

UACT

Towards Liberty And Justice For All



**United Action
Connecticut**

organized interfaith communities and civic institutions
building a better future

16th Annual Justice Celebration

Wednesday Evening, June 5th 2024

7:00p.m. - 9:00p.m.

Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek

***55 East Kings Highway,
Chester CT, 06412***



is happy to
support
United Action of
Connecticut

Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek
55 East Kings Highway Chester, CT 06412
cbsrz.org 860.526.8920



Our Lady of Mercy

Answering the gospel call
to promote peace and justice,
Our Lady of Mercy Parish
supports the mission of
United Action of Connecticut.

*A Roman Catholic Community
Serving Plainville, Connecticut since 1881*

Welcome to United Action of Connecticut's 16th Annual Justice Celebration

Wednesday, June 5th 2024

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

**Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek
55 East Kings Highway, Chester CT 06412**

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

19 South Canal Street, Plainville, CT 06062

Phone: (203) 494-8526

E-mail: uact4change@gmail.com

<http://www.uact4justice.org>

Member Faith Communities of 2023 - 2024

The congregations below have contributed to UACT's efforts during 2023-24 by participating in public "actions", meetings, leadership trainings, by distributing information, circulating petitions, generating phone calls and facilitating turnout whenever and wherever we have needed people, and by paying membership dues, providing in-kind services or hosting events.

Members



Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek

Rabbi Marci Bellows

55 East Kings Highway, Chester, CT 06412

Phone: 860-526-8920



Niantic Community Church

Reverend Dr. Eric Elnes, Interim Pastor

170 Pennsylvania Ave, Niantic, CT 06357

Phone: 860-739-6208



Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church

Father David Dawson, Pastor

94 Broad Street, Plainville, CT 06062

Phone: 860-747-6825



St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Pastor; Temporarily vacant

90 Main Street, New Britain, CT 06051

Phone: 860-225-7634



Unitarian Universalist Church

Reverend Tony Lorenzen, Pastor

328 Paddock Avenue, Meriden, CT 06450

Phone: 203-237-9297



St. Francis of Assisi Church

Father Russell Kennedy, Pastor

10 Elm St., Middletown CT 06457

Phone: 860-347-4684



Manos Unidas

Hands Together, New Britain, CT

Jose Diaz, Leader

Phone: 678-480-9586

Patricia Rosas, Leader

Phone: 860-893-3769

UACT's Funding 2023- 2024

- *Annual membership dues* of participating congregations and groups
- *Program grants* from
 - o Catholic Campaign for Human Development of the Archdiocese of Hartford
 - o Kehilat Chaverim
 - o The Smith Fund of St. Mark's Episcopal Church of New Britain
- *Donations from use of UACT equipment* from SEIU Local 2001
- *Grassroots fundraising*, including the Annual Justice Celebration, this Program Book, our Annual Donor Appeal and other generous donations from many individuals, families, businesses and congregations
- *In-kind contributions* of time and talent, ranging from writing and book keeping to photography, mailings, transportation, translation, lodging, graphic layout, web-site design, record storage, lending of equipment, meeting space, training, registration at forums, sign-making, phone calls, e-mails and last but not least, providing the wonderful food and refreshments at numerous meetings and gatherings

Donations

Anonymous
John Baksa
Rabbi Marci Bellows
Fran & Stephanie Chan
Enzo Daci
Elaine & Chris Donovan
Dave & Kathy Driver
Deane Dworski-Riggs
Kari Glidden
Shai Gothreau
Kevin Hebreo
Ron Johnson
Alan & Beverly Lagocki
Nancy Malley
Joanne Moore
Jackie Nowicky
Javier Pagan
Ed & Chris Peczynski
Linda Rigono
Ed Ruete
Ellen Salzman-Fiske
Roberta Sciacca
Sande Sorel-Leduc
Verna Swann
Diane Szymaszek
Joyal Varghese
Steve Volpini
Jacki & Tom Willametz

