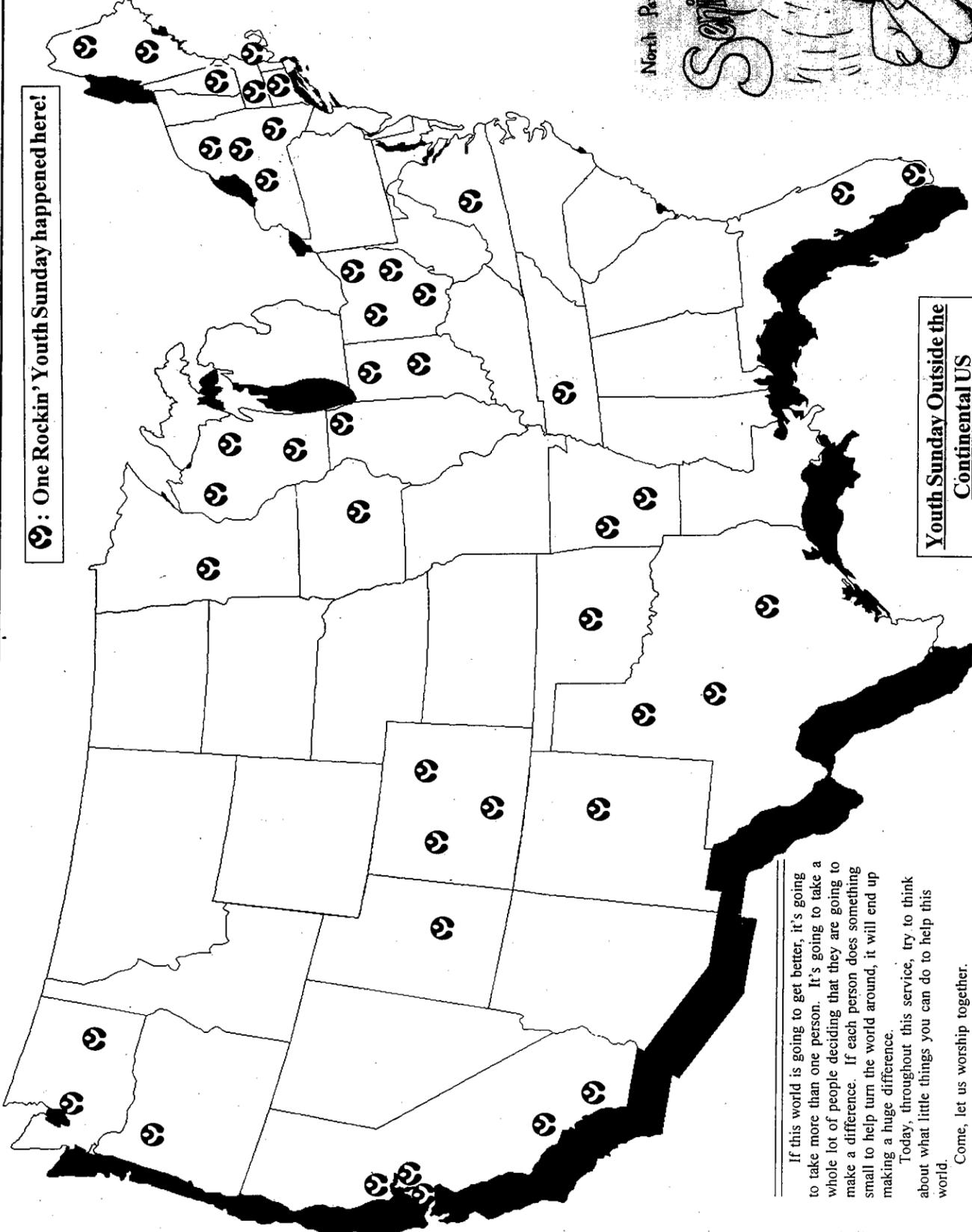
From an untitled homily by Danika Kleiber, age 17, of the First Church in Honolulu, HI, for their 5/17/98 service.

**Who are**



1998 Youth Service  
 Order of Service cover art drawn by Laura Fairham-Wheeler, 16, of the First Church in Portland, OR, for their 3/15/98 service.

**☺: One Rockin' Youth Sunday happened here!**



**Youth Sunday Outside the Continental US**  
 Edmonton, Alberta  
 Victoria, BC  
 Hamilton, Ontario  
 Honolulu, Hawaii

If this world is going to get better, it's going to take more than one person. It's going to take a whole lot of people deciding that they are going to make a difference. If each person does something small to help turn the world around, it will end up making a huge difference.  
 Today, throughout this service, try to think about what little things you can do to help this world.  
 Come, let us worship together.

