

UUSJ Program Committee Report – January 2020

The big Program Committee event of the fourth quarter 2019 was the biennial Social Justice Awards Gala held on October 5, 2019, at UU Church of Arlington. There are two major parts of the event – the event itself and the social justice awards.

GALA EVENT

Catered hors d'oeuvres were offered followed by a program of awards. The theme was “Jazzed about Social Justice” and all enjoyed the special music of the **Free Spirits Jazz Ensemble** from Arlington. Ten awards were given to eight different congregations. This event was enjoyed by more people than in past years.

The statistics from the event show the success of the 2019 event which included registrations and drop-ins of 144 people with **122 attending**. Income was about \$12,400 from tickets (at \$75 each) and bar sales and \$1,900 from donations while expenses were about \$5,500, giving a **\$6,900 net**. Comparisons to prior galas show the 2017 Gala was held at Cedar Lane UU with 110 attendees and netting \$2,3000 and the 2015 Gala which was held at UU of Arlington had 86 attendees and netted \$1,800.

A lessons-learned meeting was held after the event to discuss what worked well and what needs improvement for the next event. Many details were logged for review before the next Gala but major discussion points for future galas were:

- How do we continue to support multiple goals for this event like networking, raising up social justice work and fundraising?
- Does the gala model we have been using work for a national organization?
- How do we encourage congregations without awardees to buy tickets and attend?
- We have maxed out the seating at one of our biggest venues – are we outgrowing this event? Or do we need to look at other non-congregation events or other types of events?
- Having a paid staffer to help with printing and logistics was definitely needed to augment volunteer time.

Special thanks for the hard work of the Program Committee and individual Gala volunteers: **Martha Ades, Bill Ades, Bob Denniston, John Gubbings, Emily Koechlin, Sarah Masters, David Shilton, Mary Shilton, Art Stevens** (photographer), **David Strauss**, and **Marsha White**

AWARDS

The awards process included 20 nominations from 11 congregations covering nine of the ten award categories. Thanks to the Board members push, we received more nominations than in past years. Awards were given for nine categories to eight different congregations:

- 2019 UUSJ Minister/Senior Leader’s Award - Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd, River Road UU Congregation

- 2019 UUSJ Environmental/Climate Justice Award – Environmental Justice Ministry Team and Chairs, Cedar Lane UU Church
- 2019 UUSJ Emerging Leader Award - Alexander Kohn, UU Congregation of Columbia
- 2019 UUSJ Economic Justice Award - Jerry Poje, UU Congregation of Fairfax
- 2019 UUSJ Racial Justice and Beloved Community Award - Stephanie Thomas, Becky Ross, Paul Blackburn, UU Church of Arlington
- 2019 UUSJ Congregational Social Justice Program Award - The Social Justice Committee, Accotink UU Church
- 2019 UUSJ Congregational Social Justice Program Award - Global Connections Project, Washington Ethical Society
- 2019 UUSJ Lifetime Achievement Award - Steve Ewart, UU Church in Reston
- 2019 UUSJ Immigration Award - Sanctuary for Rosa at Cedar Lane, Cedar Lane UU Church
- 2019 UUSJ Collaboration Award - Immigration Film Festival, Washington Ethical Society

Special thanks to the Awards Review Team of **Terrie Barr** Rockville, **Terry Grogan** Reston, **Ed Kringer** Accotink, **Rev. Karen Scrivo** Goodloe, and **Carol Walker** Paint Branch.

The Awards team held a lessons-learned meeting to see what could be improved for the next awards process. Even though the awards review team had 5 congregations represented, both small and large, it was still a little awkward when they had to recuse themselves if their congregation had nominations in a particular category. The existing process for selecting nominees needs to be reviewed and overhauled, especially as to how we select awardees when there are multiple ones from a single congregation, ones from both larger and smaller congregation that might have different levels of resources available, and multiple ones for each category.

The team recommends the future awards processes be cleaner with fewer criteria and special attention given to inclusion and diversity of congregation size and location. Fewer categories could be used. Suggestions for future review criteria are:

- To what extent does the project/work match the description of the award?
- What caused the congregation or leader to pursue this project or idea? Were there roadblocks/challenges, if any, to be overcome and what methods were used to do so.
- What was the quality of the project as measured by the impact on the local community, regional community, national community and international community?
- What was the extent or penetration of congregational involvement? Is it multigenerational? Inclusive? Committee-wide or congregational wide? Other?
- Are the project described and the methods used replicable?
- Is the project sustainable or has it already become ongoing work?
- What local/regional/national and/or international partnerships were formed and how was the relationship-building work done?

ONGOING PROGRAMS

Many of UUSJ's "programs" are now events which have content sponsored by UUSJ committees or task forces like the Development Committee or the Advocacy Oversight Committee. In 2020 there will be a need for additional support when events are held. UUSJ's events always need a point of contact organizer, and people to help in the planning and in the logistics of each event.

Martha Ades has been acting as Program Chair for the past few years but has stepped down from that role. This means that board members will need to step up to help with events held at their congregations and individual event leaders will need to be appointed.

ACTION ITEMS FOR THE BOARD

- 1) Discuss reassessing "program event" needs to include appointing an event leader for each future event, whether they are advocacy training events, political speakers for the DMV or general fundraising events.
- 2) Individual members will need to step up to volunteer to help on all events
- 3) Because 2020 is UUSJ's 20th anniversary, the Board should decide if any special events should occur and get groups to start planning now.
- 4) In January 2021, discuss a repeat of the Gala for 2021 or a change to another type of event that gathers from multiple congregations and acknowledges the works of the Social Justice Activists in our midst as well as supporting all our members at the national level.

Submitted by Martha Ades