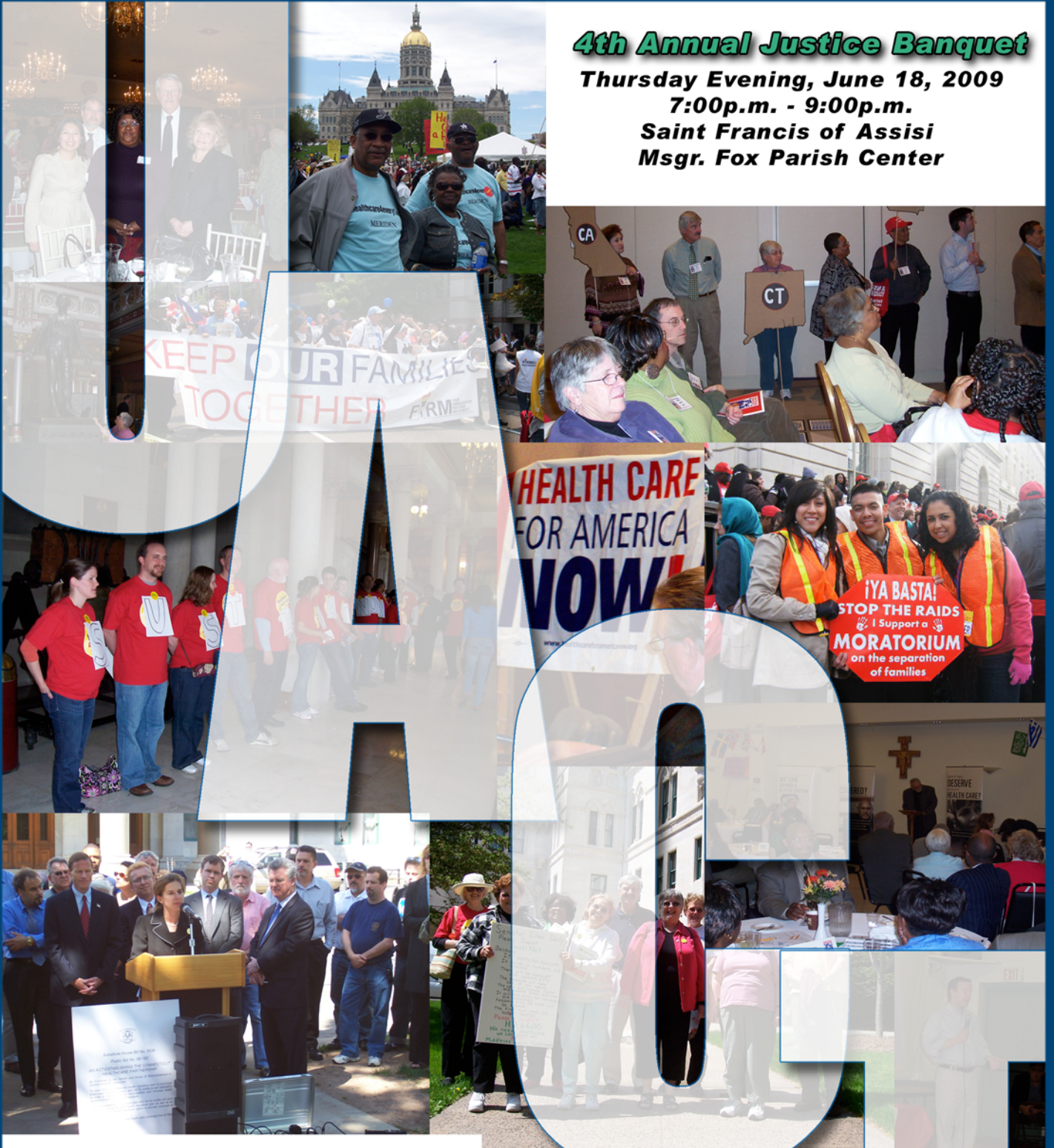


4th Annual Justice Banquet

Thursday Evening, June 18, 2009
7:00p.m. - 9:00p.m.
Saint Francis of Assisi
Msgr. Fox Parish Center



United Action Connecticut

**organized interfaith communities and civic institutions
building a better future**



UACT Member Congregations and Community Organizations 2008 - 2009

Central Chapter



New Deliverance Church of God in Christ

Reverend Alfred Warren
PO Box 296, Waterbury, CT 06704
Phone: 203-753-7496



Wallingford/Meriden Branch – The NAACP

Ms. Barbara Holloman, President
PO Box 2663, Meriden, CT 06450
Phone: 203-273-6907



Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church

Reverend John Brinsmade
94 Broad Street, Plainville, CT 06062
Phone: 860-747-6825



St. Joseph Catholic Church

Father Joe DiSciaccia
33 Queen Street, Bristol, CT 06010
Phone: 860-583-1369



St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Reverend Pat Hames
147 West Main Street, New Britain, CT 06051
Phone: 860-225-7634



St. Mary Catholic Church

Reverend Thomas Walsh
544 Main Street, New Britain, CT 06051
Phone: 860-229-4894



St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Reverend Dee Anne Dodd
65 North Main Street, Wallingford, CT 06492
Phone: 203-269-5050



St. Stanislaus Catholic Church

Reverend Ed Ziemnicki
82 Akron Street, Meriden, CT 06450
Phone: 203-235-6341



South Church

Reverend George Harris, Lead Pastor
90 Main Street, New Britain, CT 06051
Phone: 860-223-3691

Eastern Chapter

Crossroads Presbyterian Church

Reverend Anne Fuhrmeister
70 Cross Road, Waterford, CT 06385
Phone: 860-442-3693



Niantic Community Church

Reverend John Nelson
170 Pennsylvania Ave,
Niantic, CT 06357
Phone: 860-739-6208



Sagrado Corazon Catholic Church

Reverend Paul Murdock
61 Club Rd., Windham, CT 06280
Phone: 860-423-8617



St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Reverend Mark Santucci
15 Pearl St., Mystic, CT 06335
Phone: 860-572-9549



St. Mary Star of the Sea

Reverend Robert Washabaugh
10 Huntington St., New London, CT 06320
Phone: 860-443-2364



Uncasville United Methodist Church

Reverend Eric Swanfeldt
34 Maple Avenue Ext.,
Uncasville, CT 06382
Phone: 860-848-3856



Welcome to United Action of Connecticut's 4th Annual Justice Banquet

**Thursday June 18th 2009
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

**Saint Francis of Assisi Msgr. Fox Parish Center
10 Elm Street, Middletown, CT 06457**

United Action Connecticut (UACT)

United Action is an interfaith, multi-racial, multi-lingual organization of congregations and community institutions crossing political, economic and urban/suburban boundaries.

UACT's Mission

United Action's mission is the building of powerful, broad-based community organizations rooted in faith and social justice values, working to make concrete improvements in the lives of families and individuals. By identifying and developing leaders and by organizing around well-defined, winnable issues, UACT enables people to understand their own power and to acquire the skills and allies necessary to exercise power collectively and effectively. United Action seeks to strengthen local congregations, and through them to bring regions together and find common ground for the common good.

UACT's Goals

Our goals are strengthening congregations to grow and thrive; developing leaders through intensive training and practical organizing experience that is systematically evaluated and reflected upon; and moving congregations and communities into effective public action for the common good.

Contact UACT

381 Main Street, Middletown CT, 06457
Phone: (860) 704-0138
E-mail: uact4change@hotmail.com
<http://www.uact4justice.org>

Fourth Annual Justice Banquet Program

- Women for Justice -

Hors d'oeuvres	Malini Prabakar and Mary O'Brien To provide music
Welcome	Mark Kosnoff President of Central UACT Chapter St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, Meriden
Invocation and Grace	Rev. Alfred Warren New Deliverance Church of God in Christ Waterbury
Dinner	Malini Prabakar and Mary O'Brien To provide music
Song	Evangelist Clarice Hurdle New Deliverance Church of God in Christ Waterbury
UACT – “What we’ve done”	Michael Verrett President, UACT State Board of Directors Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Plainville
Recognition of Honorees “Margaret Flinter and Patricia Wallace”	Jay Klemundt Executive Director of United Action CT John Nowicky St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, Meriden
Introduction of Keynote Speaker	Roland Cockfield Meriden-Wallingford NAACP Mt. Hebron Baptist Church, Meriden
Keynote Speaker	Rev. Bonita Grubbs Executive Director Christian Community Action, New Haven
Call to Action	Mark Kosnoff
Acknowledgments	Ocean Pellett President of Eastern UACT Chapter Niantic Community Church
Benediction	Reverend John Nelson Niantic Community Church
Song	America the Beautiful

MESSAGE FROM STATE PRESIDENT MICHAEL VERRETT

United Action celebrates the hard fought victory of healthcare reform in our state with the passage of Sustinet in the Connecticut Legislature. There is still more work to be done with the Governor to ensure that all of Connecticut's residents have access to affordable quality healthcare but let us also savor the satisfaction of a job well done!!! Let us also celebrate the very real possibility of healthcare reform at the national level. United Action has already been meeting with our Congressional delegations both here in Connecticut and in Washington on this issue. All of Connecticut's Congressmen and women have come on board for Health Care for America Now!!! What is happening in Connecticut and the roles our Connecticut delegation has in Washington gives us the opportunity to help shape healthcare reform on the federal level. Let's do it now!!!