Ellen Ashburn
Clare Bean
Carmen Burgos
Roland & Barbara Cockfield
Diane & Gene DeJoannis
Norma Drennen
Karen Dworski
Elizabeth Frietas
Emily Godek
Ann & Gary Harter
Marianne Hebenstreit
Mark & Susan Kosnoff
Ivelisse Maldonado
Ecaterina McCollam
Lenny & Marjola Nelson
Mary O'Brien
Rupesh Parajulli
Ocean Pellett
Melissa Rodriguez
Cecily Salzman
Andy Schatz
Annette Silverman
Alejandra Sossa
KC Sweeker
Leo Thao
Michael Verrett
Robert Waller
Yimin Wu

Sixteenth Annual Justice Celebration Program

Welcome	Mark Kosnoff , Executive Director United Action Connecticut
Blessing of the Food and Gathering	Rabbi Marci Bellows Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek, Chester
Towards Liberty and Justice	Mark Kosnoff
Dinner / Musick provided by	David Gregoire , Folk Musician
Acknowledgements	Mark Kosnoff
Introduction of Waterford RISE	Ocean Pellett
Remarks	Mary Childs , Chairperson Honorees, Waterford RISE
Introduction of Constanza Segovia	Patricia Rosas Leader, Manos Unidas, New Britain
Remarks	Constanza Segovia Honoree, Hartford Deportation Defense
Recognition of St. Mark's Episcopal Church	Mark Kosnoff
Remarks	Stephen Hard Senior Warden, St. Mark's, New Britain
Introduction of Keynote Speaker	Mark Kosnoff
Keynote Speaker	Reverend Tony Lorenzen Pastor, Unitarian-Universalist Church, Meriden.
Closing Remarks	Mark Kosnoff
Closing Prayer	Reverend Lee Ireland Niantic Community Church

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Guest Speaker: Reverend Tony Lorenzen

Reverend Lorenzen currently serves as the half-time minister with two small congregations in Connecticut, the Mattatuck Unitarian Universalist Society in Southbury and the Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden. Previously, he was settled minister at Hopedale Unitarian Parish in Massachusetts (2015-2018) and has served other various congregations in Massachusetts and Texas. He also enjoys an online ministry as well as a ministry of consulting around issues of church leadership and mission, pulpit supply



preaching, spiritual direction, and officiating weddings. Rev. Lorenzen loves to read and play guitar. He is also an avid chess and cribbage player and enjoys walking with his dog, Pancake. He is also a huge fan of U2, Bruce Springsteen, and Jason Isbell.

Rev. Lorenzen was born in Fitchburg, MA and grew up in Leominster, MA. He attended Fitchburg State University (then Fitchburg State College) and graduated with a B.A. in English in 1990. He then attended Harvard Divinity School, graduating in 1994. Upon graduating from HDS, he taught theology in urban Catholic high schools in Massachusetts for eight years. In 2002 he was the Green Party candidate for LT Governor in Massachusetts. Rev. Lorenzen left the Catholic Church in 2003 and entered the fellowship process to become a Unitarian Universalist Minister. He was ordained by his home congregation, First Unitarian Universalist Church in Leominster, MA, on June 3, 2007. He completed a three-year training program in spiritual direction at Heart Paths Dalas in 2012. He was married in 1992 and divorced in 2013. He has one son from that marriage, Zackary, now in his twenties. He remarried in 2020 and lives with his spouse, the Rev. Tuesday Jane Rupp, an Episcopal priest, in Woodbury, CT. They share their home with Pancake, the dog, and Fiona, the cat.



Rev. Lorenzen is currently a facilitator and organizer of the Woodbury Interfaith Leadership Council and serves on the board of directors of the Woodbury Community Service Council. He has previously served on the boards of the Milford (MA) area Humanitarian Coalition, the Montachusett (central MA) MLK Coalition, the Keller(TX) Farmer's Market, and the UU Christian Fellowship. He also served two terms as a Good Officer of the Clara Barton chapter of the UU Ministers Association.

