

Interfaith Action of Evanston

Journalist Judith Valente to Give Keynote Speech

The keynote speaker at this year's Vision Keepers Dinner will be Judith Valente, award-winning journalist and published poet. Ms. Valente has served as a staff writer for *The Washington Post* and at *The Wall Street Journal* in the Chicago and London bureaus and was twice a Pulitzer Prize finalist. She is also the author of *Twenty Poems to Nourish Your Soul*, an anthology of poems and reflections on finding the sacred in the everyday.



Judith Valente

University; the U.S. International Film and Video Festival; the New York Festivals; the *Clarion*; and the National Association of Black Journalists.

Judith Valente holds a bachelor's degree in Eng-

lish and the classics from St. Peter's College in Jersey City, N.J.; certificates from the Sorbonne in Paris and the Dante Alighieri School of Languages in Siena, Italy; a master's in fine arts in creative writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She resides in Chicago and Normal, Illinois with her husband, Illinois Circuit Court Judge Charles G. Reynard.

Jane Jeffery

Vision Keepers to Be Honored

Ms. Valente gives frequent talks on faith and work issues, and often serves as a speaker at spiritual retreats for women and young professionals. In her talks, she helps busy professionals "slow down, find more balance, and get in touch with the sacred in the everyday." In her writing, Ms. Valente tries to remember the advice of a former boss: "afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted."

As a correspondent for *Religion & Ethics News-weekly*, Ms. Valente has received numerous awards and honors for her reports, among them from Lincoln

The Interfaith Action of Evanston Annual Vision Keepers Dinner will be held at the Hotel Orrington on Sunday, February 22, 2009. IA's major fundraiser allows faith communities to celebrate common bonds in faith as well as service goals. At this dinner, each congregation may publicly honor one individual as a *Vision Keeper* who embodies values that positively impact both the faith community and the larger community.

The evening begins with refreshments at 5:30 P.M., followed by dinner at 6:30

P.M. The keynote speaker this year is Judith Valente, award-winning newspaper correspondent and PBS personality.

Tickets are \$65 per person. Tables of 10 may be reserved for \$650. Each faith community should include the *Vision Keeper's* ticket in their head count.

All member faith organizations received a nomination form and dinner reservation form in early January. Please RSVP by February 4 via the forms, or call the Interfaith Action office at 847-475-1150.

..to bring together communities of faith and spirit to serve people who are hungry and homeless and to express our shared values through action and interfaith dialogue.

Interfaith Action of Evanston
Purpose Statement

Seasons of Faith

Yoga and Meditation

On Labor Day, about 40 people had an hour of peace and serenity at the beach during a yoga-meditation session led by Dick Whitaker, a local yoga instructor. Dick guided participants through low-impact movements, with meditative readings interspersed.

Thanksgiving Service

The 10th annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Service was held at First Congregational Church of Evanston. Before an altar heaped with representations of a bountiful harvest, members of the IA board and other local religious leaders led a simple service of music and shared bread. Rev. Bud Ogle, founder and executive director of Good News Partners, urged the congregation to recognize poverty in the midst of plenty – the hungry, homeless, and poor in Evanston – and plenty in the midst of poverty – programs and services that can grow out of joining together in community to bring change.

Patty Baker



Thanksgiving, 2008

Seldon and Singer Address Homelessness Issues

Delegate meetings this year are focusing on the issues facing homeless people. At the fall delegates meeting, the featured speakers were a husband and wife team: Paul Seldon, the executive director of Connections for the Homeless, and Karen Singer, the executive director of YWCA Evanston North Shore.

Paul described what he believes are the two root causes of homelessness: displacement and domestic violence. Karen discussed her work at the YWCA and the challenges that exist in Evanston to transition homeless people from shelters to permanent residences. Each year the YWCA serves over 200 women and children with safety and protection for up to ninety days, but has to turn away over 1000. According to Karen, the median age of a homeless person in the area is just nine years old.

Paul concluded the presentation by sharing insights into his work at Connections. Connections believes that the single most important factor to suc-

cess in life is housing, and the organization strives to get as many people into permanent living spaces as possible. However, currently Connections has ten units of permanent housing available. 400 families need it!

Homelessness is a growing problem that city changes exacerbates: ten years ago 53% of housing in Evanston was rental; now it is 43%. There once were 1200 units of Section 8 housing; now there are 700. There are fewer and fewer places for homeless people to go. But Karen, Paul and the many staff and volunteers at Connections and YWCA are doing their best to provide safe homes for those who need them.

Paul and Karen's dedication and passion for homeless people were abundantly clear. In the discussion afterwards, the basement room was filled with the energy of 35 delegates and board members inspired to get engaged and help to make the homelessness problem a little bit smaller.

Rev. Jessica Gregory

New Emergency Help for Homeless Guests

A new project beginning in January is providing emergency overnight shelter when it is very cold. Guests of Interfaith Action's Hospitality Center for the Homeless and Connections for the Homeless' EntryPoint will be notified when the temperature will be 0 degrees or below. St. Paul's Lutheran Church is opening its doors, and Beth Emet the Free Synagogue is the alternate site. The City of Evanston will provide cots and volunteers. Interfaith Action and EntryPoint will provide staff. If anyone is interested in volunteering, please call Sue at 847-869-0370.

