

BUUF and Its Social Justice Partners

The Berrien UU Fellowship is fortunate to have a restricted endowment from which it annually contributes to nonprofit organizations that, in a variety of ways, advance inclusive justice in southwest Michigan. Members of the BUUF Social Justice Committee serve as liaisons to these organizations and have prepared summaries of their missions and current priorities.

Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network coordinates UU work for social justice (\$100).

www.uujustice.org

The Michigan UU Social Justice Network coordinates action for inclusive justice among Michigan congregations. It also collaborates with the Unitarian Universalist Association on four national priorities: climate justice, democracy and electoral justice, racial and immigration justice, and LGBTQ+ justice. More information about these national programs is available at <https://sidewithlove>. The director of MUUSJN is Randy Block, a social services professional who lives in Royal Oak Michigan. Sharon Pedersen is the LGBTQ+ justice organizer and is the executive director of the Jackson Pride Center, Jackson, Michigan.

Two current priorities for MUUSJN are women's reproductive rights and LGBTQ+ inclusive justice. It recently received a grant to establish a new program, Inclusive Justice – Michigan, with Rev. Roland Stringfellow, Metropolitan Community Church of Detroit, as its president and Rev. JM Richardson as administrator.

CARES of Southwest Michigan provides free health resources, especially for those living with HIV (\$250)

www.caresswm.org

A volunteer application form is available at the CARES website.

The OutCenter of Southwest Michigan provides support services for LGBTQ+ people, their families, and allies (\$400)

www.outcenter.org

The OutCenter of Southwest Michigan advocates for change and provides community for LGBTQ+ persons, their allies, and their families. It does this through advocacy efforts, support services, and community building programs. It also pursues systems change initiatives, working in partnership with area-wide systems to ensure that LGBTQ+ people receive equitable services within their communities.

The OutCenter considers public education a part of advocacy and works within systems in Berrien, Van Buren, and Cass counties to educate others about the LGBTQ+ community. The OutCenter aims to have or promote programming that uplifts, values, and includes, the voices of all LGBTQ+ people in our area. Through their support and social programming, they strive to provide resources and support for individuals to live as their most authentic selves, live their

lives full of purpose and bring equity, diversity, and inclusion into every aspect of their lives. It offers advocacy through education in large civic spheres and rural communities, one on one meetings with leaders and elected officials, as well as with individuals and families.

They provide support, social, and discussion groups that aim to foster a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community, in all its diversity, and their programs work together to promote social justice, intersectionality, equity and acceptance.

The OutCenter has volunteer opportunities in their Drop-in Center, Community Event Tabling, and for Event Committee members.

The Race Relations Council advocates for public policy justice in southwest Michigan (\$100).

Volunteers are needed for all Race Relations Council projects. Interested persons should contact Board Chairs Jacquie Johnson and Charmae Sanders

(jacquie4@comcast.net; charmaesnders@gmail.com). Current projects are:

- 1) Identifying racial disparities in the Berrien County Legal System and promoting positive changes in that system
- 2) Promoting greater collaboration between social justice organizations in our area
- 3) Continuing to provide \$500 scholarships to college students who have demonstrated a commitment to increasing racial justice and decreasing racial segregation.
- 4) Continuing our mission of building bridges across the racial divide, reducing stereotypes and prejudice, and helping to move southwest Michigan forward toward becoming a truly inclusive "beloved community"

All God's Children Choir is a diverse choir for singers ages 4 to 18 (\$200).

Current projects are:

- 1) Preparing for our performance on October 1 for Interfaith Action's Celebration of the Harvest and the Harvesters at the Tabor Hill Outdoor Event Center. The program begins at 3 pm.
- 2) Recruiting and replenishing choir membership following the long COVID break, graduations, and out of state moves. The choir would love to welcome new singers, ages 4 to 18. Interested parents should contact sandyandlarryfeldman@hotmail.com or call us at either 269-921-0531 or 269-921-2953
- 3) Continuing to offer college scholarships up to \$10,000 per student for qualifying choir members who participate in All God's Children through at least the last two years of high school.
- 4) Continuing our mission of building bridges across the racial divide, reducing stereotypes and prejudice, and helping to move southwest Michigan forward toward becoming a truly inclusive "beloved community"

Calling All Colors is a multicultural education program that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion in the St. Joseph and Benton Harbor public schools (\$400).

Current projects are:

- 1) Actively preparing to begin programming in October, in the schools twice a week and at LMC twice a year.
- 2) Continuing our mission of building bridges across the racial divide, reducing stereotypes and prejudice, and helping to move southwest Michigan forward toward becoming a truly inclusive "beloved community".
- 3) Volunteers are always welcome and should contact Program Coordinator Mary Alice Johnson at 269-277-4800.

