

First Fridays Club

April 3, 2009

Social Justice

- Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) - Sister Anita Beskar
 - The FSPA believes that direct service and charity are not enough.
 - Systemic social change must also occur so that the need for charity is reduced.
 - FSPA partners with many groups that are involved in the community both in direct service and social change at national, local, and Franciscan levels.
 - FSPA awarded a grant to Viterbo in 1990 to develop the global awareness program.
 - They have a sister-companion community connection with the Franciscan sisters in Cameroon.
 - They support sisters in El Salvador, Zimbabwe, and Jackson, Mississippi.
 - Locally, they are involved with
 - St. Clare Health Mission
 - Place of Grace
 - Mathew 25
 - Interfaith Network of Justice and Peace
 - Coulee Region Transitional Housing
 - Mississippi Valley Conservancy
 - La Crosse County Housing Commission
 - The first house of the Community Land Trust is being built.
 - A Peace Conference will be held on August 1, 2009.
- World We Live In (WWLI) - Mary Kissen
 - WWLI started in 2001, during the time of 9/11 and its aftermath when the world seemed shaken by violence.
 - Mary worried about her grandchildren growing up in this world and saw an article in Christian Science Monitor about books that advocated common humanity and that reading these books to children could help them understand different cultures and not be afraid of other cultures.
 - She started by sending for books that she read to her grandchildren and compiled a bibliography for friends so they could purchase the books for their grandchildren.
 - Started a pilot program at Southern Bluffs Elementary with the help of Catherine Byers, LMC Director.

- Nine years later, 30 volunteers read in 10 schools on a pre-K through 5th grade level.
 - WWLI mission is “respect for the earth and for all the peoples of the earth.”
 - This is a grassroots, volunteer organization. Grant money and contributions are spent on books.
- Advocating Mobilizing Organizing in Solidarity (AMOS) – Kent Johnson and Curtis Miller
 - AMOS is a group of 13 faith communities working together to help those in poverty.
 - Each congregation helps members individually, but can only go so far alone. Congregations tend to focus on acts of charity.
 - AMOS came together two years ago to be powerful in order to make changes.
 - There are four task forces that meet each month within AMOS. These issues were chosen after training and discussion with AMOS members and one on one interview with members of each congregation.
 - Hunger
 - Health Care
 - Held a rally in October and will sponsor a forum with Senator Ron Kind on April 13.
 - Restorative Justice
 - Assists the re-entry of inmates into community by developing circles of support.
 - This is based on a model from Madison and helps with the transition back into the community for individuals following incarceration. It not only helps people with resources but with a supportive relationship.
 - The recidivism rate with this program is 15% while the typical recidivism rate is over 50%.
 - Hmong Issues
 - There is no paid staff at the time, Kent Johnson is volunteering his time right now, and AMOS would like to raise funds for a half-time organizer.
 - Congregations contribute financially to support AMOS and a fundraising dinner is scheduled for November 11.