United Action celebrates its movement forward with Immigrant Rights through its Citizen Workshop, Know Your Rights Training, coalition building at the state and federal levels, as well as direct advocacy with our elected Representatives and Senators in Washington. May our work with our allies bring legal status to our brothers and sisters who live and work among us. President Obama is looking for change this year. Let us press our elected officials on this issue. Si se puede!!!

United Action celebrates the Women among us who work for Justice!!! May we learn by their example to work for Justice here and now!!!.

United Action also celebrates the Leaders who have stepped up to roles in our organization. They are Mark Kosnoff, Ellen Ashburn, Ocean Pellett, Roland Cockfield, John Nowicky, Talia Lopez, Marianne Cassidy and Mary O'Brien. These are all talented people who bring different gifts to the Table of Justice as members of our Central and Eastern chapters as well as the State Board. Please join me in keeping all of them in our thoughts and prayers. May United Action move forward on its issues, build relationships, set ourselves on solid financial footing and forge mutually beneficial alliances over the coming year.

Finally, we celebrate the life we live today in America, one unparalleled in all of history. We are the wealthiest nation on earth and enjoy many personal freedoms as the result of the sacrifices of those who have gone before us. At the same time, there are many disparities and injustices in our midst so let us not forget Dr. Martin Luther King's words that "We are all tied together in a single garment of destiny". May we each choose to wear that single garment of destiny and pursue the common American value of Liberty and Justice for All!!!

In Justice and Peace,

Michael Verrett

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MESSAGE FROM EASTERN PRESIDENT OCEAN PELLETT



As a child I learned a pledge of allegiance that said “...with liberty and justice for all”. This was incorporated into the core of my being, as a tenet of my understanding of what America should be. Thus it was not a big leap for me to raise the banner of “Health Care 4 Everyone”. Likewise my faith says “all are children of God” and my understanding of this is that equal opportunity for every child to be educated to his or her potential is what “justice for all” is about.

I believe that in the long run our nation will be judged on how we treat our people and not on our GDP. This is the opinion of a confirmed “justice junkie”, won’t you join me in this endeavor.

Ocean Pellett
President of Eastern Region of United Action CT

Keynote Speaker

REVEREND BONITA GRUBBS



Rev. Bonita Grubbs has been Executive Director of Christian Community Action since December 1988.

Prior to that, she was employed as Assistant Regional Administrator in Region V (Northwest Connecticut) for the Department of Mental Health within the State of Connecticut.

She has served as a board member of the Greater New Haven Community Loan Fund, board member of International Festival of Arts and Ideas, a member of the Judicial Review Council for the State of Connecticut. Interim Pastor of Christian Tabernacle Baptist Church on Hamden, Connecticut, president of the CT Coalition to End Homelessness, Co-chair, Steering Committee of New Haven’s Fighting Back

Project, member of the Board of Trustees Mercy Center in Madison, Connecticut, Connecticut Center for School Change and Dwight Hall at Yale University.

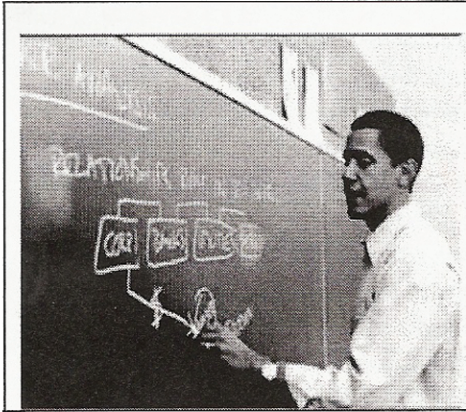
Present board and voluntary involvements include: board member of the Hospital of Saint Raphael and chairperson of its Mission Effectiveness Committee, the Connecticut Voices for Children, the Connecticut Housing Coalition, the Community Economic Development Fund and the Quinnipiac Bank and Trust Company. She has also served as a Lecturer in Homiletics at Yale Divinity School

Rev. Grubbs holds an undergraduate degree in Sociology and in the Afro-American Studies from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. She received two degrees from Yale University---a Master of Arts in Religion and a Master of Public Health. She received an honorary degree from Albertus Magnus College in 2001.

She was ordained to the Christian Ministry within the American Baptist Church in November 1987.

We are honored and delighted to welcome Reverend Grubbs as our guest speaker this evening.