Saint Augustine's Episcopal Church Neighborhood Food Pantry (\$200)

St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, 1753 Union St., Benton Harbor, phone 269-925-2670, offers bags of groceries for pick up in your car on the second and fourth Mondays of each month 4:30 - 6:30 pm. No proof of need is required.

The church obtains food from Feeding American, Western Michigan. They offer staples including canned soups, canned fruits and vegetables, peanut butter, jelly, pasta, nuts, etc. They have meat and cheese. Also, one can get some laundry soap, toilet paper, and feminine hygiene products. If persons need something else, they can ask for it, and it will be obtained, if possible.

The Fresh Start Children's Garden (\$500)

FSCG was founded in Benton Harbor as a community garden by Emma Kinnard around 2007, and BUUF has helped with FSCG since 2017. Emma reported that she is thankful for the BUUF donation. The money goes for expenses such as \$235/month for a portable toilet that costs approx. \$1000/year. Much of the work and plants are donated. Emma was injured in a highway car accident in 2022, and she currently has trouble getting around due to knee pain. Volunteers can support the FSCG and assist Emma Kinnard with scheduled times of help such as Saturday from 10a-12p during the growing season.

Sherman Reed is the FSCG Board Co-Chair, and other board members includes Nicholas Gunn, Gwen Swanigan, Angie Bell and PJ Canonie-Bubin. Nicholas Gunn is an 18-year-old Berrien Springs High School graduate attending Andrews University, majoring in Secondary Education and Political Science with a minor in Public Relations. In 2022, Nicholas was awarded Andrews University's George Floyd Scholarship for his leadership and dedication to community service. He is now serving as co-chairman of the Fresh Start Children's Garden.

Interfaith Action of Southwest Michigan is coalition of faith communities bringing justice-oriented voices into major public policy issues (\$100)

www.swmichinterfaith.org

Sid Mohn, the founding director of Interfaith Action of Southwest Michigan, describes it as "a collaborative of engaged faith communities." The organization builds from ten interfaith principles toward an annual set of specific policy priorities. For example, Interfaith Action's affirmation of our "common home," the planet, leads it to support current state legislation on solid waste and recycling, and its principle of "the common good" includes advocacy for state-

funded health coverage for noncitizens excluded from Medicaid. Vicki Schroeder, director of faith relationships and strategy, is especially focused on gun safety regulation. Its public programs include the Celebration of the Harvest and Harvesters, which will be held at Mount Tabor Vineyards on Sunday, October 1, at 3:00 pm. Interfaith Action also has seventeen educational podcasts available on its website. One, for example, is a conversation with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim representatives of faith-based perspectives on affirming transsexuality.

Carol's Hope Engagement Center is an agency of Community Healing Centers, which helps families heal from the trauma of abuse, addiction, and mental health disorders (\$200)

www.communityhealingcenter.org

Carol's Hope is a crisis intervention facility, located in St. Joseph, and serving all of Berrien County, MI. This program provides a supervised, supportive setting for individuals struggling with substance use and co-occurring disorders. Carol's Hope operates 24-hours Monday through Friday, with on call supports during weekends. Services are open to anyone, 18 years of age or older, with or without insurance. The program provides clients a welcoming environment where individuals can develop a recovery plan and connect to more intensive services. Peer Recovery Specialists assist in securing funding and placement for treatment of the client's substance use disorder (SUD) and provide a safe, welcoming space to stay while individuals wait for placement in more intensive care. In supporting those struggling with SUD and co-occurring disorders, Carol's Hope plays a role in the overall health and well-being of the community and is proud to be the start of the road to recovery.

Carol's Hope is one of 3 organizations under the umbrella of Community Healing Centers, which provides a wide spectrum of mental health, child treatment and advocacy, and addiction recovery services. Only Carol's Hope serves Berrien County residents.

The Cora Lamping Center is an agency of the Avenue Family Network that provides services for survivors of sexual and domestic violence (\$300).

www.theavenue.ngo

Cora Lamping Sexual Assault Services is a sister program connected to Cora Lamping Domestic Violence Services, and both programs are part of the Avenue Family Network. A wish list is available for client needs, food items, and facility needs. Only new items are accepted for client and facility needs. You are asked to call before making a donation to determine if the items can be used. The wish list for the Cora Lamping Center is available at www.theavenueenue.ngo/cora-lamping-center-1 .

The Cora Lamping Center utilizes both regular and intermittent volunteers. Notice of the need for volunteers is pending.

The Discretionary Fund for BUUF Social Justice Initiatives enables BUUF to respond to emerging programs and issues related to environmental justice, economic equity, the rights and dignity of LGBTQ+ persons, and racial and multicultural relations (\$473).