From the Call to Worship by Diana Rosinus, 13, of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, for their Youth Sunday of 4/20/98.

Perhaps, in its most perfect state, the pond does give an accurate expression of the world around me. But how often can the images created by the pond supply me with the lush scents of pine and oak trees?

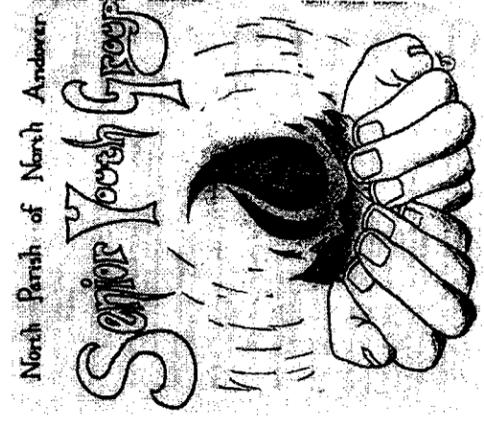
How often can it recreate the feeling of a soft, chilly autumn air that caresses my face?

Mostly, how can it possibly capture the simplistic pleasure I enjoy by watching an intricate spider, no bigger than the pen tip I write with, travel across the smooth pages of my notebook? Life must be lived; it cannot be experienced from one's television set or from the pond.

So I look away from the pond. Deep in the valleys, amongst the proud pines, dancing with the wind, part of my own essence lies. It is there for me to explore, to live and find happiness.

As a cleansing autumn air flows throughout my body, my head lifts to view the sunrise directly. Meeting my questioning eyes, the sun's brilliant rays light a path for my own discovery.

From Portrait of a Pond by Carolyn Stead, age 17, of the Allen Ave. Church in Portland, ME, for their 3/11/98 service.



Order of Service cover art by Tori Sweetser, 16, of North Parish UU Church in N. Andover, MA, for their 3/15/98 service.

**YRUU Spirituality Rocks!**

by Galen Moore  
 Two weeks ago, I saw Nick Page's choir perform before a mostly adult audience, here in Massachusetts. Like the group, singing he led at Con Con last year, this performance was a worshipful experience. But when I felt sitting there in a church pew did not approach the euphoria we knew in our crowded circle of singers, one year ago.

When we worship, we create an intensity and significance that religious communities of adults are often unable to capture. Synapse collected youth-service-related materials from the Religious Education directors of several churches to create this page; all were uncontrollably enthusiastic over their own youth-led service. For every submitted homily or piece of artwork on this page, there are three others we loved, but couldn't put in.

What is so special about the way we worship? Selenia Juneau-Vogel, 16, who helped lead a Youth-Sunday service at her church in Portland, Maine, thinks youth are open to experimentation and new ways of learning; youth don't look to any "person who's gone to seminary who's supposed to have all the answers."

Jessie Eller-Isaacs, 16, whose homily set a whole congregation to weeping at her Oakland, California church, says that youth communicate better when they step outside conventions of authority. "A minister can be intimidating," said Jessie, whereas young people are willing to make themselves vulnerable, and thus their testimony is easier to relate to.

Laila Ibrahim, 32, an adult at the Oakland church, was present at Jessie's youth-led service. According to Laila, who was a YRUU Youth Programs Specialist ten years ago, youth are "more willing to make themselves vulnerable," by sharing their own experience. She said this willingness makes youth worship more "intimate" than adult worship often is.

As young people, we have a lot to share with the UU community as a whole. When we bring the spirituality of our midnight worship circles to the pulpits and pews of our churches, both sides of the exchange benefit. Adult congregations get an injection of new energy; YRUU gets an immersion in the diversity, energy, and strength of its parent community, the church.

Send the Youth Office news about your youth Sunday!

**Diverse** continued from page 3

some sort and something to drink; this always makes people feel good. Once the meeting is set up, it would be advisable to keep posting flyers around the area, because it's not guaranteed that the youth will like what they see and hear.

On the day of the meeting, everything should be perfect. Here is where step two comes in. The basis of the meeting, or at least the introduction, should involve a check-in. You should also mention how glad you are that they decided to come, and so on. Then you should jump into some of the activities that are going on and get the new youth involved right away, so that they have a reason to come back. If your youth group has any social action projects going on or coming up in the near future, it would be best that you give the new youth a chance to participate. If you have some road blocks on what type of social action project to do, here are some of my personal experiences: I have done work with my church in Chicago for homeless shelters, soup kitchens, animal hospitals, low-income housing projects, and much more. These are just a sample of the projects my youth group has led or been a part of. My philosophy about organizing youth group social action is "as long as there are people less fortunate than myself, then there is always a social action project." Once the meeting has been adjourned, mingle and get to know the new youth. That always gets them to return. Again, they will feel comfortable.

