From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I would like to extend my greetings and a warm welcome to you all as past supporters of the Albany Collegiate Interfaith Center. This is our first newsletter in several years and we are hoping to reach friends both old and new, who have experienced the Interfaith Center (formerly Chapel House, as it was fondly called in the past) as a part of their lives. Whether it was through a student affiliated group, like Catholic Campus Ministry, Hillel, or Protestant Campus Ministry; as a Board member representing one of our founding faith groups; a faculty/staff member of the University at Albany, or one of our campus ministers, we hope that you will enjoy hearing about our own journey of growth as we continue to provide a welcoming space for learning and understanding each other’s religious and spiritual practices.

In addition to our name, we have made other significant changes to our building and services within the past few years. As part of our 40th anniversary celebration in 2006, we challenged ourselves to make some major renovations to our current site, which was built in 1987, two years after the original Chapel House burned down. For the building itself, we have installed new flooring, stained the exterior of the building, and have made the building handicapped accessible. We have also updated the kitchen appliances, expanded our library collection, furnished our meditation garden, created a meditation and prayer room, and built an outdoor labyrinth.

In addition to our faith specific campus ministry programming, we now offer a variety of interfaith programming. We have been hard at work coordinating the Faith Journey Program, hosting interfaith
and supporting the Interfaith Student Group’s events. We have strengthened our relationship with both the University community and the greater Capital Region community by partnering with a variety of University departments, student groups, and community-based organizations. We have also diversified our board to be more representative of the population that we serve. If you would like to get to know more about our Board of Directors, I encourage you to check out our website at www.albanyinterfaithcenter.org.

The summer is drawing to a close, but The Interfaith Center is as vibrant as ever as we approach the autumn. We have a diverse array of programs and events planned that we are sure you will enjoy (see calendar sidebar page 5.) If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the Interfaith Center, contact me by phone at (518) 489-8573 x21, or by email at dcrisafulli@albany.edu.

With great kindness,

Introducing the Interfaith Student Group

By Amanda Baroni (Class of 2014, President of ISG)

The Interfaith Student Group (ISG) began taking form in November of 2011. The group’s mission is to promote religious pluralism on campus and to educate others about different paths of faith.

By May of 2013, the Interfaith Student Group had planned the Annual Unity Dinner, encouraging both multi-religious and multi-cultural understanding on campus, and earned the “Hope for the Future” Award from The Interfaith Alliance of New York State.

The group organizes educational programs with monthly speakers from various faith traditions and embraces members from all different religious backgrounds to take part in events, field trips and community service to better our campus and the surrounding Capital Region.
New Spaces for Meditation

Meditation & Prayer Room

By Samantha Leuschner (Class of 2012)

There is a tranquil place tucked away in the woods nearby the University at Albany; it is the interfaith meditation/prayer room that can be found in The Interfaith Center.

Its coming-to-existence is a remarkable tale. Donna Crisafulli always wanted to have a mediation/prayer room. When I signed on to be her Community and Public Service Program student intern for Fall 2011, we decided to launch this dream into action.

We observed the old conference room, created an image in our heads and expanded from there. We reached out to students, professors, staff, and the Capital Region community, sharing with them our endeavor of building this room; people were more than thrilled and donations poured in. With great support from our UAlbany and Albany friends, religious texts and prayer material can be found in the room for Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, and Muslims.

Step into the room today and feel a sense of tranquility, peace, and love embrace you. The good spirits of surrounding friends helped create the room for what it is.

Building the Labyrinth

By Alessio Fasulo (Class of 2013, Albany High School)

It has been a great honor to be invited to write an article for the UAlbany Interfaith Center. I am very happy for the generous opportunity they’ve provided me. It all started when Deacon Sullivan at the Saint Francis of Assisi Church recommended the Interfaith Center as a good place to find an Eagle Scout project.

I’m very happy I heeded his advice. Ms. Crisafulli was very welcoming and open and showed us around. She indicated that the Center was hoping to have a meditation labyrinth built on the grounds surrounding the building. After some research, the model of the classical labyrinth was chosen. The initial choice of river stones to outline the walking paths turned out not to be feasible and we decided that bricks over mulch was the best choice. The project was ready to be done.

The Department of General Services donated the mulch for the project while Ms. Andrea Russo Crisafulli President of Crisafulli Brothers Plumbing and Heating along with Mr. George Bartlett and his company donated the bricks for the project. Many of the bricks came from century old homes in the area, fulfilling both the responsibility of the scout to be thrifty and lending an historical feel and connection to the project.

The labyrinth was built by the scouts of BSA Troop 46 on April 20th and, despite a wheelbarrow breaking down, went surprisingly smoothly. 17 boy scouts, adults and family members took part in the project. Ms. Crisafulli brought hosta plants that were planted along the perimeter, greatly improving the visual appeal of the labyrinth. My family helped me design and realize a hand-painted sign to mark the labyrinth, which was officially inaugurated and blessed in many faith traditions on May 6, 2013.