UACT / Gamaliel / Obama Connection



"As some of you may know, I got my start as a community organizer with a Gamaliel affiliate in Chicago..."

... I learned that meaningful change always begins at the grassroots, and that engaged citizens working together can accomplish extraordinary things."

Barack Obama



The Gamaliel Foundation is a national training and consulting network whose vision is to empower ordinary people to effectively participate in the political, environmental, social and economic decisions that affect their lives. Gamaliel's goal is to transform our society and bring about justice locally, nationally and globally.

Gamaliel's roots were fostered in the late 1960's and it now has nearly 60 affiliate organizations in 22 states and three countries. United Action of Connecticut is one of those affiliates.

Before he entered Harvard law School, President Barak Obama was an organizer in the Gamaliel network on the south side of Chicago. He has acknowledged many times and in many settings the formative influence this experience has had on his life. His wife Michelle has said that her husband is still an activist looking for new ways to express his belief in the people and to fight for his values.

We are honored and blessed by the connection between President Obama, Gamaliel and United Action

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Honorees

Margaret Flinter



Margaret Flinter is the Vice President and Clinical Director of the Community Health Center, Inc. and the Director of its Weitzman Center for Innovation in Community Health and Primary Care. Margaret earned her Bachelors Degree in Nursing from the University of Connecticut, her Master's Degree from Yale University, and is currently a candidate for the doctoral degree at the University of Connecticut. She is licensed as an advanced practice nurse and is certified as a family nurse practitioner. She was a Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellow from 2002-2005, and served as President of the Connecticut Nurses Association from 2005-2007.

Following her graduate training at Yale University, Margaret joined the Community Health Center in 1980 as a National Health Service Corps Scholar and CHC's first nurse practitioner. Since 1987 she has held both clinical and administrative leadership roles in the organization, and helped pilot its expansion from a single clinic to its current statewide enterprise of primary care organizations serving 70,000 patients.

In 2005, she established the Weitzman Center for Innovation in Community Health and Primary Care as the "research and development" arm of CHC. In 2007, she was appointed by the Connecticut Legislature to serve as the co-chair of the state's two major health reform authorities, the HealthFirst Ct. Authority and the Statewide Primary Care Access Authority, and continues to lead these efforts.

Margaret is a native of Waterbury, Ct. and except for brief stints in Washington, DC and Georgia, has made Connecticut her home. She currently lives in Higganum with her family.

Special thanks to the 2009 Justice Banquet Committee

Mr. John Nowicky
Ms. Ocean Pellett
Magdalis Figueroa
Lucy Jusino
Mr. Mark Kosnoff
Mr. Jay Klemundt

Additional thanks to:

St. Francis of Assisi and Claudia DeFrance for providing us access to the Msgr. Fox Parish Center facilities.

Leslie Roberts and Thyme in a Bottle Catering for the wonderful dinner.

Brian Kosnoff for designing the Program Book.

Prentis Printing Solutions, Inc. (mike@jlpgraphics.com)

Malini Prabakar and Mary O'Brien for their musical talent.

Pat Wallace

Pat Wallace spent her grade-school years in a neighborhood that was a real community, a formative experience. She was in college in the late 1960's and was student body president at Albertus Magnus College in the spring of 1970 when Albertus, like many other colleges, was out on strike over campus issues, the Vietnam wars, the killings at Kent State and the Panther trials. She was part of a successful negotiation with faculty and administration to allow students to take incompletes for that spring. She herself took 5 incompletes. She was to be the student commencement speaker at her college graduation. The Albertus commencement was always held outdoors. For the first time in the history of the college, it rained, so she was spared. This was how she became certain that there was a God, and became unalterably convinced of the efficacy of prayer.

She began her work for justice at Christian Community Action in New Haven as the volunteer editor of their newsletter. On the day she arrived, they had received a large donation of mimeograph paper. She learned the fine art of straightening the edges of stacks of paper so that the mimeograph machine would not jam. Soon she was volunteering full-time, commuting from Fairfield where she waitressed at night. The Executive Director opened his calendar and let her go to any meeting he was attending that interested her. She soon became the overnight staff person in the emergency housing facility with responsibility for building maintenance. She read up on plumbing so that when she went to the plumbing supply house up the street she could stand at the counter with the guys, place her order, and sound like she knew what she was talking about.

She was hired as the coordinator of Citizens for Humanizing Criminal Justice. The organization worked on a variety of things: prisoner grievance committees, the death penalty, a busing program so families could visit loved ones in prison, a community mediation program. She learned from the New England Prisoners Association that it is essential that the people most affected by broken systems lead the effort to change those systems.