Step three is optional. If your advisors are all of one race it's okay, but try to have adults of different races show up at least a couple of times a month or something to that effect. Reason being that some of the youth that decide to give the group a try may base their opinion of the group entirely on that observation. Seeing that only white, black, or Latino advisors are in charge makes some youth uneasy. Why, I don't know; I have just witnessed it before. Personally, I like and can get along with anyone that gets along with me, and of course anyone that finds me funny. So, like I said before, step three is entirely optional. Just take it into consideration when trying to diversify your youth group.

Step four is the step that I feel will have a positive effect on the new youth. This step will bring the new youth to enjoy being part of this group. You are all probably wondering what it is I'm referring to; well, here it is. Once a week (or whatever you decide on if you adopt my method), get together and do something fun, like going to a movie or a museum — something that will impress the new youth. Maybe even get together and study. That will definitely catch the parents' eye, and that's always good, because not only do youth often depend upon their parents for transportation, but they may be able to encourage their parents to attend the service as well. Believe it or not, if you decide to take this on, you will be participating in a social justice project and cutting down on a lot of racism in the YRUU youth groups.

Step five is the step that even most youth are long-time members of youth groups forget about, or at least forget to tell their friends. The most sacred and the most fun-filled weekend is the weekend of any youth conference. Youth conferences are the ultimate way to win any youth over. I should know: that's how Second Unitarian won me over. Youth conferences are a mixture of fun, business, love, sharing of personal feelings, spiritual sexuality, worship, and more fun. It's also a way to meet new people and have a reason to join the youth group. So whatever you do, do not forget to mention the youth conferences to the new youth.

Now you're probably thinking to yourself that these steps apply to the building of any youth group: where's the diversity? Diversity is never the goal of planning; it is the byproduct of good planning and an open-door policy.

*Eddie is a youth in the Pacific Southwest District.*

**Summer's End:**

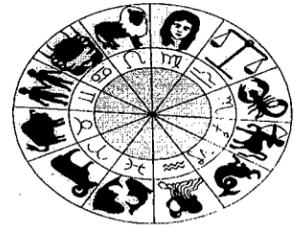
Northeast Week-long Youth-Autonomous Summer Conference  
August 15-23, 1998



Contact Kirsten Amann for more information.  
608-673-7188

# Horoscopes

By Duncan Metcalfe and Jessie Eller-Isaacs



**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 19): Your earthy side shines through. Chain yourself to a redwood tree and restrict yourself to a diet of your neighbors' discarded lawn-rakings (they taste great with a little paprika). Don't forget the patchouli!

**PISCES** (Feb. 20-Mar. 20): That cute person in your youth group you have your eye on will say: "Hey, wanna come over and see my clip art?" Be wary of their software: there could be viruses lurking.

**ARIES** (Mar.21-April.19): Big things in your future! Have you ever wanted to schmooze with a UUA Executive? Well, there is a UUA presidential election coming up...follow your dreams. Oh yeah, and about that big thing in your future: watch for falling pianos.

**It's In The Stars!**

**TAURUS** (April. 20-May 20): Your stubborn side shows through. Just get over it. Don't worry if people hate you: you are better than them.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 20): This is a time for healing. Participate in a spiral dance, sing "We are a Circle," and cleanse your aura with a dust mop. Repent your sins. If you wear goldfish platform shoes, you will come to the realization that you *ain't* all that.

**CANCER** (June 21-July 22): You will finally come out of your shell, but you won't freak out. You will be elected to your district YAC. Don't worry, the Youth Office *will* call you back.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22): Your local church will want to outlaw co-ed sleeping areas for youth from your church. If more than eight people in a room together have their shoes off, the law calls it an orgy. They *could* make you keep your shoes on all the time, too. It could be worse.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You feel the urge to change things. You make plans to turn your church into a suspension bridge. It will create great bonding opportunities for your youth group. Mr. Burns says, "Excellent..."

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): Ironing day is here, time to smooth out those wrinkles. It is all a metaphor...

