

A Bucket of Quarters Rev. Amy Kindred

In December 1999, I ran the Honolulu Marathon. The physical training was hard but it was nothing compared to the fund-raising efforts I participated in with the Leukemia Foundation's *Team in Training* program. You see, in return for having a running coach to help a person prepare for the 26.2 mile marathon, each participant had to personally raise \$5,000.

From October through December, I was either on the streets in Bloomington, Indiana running 7, 12, 18, 21 then 24 miles in preparation or, I was standing with other team members at 4-way stops holding a bucket that had the words "Team in Training" printed on the side. We spent hours in the intersections asking for money for the Leukemia Foundation.

I learned a great deal from that experience. First, I realized the pitfalls of making assumptions. For example, when a Rolls Royce or a Mercedes rolled to the four-way stop, we all perked up, eager to approach a driver who would most certainly want to share a little bit of their good fortune with an organization that worked so hard to eradicate suffering.

Wow! Were we ever surprised. On many occasions, the vehicles with what appeared to be affluent drivers rolled right on by without even lowering their windows to say, "Good morning" or "Good on you for trying to raise money." Granted, this was not the case all the time, but it became fairly predictable.

In stark contrast, an unremarkable vehicle would roll to the stop, and often, an arm would emerge waving a dollar bill or two to one of us as the driver smiled and moved on by.

Perhaps most touching, were the several occasions when a car eased forward, and the driver would look at me with wet eyes. The person would pause briefly to tell me how they lost a loved one to the dreaded disease and provided a few coins saying, "Thank you and this is all I can give right now."

And then there was this astonishing fact: At the end of the day, we were shocked that we had amassed a large amount of quarters, the twenty-five cent coins, and that just the quarters alone added up to hundreds of dollars. The donations of cash, multiple twenties, fives and ones were great but when we finished, it was a

heavy bucket filled with quarters that provided a substantial amount of money donated to the Leukemia Foundation.

Of course, we held other fund-raising events such as dances, art exhibits and raffles involving music performances to assist our funding goals. All in all, it was through our collective efforts that made a difference.

What does this have to do with the Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater stewardship campaign that launches with a party after service on March 12th? Perhaps it is the unarguable fact, that a group of individuals *can* collectively work together to reach what appears to be unattainable goals.

As you consider making a contribution to UUC, I hope you will think about what UUC means to you. Are you grateful for the sense of community you have found here? Are you buoyed on occasion by the message you receive on a Sunday morning, or during meditation on a Wednesday evening, or Spiritual Potpourri on a Friday afternoon, or at Open Issues before Sunday services? Do you enjoy the laughter you experience during a game of Mah Jong, over a book group discussion, a covenant group gathering or a potluck occasion?

Do you find a sense of kinship with complete strangers who attend the ESL classes, with others who cherish the Beacon food forest, and when you participate in social justice events such as breakfasts and marches? Does having the opportunity to sing with others who strive to raise their voices even through intense feelings of vulnerability provide you with a sense of purpose? Are you grateful to participate with others at UUC to support local charities every month?

At UUC, with everything we do, we strive to serve the mission, "To celebrate dignity and respect for all, nurture lifelong spiritual growth, act for justice and equality and serve the wider community."

Will you join us? Will you share some of your good fortune in whatever amount possible to support the work of our beloved Unitarian Universalist community here in Clearwater?

As I wrote in my letter to friends and family members during my fund-raising efforts for Team in Training, "Won't you help me to reduce suffering and bring a little more joy to the world."