She worked for the Office of Urban Affairs of the Archdiocese for 28 years. She had the privilege of getting to know hundreds of remarkable leaders of organizing projects funded by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. She was part of successful legislative campaigns focused on housing and other issues. She got to know the insides of many church basements, and the hearts of many remarkable Catholics who know that faith is a verb, not a noun.



She does part-time organizing for the Corporation for Supportive Housing, in a project focused on getting small towns to provide permanent affordable housing with services for chronically homeless people. She and her husband, Paul Hodel have one daughter who will be a senior in college this fall. They are Quakers, members of New Haven Friends Meeting. She is also a member of a mothers' group of 7 that has been together for more than 20 years. She will begin a new full-time position in New Haven later this month.

(This is a childhood photo of Pat during her first experience with neighborhood-based economic development, a worker-owned co-op. She is the one setting out the cups.)

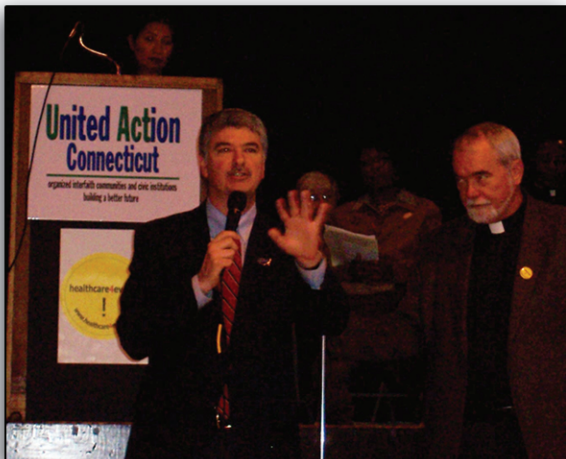
TASK FORCE REPORTS

Better Health for the Common Wealth

During 2005, United Action Connecticut conducted almost 1000 interviews among our member congregants, focusing on their daily concerns, fears, hopes and dreams. Congregational meetings were called to share and better understand these concerns, and to explore avenues for joint action. Regional “issue assemblies” at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Wallingford and Temple Emanu El in Waterford brought 400 interfaith representatives together to vote on a short list of priority issues that we might address through UACT. Early childhood education, affordable housing and tax equity all surfaced as important items, and unjust and unworkable immigration laws were seen by many as disturbing. Quality, affordable health care, however, loomed really large at both assemblies. Its escalating costs and restricted access for people became a primary issue.



This widespread interest in health care reform was further underscored by a survey which UACT’s Health Care Task Force circulated to some 800 of our member households during 2006. The survey’s results emphasized the consequences of rapidly rising insurance premiums, higher co-pays, escalating deductibles and built-in biases against people with pre-existing conditions, women, older persons, smaller businesses, the self-employed, etc. Medical debt and medically related bankruptcies were identified as a growing problem even back in 2006. Health insecurity was spreading from poor people throughout the middle class. Disparities in health care services and treatments were also identified, based on differences in income, race, ethnicity and immigration status. These concerns were further illuminated by UACT’s strategic visits that year with hospital administrators, doctors and nurses, public health officials, VNA leaders, business owners, union leaders and legislators. A big problem looked like it was about to become even bigger.



June 2006 issue assemblies at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in New Britain and at Niantic Community Church in East Lyme reflected the heightened interest in finding effective ways to reign in out-of-control health care costs. How could Connecticut best assist the uninsured and under-insured individuals, families and small businesses whose story cards we were collecting? UACT helped to make health care a very prominent issue in the ‘06 state and congressional election campaigns. It was featured at UACT’s Fall Public Meeting at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in New Britain, to which we had invited a reluctant Governor M. Jodi Rell and a shy Congresswoman Nancy Johnson.

UACT joined the “HealthCare4Every1” statewide health care reform coalition being encouraged by the Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut. Work accelerated in earnest on developing a sustainable plan for improving the way health care services are provided here, especially with regard to those currently not well-served or priced out of the market. An integrated field operation was also being set up to engage citizens from every corner of the state in this unusual effort. UACT agreed to focus on enlisting faith communities’ involvement.



From 2007 through the present, United Action has focused intensively on public education and organizing toward improving and transforming Connecticut's health care systems. We have sponsored 'Sicko' film screenings and circulated dvds of TV documentaries about health care disparities to facilitate small group discussions within congregations. We have hosted numerous community educational forums and helped people prepare testimony for HealthFirst/PrimaryCare Authority hearings and legislative committee proceedings in Hartford and across the state.

