

Director of Lifespan Experience Annual Report

❖ **Lifespan Experience Highlights for 2015-2016**

Main goals for this past year have been to strengthen and expand the Lifespan Experience program in terms of congregational support and participation, and to create a program that meets the wants and needs of members and friends of all ages.

Along with Rabbi Chava Bahle, I have continued to strive to help the congregation to be aware of children and families, not only in terms of what's going on in Religious Education for Children and Youth, but also in terms of the full spectrum of congregational life, including providing child care for congregational events, and helping to make more programs available for children, youth, and families. This year we attempted to launch a Religious Education Program at 9am with Children's Programming at 10:30am. Due to a lack of volunteers as well as low enrollment in both programs, we discontinued 9am Religious education at the end of December. Currently we continue to provide childcare when there are 9am adult opportunities. Our 10:30am format as of January 2016 has been as follows:

Children (preK-5th grade) and Youth (6th-12th grade, 12-18yrs) are invited to join their families in the service through the Story Wisdom. Following Story Wisdom, Children (preK-5th grade) follow their teachers to the large classroom space. Youth (6th-12th grade, 12-18yrs) join their teacher in the Office. Following the service, parents of Children (preK-5th grade) make their way to the classroom/program wing of the building to sign their child(ren) out of programming.

This will be our 4th annual Specialty Class Summer – our summer program for Sunday mornings which runs June 1st-Resumption Sunday in September. This consists of fun, informative lessons led by congregants and special guests.

The congregation has continued its efforts to move toward a Lifespan model not only in the sphere of children's programming, but programming for adults and families as well. We currently offer 6 programs on a regular basis that fall within the purview of Lifespan programming that meet the needs of adults – some of which are also multigenerational. It can also be noted that we frequently have special programs, classes or events.

❖ **Lifespan Goals for 2016-2017**

My primary goal as Director of Lifespan Experience for the coming year is to continue to strive to strengthen the Lifespan program in terms of building up enrollment and continued congregational support and participation, as well as increasing the number and variety of offerings of programs, classes, and social events.

We often talk about visionary and strategic goals for our Lifespan Experience program at meetings of the LE Committee, which consists of:

- Mary Cheney (co-chair)
- Laura Matchett (co-chair)
- John Hoffmann (adult programming liaison)

As a group, this committee works tirelessly to support and promote Lifespan programming for the congregation.

❖ **DLE Professional Development**

I was privileged to have the opportunity to participate in the Parliament of the World's Religions in October of 2015 in Salt Lake City, UT. I have also maintained relationships with other religious educators through email list serves and Facebook groups.

❖ **Lifespan RE Experiences - Beyond Sunday Morning:**

- **Adult Programs** – Small group ministries, CUUPS and 9am teachings are just a few of the opportunities that have been made available this year. Additionally, the Wednesday Night Colloquiums have featured a variety of speakers from within our congregation, as well as special presenters. The popular "Brewing Community" group continues bringing all ages together for happy hour fun in an adult and child

friendly environment. More recently, the Parent's Chalice Circle has been meeting to support parents of all ages.

- **Friday Night Out**– This is our drop-in childcare/program offering for children and their adults. This gives the adults a chance to attend to their own needs, giving them the opportunity to recharge and be the best caregivers they can be. It also gives the children the opportunity to build community with their UUCGT friends in a social setting. Friday Night Out occurs the 2nd Friday of every month and continues to be well attended. It also frequently has a wait-list.

❖ **Communication**

- I highlight Lifespan activities in my weekly “Flash” column as well as offer further perspective in my monthly “Beacon” column.
- I update the “chalkboard wall” weekly with descriptions of activities/lessons.
- I use email, texting, phone, and Facebook to keep everyone up to date on the happenings here at UUCGT.

❖ **Worship**

- I created or co-created and lead or co-led several Multi-Generational worship services throughout the year. We are striving for the balance required to provide a Sunday morning experience that meets the spiritual needs of all ages of people who attend.

❖ **Challenges**

- Although a lack of volunteers is a challenge faced by many committees and groups within our congregation, we have reached a near critical or critical level at several points this year. In order for us to continue to sustain the minimal programs that we have had to down-size to this year, we require double the current number volunteers. This is necessary if we are to move away from over-burdening those individuals who are already assisting. We will not be in a position to expand our programming, or realize many goals for the program without more assistance. I am extremely grateful for those who currently volunteer, and could not conduct our Lifespan program without their help.
- We continue to need to find more ways to be truly multi-generational on Sunday mornings. Work could be done to more deeply engage children in our Sunday Services, as well as include them more frequently in the service. It will be difficult for children and youth to find their place as engaged adults within our UU congregations (if they choose to take part) if we do not teach/model for them what it is like to be a regular part of the entirety of Sunday Services.
- We also need to continue to look for, and create opportunities to intentionally reach out to and include young families and young adults. Once again, many of these efforts will require more volunteers.

❖ **Hopes for the Future**

- I hope to grow our Lifespan program, so that we serve more individuals of all ages. This includes more youth (teen) events/activities.
- I hope to involve more adults in Sunday Morning Programming for children and youth.
- I hope to be able to continue to engage in Professional Development, attending educational opportunities and denomination-wide events, as time and budget permit.

In Peace,

Sarah E. Montgomery-Richards

Director of Religious Education - Lifespan