

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Quad Cities Earns Green Sanctuary Status

The Green Sanctuary Program of the Unitarian Universalist Association provides a path for congregational study, reflection, and action in response to environmental challenges. Through the accomplishment of goals in four major areas, the program gives structure for congregations to examine their current environmental impacts and to move toward more sustainable practices grounded in the UU faith tradition. Over the past four years, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Quad Cities has been working on over ten projects to complete the Green Sanctuary program, and to establish greater environmental awareness in their congregational life. Accreditation from the UUA to their congregation was awarded in March, 2015.



Following are the four focus areas and examples of ways they fulfilled them:

Sustainable Living looks at living in better relationship with the earth by being mindful of the choices we make, and by using fewer resources. Once a month for over a year the congregation presented “Sustainability Spotlights” during the morning services; these focused on numerous practical, daily things we can all do to live a more earth-friendly life. They started TerraCycling, which collects otherwise non-recyclable items.

Worship and Celebration encourages a congregation to celebrate the beauty and bounty of the earth, and to mark accomplishments in the project along the way. The UUCQC continue their traditions of an Earth Day service every year, and have added an Earth Day concert and winter solstice celebrations. They also performed an adaption of The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov.

Religious Education encourages a congregation to study religious motivations to care for the earth, and current environmental topics. The UUCQC efforts spanned all ages and included book discussions on environmental topics, the study of nature poetry and the Tao, numerous guest speakers at Sunday morning adult forum. The children and youth have cleaned up a nearby stream each year and are building an earth- and child-friendly play area on the church grounds.

Environmental Justice projects engage members in caring for other people and creatures that share the earth. The UUCQC developed a Giving Garden with bountiful fresh produce going to a food kitchen that serves a meal every day of the year to those in need. They also involved youth from a nearby residential treatment program in helping with the harvest. They also developed a butterfly garden in hopes of providing sustenance to butterflies, especially the endangered monarchs.



Liv and Alice with produce for the Cafe on Vine

The UUCQC had taken many important steps prior to beginning the accreditation process, such as installing geothermal heating and cooling, replacing all lighting with energy efficient bulbs, and placing motion activated light sensors in all hallways, closets and bathrooms. Many of the Green Sanctuary projects are intended to be ongoing, and to inspire other environmental awareness and practice projects to begin.

Thanks to Kathryn Allen for this article. For more information, please feel free to contact Kathryn at kasavelie@aol.com

More Giving Garden photos:



Planning the leafy greens garden



Giving Garden Gardener