UACT's Campaign participation ranged from surveying 100 small businesses and sponsoring a Religious Leaders' Summit

on Health Care to more recent "Noah's Ark" visits of small groups with their state senators and an impromptu "pie-in" in Deep River. Along the way, we circulated petitions, showed up at country fairs, parades and musters, attended Town Hall meetings and made a point of getting to know key legislative staff.

We have facilitated dialogue with many legislators, public officials and private sector leaders about the best practices and pathways for reforming health care. This quest now concerns not only Connecticut, but the entire country. Indeed, we know that state health care reform and federal reform are inevitably linked---by funding, regulatory issues and the realities of our federal system of government. Social Security was not enacted for the entire nation during the 1930s, until eight states had introduced a similar safety net for the elderly and disabled. Federal social security was based on these introductory programs first tried in smaller jurisdictions. We may well see a similar sequence with health reform today.

The Sustinet HB 6600 bill passed by Connecticut's House and Senate in May of 2009 is landmark legislation to guarantee health care access, control costs and strengthen health care delivery systems. It puts Connecticut on a path to better health care for all of our residents, and also points the way for our nation.

UACT is proud to be an important part of this as yet unfinished Campaign, and to apply what we have learned together in Connecticut about health care reform to the unfolding national fight for better health care now!

Religious leaders make health care a moral issue

Ministers, rabbi preach to the choir on need for universal coverage in the U.S.

BY SCOTT WHIPPLE
HERALD STAFF

NEW BRITAIN — Religious leaders from all corners of New England converged on South Church Tuesday to urge establishment of universal health care. Despite the denominational mix of clergy, all seemed to agree the system is broken and needs to be repaired or replaced.

Juan Figueroa, president of the Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut, said adequate health care is no longer an ethical issue, but a moral one. Figueroa, a former state representative, is on record as saying

'He who doesn't have his health doesn't have anything.'

JUAN FIGUEROA
President, Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut

dents," he said. His foundation has pushed for health-care measures that achieve quality, continuous and portable health care.

The Rev. Brendan McCormick, president of United Action of Connecticut's Central Chapter and the event organizer, reminded some 75 participants that studies repeatedly show that people without health care tend to live sicker and die younger.

The Rev. George Harris, lead pastor of South Church, said "most of the uninsured have jobs, but simply cannot afford health insurance. Minority folks make up a disproportionate numbers of those who are uninsured."

Panel hears plea for health care

Uninsured listen to strategy for quality coverage

BY LAURESHA XHIMANI
REPUBLICAN AMERICAN

WATERBURY — Clarice Hurdle was in the hospital several years ago fighting for her life when a nurse came into her room in the middle of the night and told her she had to leave unless she could pay for the services.

"If you don't have medical insurance, you're nobody," Hurdle said.

She had gone without insurance for 10 years after being laid off and couldn't afford to go see a doctor. At 63, she found out she was a diabetic after an emergency room visit followed by a hospital stay.

Hurdle told her story to about 40 people including

health care providers, workers, union members and activists and a panel of HealthFirst Connecticut officials. The panel, commissioned by the state 15 months ago to recommend strategies on affordable, sustainable care for the state's 3.5 million residents.

The panel has to come up with ways to cut costs while providing quality health care for people including those with chronic disease and those who are paying more for it. The panel also has to recommend ways to pay for it, including increasing subsidies and having

neesses who don't offer care to workers to come toward health care.

The panel held its forum at the Waterbury Magnet School on Wednesday. The forums give the public a chance to hear from people over the state.

A staff member of P

Plan to cover Connecticut

Universal health care proponents bring sweeping proposal to Capitol

By SCOTT WHIPPLE
HERALD STAFF

HARTFORD — More than 500 business leaders and state officials gathered Tuesday evening at Union Station to hear details of a sweeping new plan that its proponents argue will permanently change the health care coverage landscape in Connecticut.

The announcement from a coalition of business and labor leaders, health providers, clergy and health care advocates was led by Meriden-based Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut. The group unveiled a proposal outlined in a report called "SustiNet: Health Care We Can Count On." The proposal is



Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz applauds.

designed to control health care costs, save Connecticut's families and businesses money and make coverage available to everyone in the state who needs it.

"This is our first down payment on health care for everyone," said Universal Health Care Foundation President Juan

Figueroa. "Our state and the nation face critical challenges because of our floundering economy and skyrocketing health care costs. SustiNet provides the legislature, which convened last week, with an innovative and practical blueprint for

See PLAN, Page 9

"You Shall Welcome the Stranger" Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Comparing Health Care and Immigration Reform

Unlike the well-developed, multi-faceted health care reform campaign that has risen to a fever pitch in Hartford (and soon Washington, D.C.), comprehensive immigration reform has had a lower profile in recent months, been less prominent in most legislators' speeches, if no less controversial.