Honorees : Waterford RISE

(Residents for Inclusion and Social Equity)

Waterford Residents for Inclusion and Social Equity is a nonprofit organization of Waterford residents and regional collaborators. Our mission is to enhance our community through racial advocacy, engagement, and education. Our vision is that Waterford becomes a community in which the innate dignity and worth of each individual is respected and celebrated—one in which each person feels welcomed, included, and valued regardless of how they self-identify.



For the past three years we have worked to offer opportunities to build community through cultural events, present topics for community dialogues, delve deeply into texts of personal narratives and historical perspectives, as well as advocate for positive changes in our town. Through cultivating collaborative relationships, we have held meetings with town leaders and raised questions around their departments and areas of influence. One positive impact has been to provide the opportunity for our high school students to attend an annual tour of Historically Black Colleges and Universities.



Most recently we have been deemed a non-profit organization. Our success has been the result of many people working together and putting energy into some very worthwhile actions: Be it highlighting and recognizing local author Ann Petry or advocating for a town-wide observation of Juneteenth, we find ourselves deeply immersed in and committed to our community. With support from The Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut as well as Ledge Light Health District, we are humbly aware of the interconnectedness necessary to make positive change.



Honorees: Constanza Segovia



Since 2016, Constanza has been the lead co-founder and lead organizer of Hartford Deportation Defense (HDD), an immigrant-led immigrant rights organization that organizes neighbors to build a just and dignified future for their families and communities in the Hartford region. Their current focus is access to health care, quality public schools, renters' rights, and workers' rights. Constanza has represented HDD and helped lead statewide social justice coalitions like the CT Immigrant Rights Alliance, HUSKY 4 Immigrants, the CT

Coalition for Immigrant Freedom, and Connecticut For All. During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, she helped start the CT UndocuFund and the Mutual Aid Hartford network. Since 2024, she has been the organizing director for the statewide community-labor-faith coalition **Connecticut for All**.



Among Constanza's proudest accomplishments is the establishment of the Families Facing Deportation Fund at the City of Hartford, the expansion of the HUSKY program to include undocumented kids up to age 15 and undocumented pregnant people, and the recognition of Connecticut pardons by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), resulting in people avoiding deportation because of their criminal record once they obtain a pardon in our state.

Constanza grew up in Mendoza, Argentina, and moved to the US at the age of 17. She is formerly undocumented and part of a mixed status family. She lives in Hartford, CT, with her family.



Healthcare / Immigration

United Action Connecticut has advocated for both healthcare reform and immigration reform since 2005. While UACT has supported numerous state and local initiatives on both these issues over the years, we will always maintain that all U.S. residents should have access to affordable, comprehensive health insurance and that all undocumented immigrants be afforded a pathway to citizenship in the United States.



Since these two issues are critical to UACT's advocacy work, it was only natural that the HUSKY 4 Immigrants campaign would be our focus in 2024, as it was in 2023.

Because of the short legislative session this year and the fact that it was not a budget setting year, the H4I campaign recognized that its goals for 2024 needed to be more

modest, so it lobbied to increase the age of eligible children for HUSKY coverage to 18, expanding it from the current age of 15.

The campaign faced challenges the entire session, from budgetary constraints to opposition from certain legislators and the governor. Nevertheless, from the very beginning of the campaign launch on February 14th, hundreds of individuals showed up in solidarity. On February 21st, the Appropriations Committee had a public hearing on the HUSKY 4 Immigrants proposal and over 350 people submitted written testimony and more than 100 others testified in person or on Zoom over a ten-hour period. UACT's own Patricia Rosas gave her testimony on Zoom **after 1:00 AM** in the morning. Then there were lobby days, and actions where dozens of people rallied. The mobilization efforts were nothing short of remarkable.

Even during the last two weeks of the session the campaign held four visibility days at the Capitol Building, a Student Day of Action and the then healthcare providers from around the state delivered a letter signed by over 450 doctors, nurses, medical students, clinicians, social workers, and more to Senate and House leadership.



Unfortunately, the legislative session ended without the campaign achieving the goal of extending the eligible age to 18. Although UACT understands the importance of fiscal guardrails to keep Connecticut economically sound, we must also reiterate the importance of all Connecticut residents, including the undocumented, having access to life saving health insurance coverage.