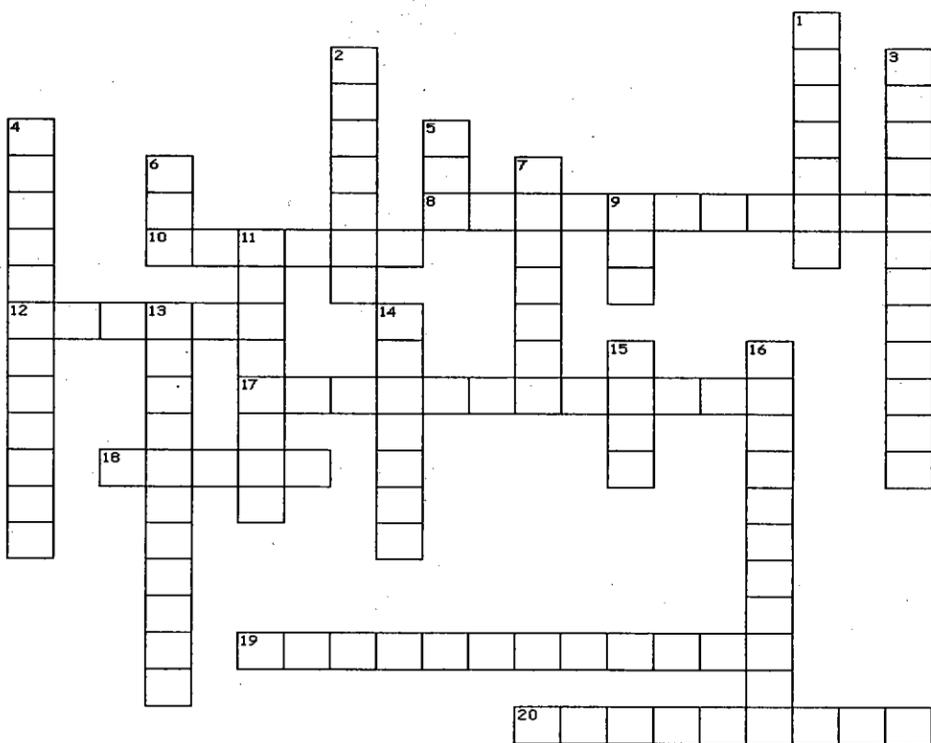
**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24-Nov. 22): Your congregation gets a new youth-friendly minister. Pass go, collect \$500, and don't forget your "Plan-a-Youth-Sunday" card!

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 23-Dec. 21): There is destruction in your future. The next youth conference will be at a Frank Lloyd Wright church. You are doomed . . . never say doomed, always say, "I am in terrible trouble."

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You will return to your punk rock roots. You will pick up things and pin them to your jacket. You will also build a beautiful chalice out of bottle caps and bits of plastic and tin foil.

*Duncan and Jessie are both youth from the west coast.*

## TEST YOUR YRUU SMARTS!



**Across**

- 8. Youth constituency at GA
- 10. Publication put out by the C\*SAC
- 12. Annual fun continental event
- 17. Location of the first Con Con
- 18. Location of the Continental Spirituality Development Conference
- 19. Continental YRUU GLBT Con
- 20. Site of GA '98

**Down**

- 1. UU symbol
- 2. Smallest UU District
- 3. What Unitarians and vampires have in common

- 4. Governing body of YRUU
- 5. Predecessor to YRUU
- 6. Youth Position at the UUA (also stands for "Young Person of Scandal")
- 7. National Social \_\_\_\_\_ Conference
- 9. YRUU greeting/gesture
- 11. Newest at-large position
- 13. No-talent extravaganza
- 14. Touch-base session
- 15. Full-contact bonding game
- 16. Overplayed YRUU song

**For answers, see page 12!**

# IN THE SPIRIT

Dedicated to the celebration of UU youth spirituality and the religious contributions youth make to UU congregations.

## Warmth

by Mary Ailish Birnbaum

My youth group is warm. I was just thinking on the concept of warmth, and I have concluded that warmth is all over the UU Fellowship of San Dieguito. Perhaps the warmth is a result of the outdoor amphitheater, or the fact that the fellowship is located on a notoriously sunny shelf of dirt in southern California. The strength of spirit I encounter on Sundays is inspiring. At the Fellowship there are people who know everything. They are young and old and medium and all incredible, in my experience. Our youth group naturally reflects some of this light, and on Sunday we sit and glow... at least... through my eyes, we glow. I don't know what it looks like to everyone else. I am safe, and I am warm, and among people who make me smile.

and maybe  
the hiss  
halting exhalations  
of youth  
who spread mirth  
like butter  
fills our room  
on sundays  
the sound of love  
rolling off of  
people's tongues  
is the source  
of this insane  
abundance  
of warmth  
i feel...  
who we are...  
laughing...  
who we are...  
very warm people

### A Sandstorm on the Passive Plain of Time

The dusty path on either side of me has grooves, which, filled with wax and reddish clay, seem to evoke a spirit-conscious tree that stands, a mirage, in this desert gray. The wind is always blowing down my path, and white mandalas hang above my head. A spirit guide of medicine, witch craft, a lone hide bag reminds me I'm not dead. It's been so long since I have seen the trees that only spirits help me on my way. I'm struggling for the answers, deep in me, to questions from some far and distant day; but on this path, that though straight, tends to wind my soul has found a wise and peaceful mind.