As with health care reform, immigration reform in the U.S. has a tortured history of twists, turns, bitter defeats, sweet victories, embarrassing moments and finest hours. Like health care reform, immigration reform has been a priority and promise for President Obama's new Administration---first articulated to us in person in December, 2007, at the Heartland Presidential Forum in Des Moines (UACT leaders were there in the midst of an ice storm).

Unlike health care reform legislation, comprehensive immigration reform bills are not on the verge of being introduced. There is much organizing yet to be done in immigrant communities and among non-immigrants as well. There is plenty of discord, misinformation, outright prejudice and contorted myths about immigrants being spread by anti-immigrant front groups, numerous talk show hosts and some politicians and advocacy groups intent on building up their reputations and war chests by conveniently blaming immigrants for many of our problems.

Health care reform is a heavy lift, as we have learned; but so will immigration reform be difficult. Both matters are large, complicated, hot-button issues involving millions of lives, billions of dollars and deeply entrenched special interests loaded for bear.

United Action's Approach to Comprehensive Immigration Reform



supported an "In State" college tuition bill covering undocumented immigrant students which passed both houses of the Connecticut general Assembly in 2007. Eleven other states allow this in some form already. The bill was one of five vetoed by Gov. Rell after the session ended.

Immigrant Detainee Dies, And a Life Is Buried, Too

By NINA BERNSTEIN

The hand-scrawled letter from a New Jersey jail was urgent. An immigration detainee had died that day, Sept. 8, 2005. A fellow inmate wrote in English, describing pains and pleas for attention that went until too late. "Death ... need investigated," he urged group that corresponded with the man, the County Correctional in Freehold. "We much because that c to anyone of us."

Yet like a message tossed from a distance even the fact of the death was soon swept away. Inquiries by the were rebuffed by jail. Complaints forwarded Department of Hon curity were logged, gotten. And when

Arizona Is Seeing Signs Of Flight by Immigrants

By RANDAL C. ARCHBOLD

PHOENIX — The signs of flight among Latino immigrants here are multiple: Families moving out of apartment complexes, schools reporting enrollment drops, business owners complaining about fewer clients. While it is too early to know for certain, a consensus is developing among economists, business people and immigration groups that the weakening economy coupled with recent curbs on illegal immigration are steering Hispanic immigrants out of the state. The Arizona economy, heavily dependent on growth and a Latino work force, has been slowing for months. Meanwhile, the state has enacted one of the country's toughest laws to punish employers who hire illegal immigrants, and the county sheriff here in Phoenix has been endorsing

OUT OF TIME

City man to be deported today despite appeals

HEAD OF AGENCY: GOV'T WON'T ANSWER QUESTIONS

UACT also signed on to the national “Fair Immigration Reform Movement” (FIRM), through our affiliations with the Gamaliel Foundation Network and the Center for Community Change (CCC). UACT participated in FIRM’s annual summits during early 2007 and 2008 in Washington, and in other national actions related to immigration reform that were conducted back home.

During the Spring of 2007 and in December of 2008, UACT buses represented Connecticut as multi-state waves of people ascended Capitol Hill to bring to members of Congress and their staffs the realities of prejudice, fear and a broken immigration system. UACT has met with employers who rely on immigrant labor but are frustrated by poorly administered or unworkable visa programs that adversely impact local economies. We have also collaborated with Connecticut’s chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers’ Assn. (AILA), which has extensive experience attempting to navigate the labyrinth of confusing immigration laws and administrative policies for their clients.

What We Mean by Comprehensive Immigration Reform



The delineation of an immigration reform agenda has been one by-product of the hopeful (and frustrating) organizing around immigration issues during the last two years. Certain principles and notions of common sense were juxtaposed with deep-seated prejudices and myths about immigrants.

Family reunification is critical. A pathway to legalization for the undocumented is important. Unconscionable bureaucratic delays of many months or even many years for various visas and applications involving the status of individuals and families are unacceptable, inhumane and disruptive to our economy. Unjustifiable and illegal raids and detentions must end. Those in detention deserve medical attention, due process and other basic human and Constitutional rights. Worker’s

rights matter, such as getting paid for work performed, whether or not they are documented. Immigration laws and administrative policies could help rather than hurt our struggling economy, if we were more thoughtful and less reactive. More strategic economic policies and targeted development assistance might help countries such as Mexico and Guatemala keep their own people employed and at home.