I hope that this Eagle Scout Project will provide the opportunity for peaceful meditation for years to come to anyone willing to walk it.
Planning for the Future

Over the past year interest and attendance in our programs and requests to use our building have steadily grown. In addition to our in-house student groups – Cornerstone, Hillel, Interfaith Student Group, and Newman Association – which use the building for regularly scheduled weekly programs, our facility was used more than 17 times by additional student groups and 22 times by other non-student organizations. In addition, we partnered with 20 student groups, university departments, and community organizations to provide further interfaith opportunities. "Drop In" traffic increased considerably when The Interfaith Center sign replaced the Chapel House sign in August 2012. There was a new perception that everyone was welcome here.

On the first day of classes this semester we had several new students wander in, drawn by our sign and looking for a place to meditate/pray/learn more about other religions. It truly is an exciting time for us and a time of growth.

We now find ourselves in a wonderful predicament; our facility and programs are in demand. We want to meet that demand but with extensive use comes wear and tear. Our kosher and common kitchens are used multiple times a week for the past 26 years and it shows. Tables and chairs are worn; there is minimal lighting in the building and the window walls are in need of retractable shades to add privacy for night programs and contain warmth in winter months. We have limited technological resources due to outdated electrical wiring. These updates are some of the improvements that would ensure that our facility continues to be a safe and desirable space into the future.

Is there a project that resonates with you? Your gift will ensure that The Interfaith Center will never stop transforming lives.

Calling All Presidents

As The Interfaith Center approaches our 50th Anniversary, the Board of Directors would like to honor those who have served as our Presidential leaders. The “easy” part is selecting a location for a plaque, purchasing, installing and having an affair to celebrate. The hard part is actually preparing an accurate list of those past Presidents and their inclusive years of service.

Here is our current list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>President</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Dr. Milton Olsen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Charles Tobin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Samuel A. Strasser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>David Schultz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Dr. Margaret Farrell</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Dee Donnelly</td>
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<td>2004-05</td>
<td>Abe Sherer</td>
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<td>2005-06</td>
<td>Margaret Farrell</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-08</td>
<td>Barbara Berkun</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008-10</td>
<td>Dr. Richard Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010-12</td>
<td>Richard Dolins</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Miriam Paska</td>
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</tbody>
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I ask those reading this newsletter who have information about past Presidents and their year(s) of service to contact me to help fill those gaps and allow us to display with pride the names of those who have brought the organization this far.

- Richard Dolins, Past President, CPLO (Chief Presidential List Officer)
Down Memory Lane...

My Interfaith Center Memory

By Daniel Sabbatino (’08, ’12)

A Newman Thursday Mass and Dinner was a perfect combination of food, religion and socializing. The meal was prepared each week by a different member and mostly, it was good. Sometimes, it was tolerable. Once or twice, it was not. But, it was always a nice change of pace from the cafeteria. And after, there were games.

I first discovered “Apples to Apples” my freshman year. The rules are simple. Match “nouns” to “adjectives” and hope the player choosing that round’s winner likes yours the best. For example, the adjective could be “spunky.” Then, players offer cards from their hand. “Rush Limbaugh,” “snakes,” and “video games” might be played. Depending on whose turn it is to pick, your card may be cast aside casually with a “no way!” or considered carefully for selection.

I don’t remember who played, or if I scored a lot of points, or who won. What I do remember from that 2004 evening was a valuable lesson. Everyone has their own interpretations of fixed ideas, like “spunky.” It doesn’t make any one of them wrong or the card in the middle any less real. It just means we all see the same things differently. And I remember thinking to myself, “If that’s what this place is all about, then I want to be a part of it for a long time.”

Events

Meditation Monday: Guided Meditation Program
Weekly 6-7pm

Interfaith Cookout
September 11, 5-8pm

Interfaith North Star Peace Walk
September 15, 2-5pm*

ISG Religion 101: Scientology
September 25, 7:30-9pm

Interfaith Center Open House
October 9, 2-6pm

ISG Religion 101: Buddhism
October 16, 7:30-9pm

Faith Journey Program
October 24, 6-9pm

ISG Thanksgiving Program
November 6, 7-9pm

Unity Dinner
December 5, 6-8:30pm*

*Off-site event

Giving Form

The Interfaith Center • University at Albany • 1400 Washington Avenue • Albany, New York 12222

Yes, I would like to donate to The Interfaith Center. My donation and selected method of support is checked below. I understand that The Interfaith Center is a 501(c) (3) non-profit and that my contribution is tax deductible.

☐ General Donation for Organization Support and Programs
☐ Specific Project or Program ________________________________
☐ Building Fund

Name ________________________________

Address ______________________________________________________

City __________________ State _______ Zip ______________

Enclosed please find my support in the amount of $___________

☐ Check (Please make payable to ACIC.)
☐ Credit Card Online (Go to http://bit.ly/15peEjn to give online.)