UACT wants to extend its sincere gratitude to campaign director Luis Luna, the other H4I committee chairs and all those who participated in the campaign for their unwavering commitment to seeking social justice through the H4I campaign. We look forward to once again supporting HUSKY 4 Immigrants next year.

Mental Health / Manos Unidas

It has been a busy year for Manos Unidas. On the political front, Manos Unidas is a member of a coalition that has lobbied hard for increasing HUSKY Medicaid insurance for teens from age 12 to 18 for families that are income eligible. In addition to rallies and lobbying at the state capitol, a meeting was devoted to writing and submitting testimony. Addressing problems in the public schools is an upcoming agenda item.



The mental health info sessions have been very successful. These meetings provide education about depression, stress/anxiety, trauma and other mental health issues. This education also focuses on helping participants to identify resources, and to develop their own coping skills and strategies which participants can use throughout their lives. For example, a staff member from Hartford Interval House addressed the issue of domestic violence, and Ivette Betancourt, a family therapist, spoke to the group about parenting issues. One of the major stressors for members of Manos Unidas is immigration law, so Attorney Dana Bucin updated the group and answered many questions.



The Support Group meets monthly and is a safe emotional space where group members can talk about the issues in their lives and receive mutual support in a non-judgmental environment. Group members have expressed how important this is to them. Often the issues identified in the group have become part of the program. There have been several events that bring people together, creating a sense of community and mutual support: a Christmas Party potluck, a celebration of La Rosca de Reyes, and a Family Fiesta Potluck last week.

Manos Unidas is also providing concrete support to immigrants through the Smith Fund, distributing grocery gift cards and basic nonfood products. This has been helpful in these difficult economic times.

Social Justice Quotes

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” – Martin Luther King; American minister and leader of the Civil Rights Movement.

“We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. An absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community, a state, a nation.” – Bryan Stevenson; Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative.

“I Guess the only time most people think about injustice is when it happens to them.” – Charles Bukowski; Underground writer and poet of American life.

“All too often, when we see injustices, both great and small, we think, that’s terrible, but we do nothing. We say nothing. We let other people fight their own battles. We remain silent because silence is easier. Qui tacet consentire videtur is Latin for ‘Silence gives consent.’ When we say nothing, when we do nothing, we are consenting to these trespasses against us.” – Roxanne Gay; Acclaimed writer and cultural critic.

“A democracy cannot thrive where power remains unchecked, and justice is reserved for a select few. Ignoring these cries and failing to respond to this movement is simply not an option – for peace cannot exist where justice is not served.” – John Lewis; Civil Rights leader and politician.

“When I liberate myself, I liberate others. If you don’t speak out ain’t nobody going to speak out for you.” – Fannie Lou Hamer; Civil rights activist known for pursuing voting and economic rights.

“There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.” – Elie Wiesel; Jewish writer and activist who experienced the Holocaust.

“We, the People, recognize that we have responsibilities as well as rights; that our destinies are bound together; that a freedom which only asks what's in it for me, a freedom without a commitment to others, a freedom without love or charity or duty or patriotism, is unworthy of our founding ideals, and those who died in their defense.” - Barack Obama; 44th President of the United States.

“To forgive and accept injustice is cowardice.” – Mahatma Gandhi; Indian anti-colonialist nationalist, lawyer and icon of civil disobedience.

“From the depth of need and despair, people can work together, can organize themselves to solve their own problems and fill their own needs with dignity and strength.” – Cesar Chavez; American labor leader and civil rights activist.



Niantic Community Church

170 Pennsylvania Avenue
Niantic, CT 06357

Phone: 860.739.6208

E-mail: info@nianticcommchurch.org

**Whoever you are ...
you are welcome!**

The Rev. Dr. Erica Aveno,
Interim Pastor

Rev. Kaleigh Corbett-Rasmussen,
Assistant Pastor, Congregational Care

Saint Francis of Assisi Parish

10 Elm Street • Middletown • Connecticut



May our parish be a meeting place for people of all races and
cultures so that we may share in something more than a
building: lives built on faith in Christ Jesus.