As the temperature goes down, the numbers go up at the Hospitality Center. More people are coming in from

the cold, and that means more hot drinks and instant oatmeal. It also means more wet feet and cold hands, and the guests greatly appreciate the socks and gloves we provide for them.

The warming centers opened in November, providing warm and welcoming places for cold and homeless people to spend their afternoons. Each of the six warming centers is different; each has a friendliness that is unique to its faith community and volunteers. If you ask a guest which is their favorite,

they can give you a reason why each one is the favorite!

The soup kitchens are also seeing an increase in hungry guests. Can you help? Please let us know if you have an interest in getting a team together to fill this need.



Sue Murphy

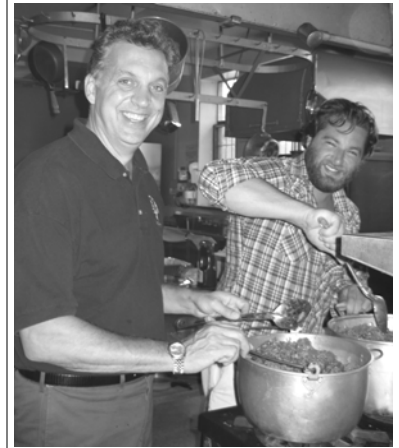
Connecting to Interfaith Action

Page 3 of this newsletter often contains appeals for help or reports on people who have helped. If you are still wondering how you can be a part of Interfaith Action, perhaps one of these suggestions might galvanize you into *Action*.

- Write out a check. Most of IA's money comes from individuals.
- Make sure your faith community has contributed.
- Form a soup kitchen team, join an existing one, or come to one by yourself. We always need help. IA soup kitchens are Sunday, Monday, and Thursday.
- Volunteer at one of the six warming centers that operate from November until April 1.

- Spend two mornings per month at the Hospitality Center supervising movies. Sitting around watching movies might fit into the schedule of a student or a senior.
- Pick up over-stock foods at one of Evanston's businesses once or twice per month and bring them to the Hospitality Center. Starbucks, Panera, Bennison's, etc. are glad to help, but they will not deliver.

Sue Murphy can give you more information about any of these opportunities. Call her at the Hospitality Center, 847-869-0370, any weekday between 7:00 and 11:00 A.M., or call the office at 847-475-1150.



Make it a family tradition to serve on a soup kitchen team. Shown here are Jay and Danny Larmee, who serve together at the Thursday soup kitchen, at First United Methodist Church, as part of St. Mary's team.

Membership Vital to IA

The member faith communities of IA are vital to our organization. We depend on each to provide us with the invaluable and dedicated volunteers who provide direct service to those in our community who are food insecure and without reliable shelter. We also depend on delegates who represent each member faith community at our three annual delegate meetings.

Our primary source of funds comes from the dues our member faith communities pay. We rely on their annual contribution. If your faith community is not a member of IA, approach the leadership of your community and ask why. If you are a member, be sure that your

faith community has two designated delegates who attend our delegate meetings. Please be sure that IA is included in your annual budget. Many faith communities begin with a \$400-800 annual gift and then increase by 1-2% a year. The important thing is to begin.

Membership Requirements:

1. Membership form and two delegates.
2. Annual contribution to IA
3. Active participation in activities such as the soup kitchens, Hospitality Center, or Four Seasons of Faith.

Rev. Sheri Delvin
President, Interfaith Action

Interfaith Board of Directors

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Your donation will be used for the soup kitchens, warming centers, the Hospitality Center, and job counseling services that Interfaith Action of Evanston sponsors.

*Here's my donation
In support of Interfaith Action's work*

\$25 _____ \$100 _____ \$1,000 _____ Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail address _____

Please make all checks payable to Interfaith Action of Evanston and mail to Interfaith Action of Evanston, P.O. Box 1414, Evanston IL 60204.

Supper's Ready



Ethelyn Bond is one of the people who makes the Thursday Night Soup Kitchen at First United Methodist Church work. For the past seven or more years she has been part of a team which coordinates the IA Soup Kitchen, which serves about 80 people per night. Once a month, she oversees the Kitchen on site and works to keep cooks and guests happy. She began as chair of her church's Mission Committee, and somehow, that segued into responsibility for the Soup Kitchen. In addition to her broader responsibilities, she also heads up the cooking team for the First United Methodist Church team.

When I spoke with her, she was in

the midst of setting up the schedule for churches who will do the cooking for 2009. This year's scheduling has been more complex than usual because Christmas and New Year's Day fall on Thursdays, in addition to Thanksgiving. This makes recruiting volunteers a bit more difficult.

Why does she keep on doing this? She says, "I don't know; I enjoy it, and over time, you get to know some of the people." And you can be sure they are grateful for her!

Marge Bradford

Seasons of Faith

Interfaith Choral Festival

April 26, 2009

Reserve the date for a recital by
some fabulous choirs!

(Location and Time TBA)

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