-Robin Van Loon

(I wrote this sonnet in the spring of 1997 during the year that I had forty-seven weeks of chemotherapy and radiation therapy for rhabdomyosarcoma, a rare form of childhood cancer. I finished cancer treatment in August 1997. My cancer is fortunately in remission. I am sixteen years old and currently a junior at Rancho Bernardo High School. I attend Chalice Unitarian Church in Poway, CA, where I play the cello occasionally for services.)

*When in despair for lack of time and health,  
I all alone lament my talent's state,  
Look down on myself, reflect, curse my fate  
And trouble deaf God for my empty wealth.  
Not from the stars do I blame my pain's stealth.  
Power of healing I prognosticate  
Music as truth's and beauty's opiate  
Endorphin stringing I would excell.  
So for such joy from music I derive  
So long as my lungs breathe, ears hear, eyes see,  
Love's warm, eternal summer shall not fade.  
As song and talent shall together thrive  
So long lives music. Joy gives life to me,  
And Death's breath dries not my sweat in its  
shade.*

~Bob Cambell

## Sparking the Spirit 1998

~Melanie Griffin

On May 2, I awoke at the much too early hour of 4:00 am to finish (well, to begin) packing for my trip to Texas. I was on my way to the first Continental Spirituality Development Conference, which was to be held in Argyle, Texas.

My journey began in an almost too appropriate manner. On my plane ride I sat next to a man who worked with youth and was training to be a minister. This was Serendipity at her peak. I talked to him about the conference I was about to attend, telling him it would consist of half youth and half adults, and its purpose was to address the issue of spirituality concerning both youth and adults. The conferees would then take what they had learned from the conference and use that to plan a Spirituality Con for their district. The man and I talked about our faiths, and I talked about what I was expecting from this conference. As I am during every YRUU conference, I was looking for a growth experience. Well, I got an experience!

When I arrived at the airport in Texas, which is gigantic in the literal sense, I had some trouble finding the group. I lugged my luggage around for a while starting to get a little desperate when I saw Sienna Baskin's (a member of the staff) smiling face through the window of a luggage claim area. A colorful sign, lots of luggage, and a group of UUs singing and playing instruments greeted me beautifully. It was such a worshipful sight. As people arrived, it struck me kind of funny because it was all the worship kids from the districts, you know what I mean, a lot of flowing skirts and guitars. I felt a little out of place in my baggy pants, but they soon found out I'm a worship kid at heart. The Spirituality Conference was held in Texas, at a conference center called Briarwood. It was a lovely site and so was the weather. (Word, girrrrl when I say the digs was lovely, I mean phat!) After our initial orientation to the conference, we were given these amazing binders that were full of worship stuff, and the recently published YRUU songbooks. The scene was set for spiritual happenings.

I enjoyed myself throughout the conference, but I could not possibly tell you all of what we did because we were kept very, very busy. I would have to say that there was only one major flaw to the conference and that was that we were so busy, although doing neat things, that we didn't really have a lot of time to meet and get to know all the wonderful worshipful people who attended. Among our activities were a may-pole celebration, a Rockin' Pajama worship service, numerous brainstorming sessions that were actually quite helpful, workshops, a game of UU family feud, worship planning groups, and more worship, worship, worship. We worshipped 'round the clock, sometimes in small ways like just trying to be aware while you brush your teeth. It sounds silly, but you should try it some time! In fact, the importance of trying to find ritual and worshipful moments in my life is one of the most important lessons that I learned from the CSDC. I found this conference to be a very valuable experience for this and many other reasons.

When I found that I was going to be attending this conference, I thought I was going to get tons of ideas for workshops. I thought that I'd never have to worry about thinking of a creative worship idea again. But the purpose of a conference of this type is not to simply feed you ideas of what to do. Instead, we thought and talked about the issues that come up when worshipping, and taught one another the skills of planning worship. Now I am prepared to design workshops on my own that suit me and my district: My spirit has been sparked. I hope to carry my spark, what I have learned, and use it to develop the spirituality in my district.

Melanie is a youth from Joseph Priestley District



Youth and adults circle around a chalice at the CSDC

Photograph by Alison Purcell



The Opening Ceremony of the CSDC

Photograph by Sienna Baskin