Past Honoree’s of UACT’s Justice Celebration

- 2007 Barbara E. Richards, Professor at Housatonic Community College
Rev. Brendan P. McCormick, Pastor of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church
- 2009 Margaret Flinter, Vice Pres. and Clinical Director of the Community Health Center
Pat Wallace, Office of Urban Affairs for the Archdiocese of Hartford
- 2010 Ocean Pellett, Niantic Community Church
Michael Verrett, Our Lady of Mercy Church, Plainville
- 2011 Elizabeth “Betsy” Ritter, State Representative for the 38th District
Connecticut Students for a Dream
- 2013 Lynne Ide, Universal Health Care Foundation
“Own the Dream” Volunteers
Christian Proano, St. Bridget’s Catholic Church, Manchester
Diego Proano, St. Bridget’s Catholic Church, Manchester
Karina Nunez, Ministerio de Hermandad, Meriden
Jose Diaz, Manos Unidas, New Britain
Elkin Espitia, Alcanzado el Mismo Sueno, Willimantic
- 2014 Sister Mary Jude Lazarus, Director of Hispanic Ministry, Diocese of Norwich
- 2015 Mary O’Brien, Global Solidarity Coordinator, OCSJM
Arturo Iriarte, Parish Social Ministry Coordinator, OCSJM
- 2016 Alok Bhatt, Connecticut Asain Pacific American Affairs Commission
Ana Maria Rivera-Forastieri, Junta for Progressive Action
- 2017 Father Russell Kennedy, Pastor, St. Francis of Assisi Church, Middletown
- 2018 Reverend Dr. Jan Carlsson-Bull &
Unitarian-Universalist Church of Meriden Chalice Sanctuary Team
- 2019 Dana Bucin, Immigration Attorney
Alan Dornan, Immigration Activist
- 2022 Megan Fountain, Program Coordinator, Unidad Latina en Accion
Lizbeth Polo-Smith, Community Activist, New London
Patricia Rosas, UACT Hispanic Organizer, New Britain/Hartford
- 2023 Health Improvement Collaborative of Southeastern Connecticut,
Food Justice Action Team
Manos Unidas Mental Health Team, New Britain

**Special thanks to the 2024
Justice Celebration Committee**

Ellen Ashburn	Ocean Pellett	Linda Rigono
Patricia Rosas	Michael Verrett	Mark Kosnoff

To Rabbi Marci Bellows and all the staff at
Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek for all their assistance

To **David Gregoire** for the inspiration of his “protest songs and musical talent

To everyone who donated food and desserts for tonight’s celebration

Brian Kosnoff for designing the Program Book

Michael Glynn at Prentis Printing,
for always managing to get this program done on time regardless of the hurdles
(info@jlpgraphics.com)

The Unitarian Universalist Church in Meriden

Practicing Loving Community/Advancing Justice/Nurturing Spiritual Growth



328 Paddock Avenue, Meriden
203-237-9297
Sunday Services 10:30 AM
www.uumeriden.org

"I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways..... And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice."
Unitarian Minister and Abolitionist The Rev. Theodore Parker 1857

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. 1958

"Dr. King once said that the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice. It bends towards justice, but here is the thing: it does not bend on its own. It bends because each of us in our own ways put our hand on that arc and we bend it in the direction of justice...."
President Barack Obama 2009



EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN CONNECTICUT

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

Congratulations to –
Waterford RISE and Constanza Segovia

St. Mark's Episcopal Church in New Britain

"Open to God's love, serving our neighbor"

THANK YOU

St. Mark's Episcopal Church of New Britain and the Smith Fund

Your generous grant to United Action CT has allowed us to purchase and donate essential household items; pay utility, insurance and legal bills; and purchase thousands of dollars' worth of food to help low-income families in New Britain.



We and the many families we were able to support thank all the congregants of St. Mark's and the administrators of the Smith Fund from the bottom of our hearts.