Alongside media reports about immigration reform proposals have been stories about violent attacks against immigrants, including murders and harassment; unsubstantiated but amplified accusations that “illegal” immigrants are bankrupting our health care system and jamming up emergency rooms; allegations that immigrants siphon off public services and welfare but never pay taxes; and that recent immigrants are responsible for most crime, drugs, gangs and disease in the U.S.

The Organizing Ahead

In this context, UACT has focused on organizing and supporting local training and educational events, such as “Know Your Rights” seminars for recent immigrants in Willimantic, New London, Meriden, Danbury, Manchester, Waterbury and Bristol. We trained about 20 volunteers to conduct “Citizenship Workshops” in New London and Plainville that provided free assistance to immigrants in sorting out their status and in preparing the complicated 20+page citizenship application. These workshops are likely to be repeated during 2009 and 2010. Some of our Laotian-born attendees from Norwich were recently sworn in as new U.S. citizens during a ceremony in New Haven!



On a state level, UACT has worked with several other organizations to lay the groundwork for a strong, statewide immigrant rights' coalition. This sponsoring group has been meeting since December 2008, at St. Rose Church in Meriden.

At the federal level, we continue to collaborate with the Gamaliel Foundation's Civil Rights of Immigrants (CRI) Department and the Center for Community Change's FIRM movement. Together these networks link us to like-minded groups in 35 states. In cooperation with our young statewide coalition partners, Gamaliel and FIRM, UACT has strengthened our working relationships with Connecticut's Congressional delegation and their key staff persons handling

immigration matters in both district and D.C. offices.

The notorious deportation proceedings against Polish-born, New Britain small manufacturer Andy Nowakowski last December (and more recently against an Ecuadorian-born immigrant in Bristol) have spotlighted questionable practices by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Connecticut. The "Deportation and Removal" bureaucracy set up within ICE and the Dept. of Homeland Security continues to terrorize, intimidate and disappear people in our names. Over 360,000 were reportedly deported last year.

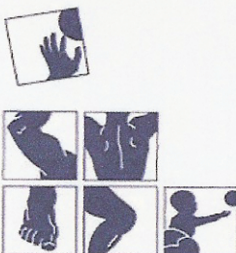
It is time to transform this "gulag", and to replace it with humane, just and fair immigration policies, laws and detention procedures that work for our country, its residents, businesses and workers---consistent with our values as a "free society." This is an enormous challenge beckoning our member congregations, immigrant communities, and other allies for the remaining months of 2009 and well into 2010.

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 - o Macy's (Matching Gift)
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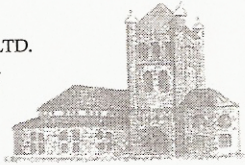


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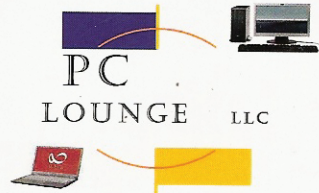
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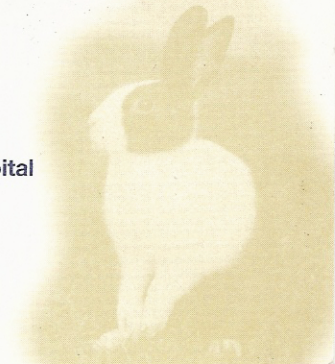
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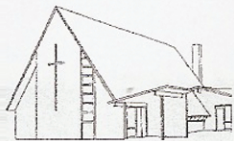


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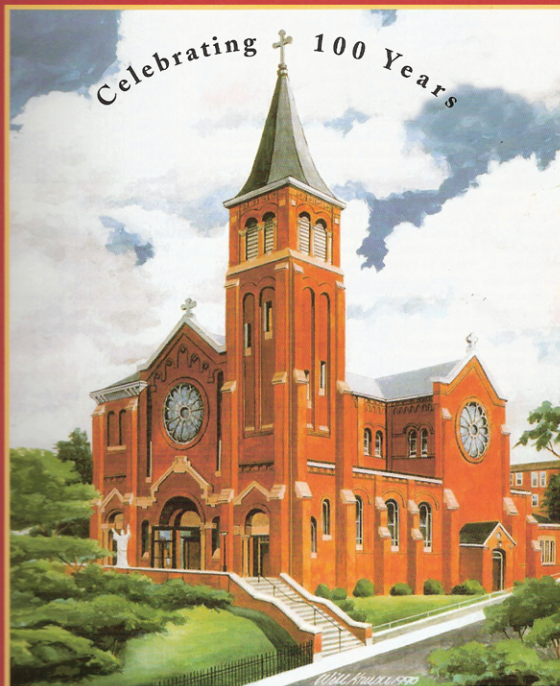


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