

Hope, Gratitude and *Solidarity*



THE BOARD OF THE DUTCHESS COUNTY INTERFAITH COUNCIL STANDS SHOULDER TO SHOULDER with so many religious and non-religious organizations in denouncing the murder of George Floyd. We support peaceful protests that ask our nation to address the unaddressed causes of racism that sicken our society and our souls. The work ahead of us is profoundly challenging, but our faith traditions demand that we look upon each other with the eyes of compassion.

We call all people to sit in judgment upon their hearts, knowing that it is our actions and our inaction that reveal our character. Let this be the moment where the oppressed are heard, supported, and uplifted. Let this be the moment where those who have ignored the pain of racism in America awake to see the injustice suffered by too many Americans. Let this be the moment we work together to bring about justice for all.



The Race Unity Circle hosts courageous conversations around the topic of race in an effort to build racial unity upon a foundation of truth. We host informative films, panel discussions, lectures and more for community wide participation, growth and transformation.

<https://www.facebook.com/theraceunitycircle/>

"The oneness of humanity is a spiritual truth abundantly confirmed by science. Recognition of this truth compels the abandonment of all prejudices of race, color, creed, nation, and class--of "everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others." The principle of the oneness of humankind "is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope.... It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal.... It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced." - - The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of North America - -"A Vision of Race Unity" The Race Unity Circle hopes to be part of that organic change.

If you are interested in learning more about racial equity and building more effective social justice habits, [CLICK HERE](#).



Helping
Hands

"...it's important that we show up for each other and remember that we are not alone."

<http://www.beaconmutualaid.com/>

With nearly 12,000 members, the "Beacon, NY" public Facebook group is always chattering, but early in the coronavirus pandemic the virtual volume rose to a kind of panicked din. Over and over seniors were posting: "How are we going to get our groceries?"

Local consultant and organizer Dara Silverman saw the notes and swung into action. She reached out to a mutual aid network in Massachusetts to see how they'd organized. Next she messaged local friends to see if they were interested in organizing something similar here. Within hours, Mutual Aid Beacon was born.

With networks popping up around the country, mutual aid has become something of a national movement during the COVID-19 outbreak. But it really taps into an old idea of neighbors helping neighbors. In Beacon, the new MAB network gained 850 Facebook followers. Nearly 400 signed up to volunteer.

"The whole idea of mutual aid is that it's solidarity, not charity," Silverman says. "It's really just about, how do we meet the needs of our neighbors?"

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Helping Hands *continued*

Together with co-coordinator Virginia Baeta, Silverman and their fellow organizers quickly decided to concentrate MAB's services in a few critical areas, including delivering groceries, retrieving prescriptions, and arranging rides to doctor's appointments. The service area extended from Beacon to Fishkill and Wappingers Falls.

From March to mid-June, volunteers packed 450 food bags per week for Wednesday delivery. The groceries were offered in cooperation with the Mid-Hudson Food Bank and the Feeding Beacon Coalition. For Friday delivery, Fare-ground funneled delivery requests and donated half the grocery bags for a recipient list that burgeoned to 165 families (although MAB is now handling those solo). A weekly prepared-meals initiative with Beacon Community Kitchen was added as well to help people who couldn't easily cook for themselves.

Mutual Aid Beacon also sought to keep homebound folks feeling connected, first with a phone number they could call if they needed emotional support. Later that developed into a program pairing isolated people with neighbors who would call twice a week just to listen. Volunteers have made up to 425 social-connection calls over the past nine weeks.

In addition to posting at businesses, fliers shared with churches were key to getting the word out about MAB early on. At least one church, St. Joachim-St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church, mailed a flier to every parishioner.

To date, Mutual Aid Beacon has received \$21,000 in donations through Venmo and another \$8,000 through PayPal. Several people forwarded \$1,200, effectively handing over their government stimulus checks entirely.

Donations ranged in size from \$1—passed to a volunteer by a neighbor receiving help—to \$9,000. That largest gift was made anonymously in \$50 gift cards to Key Foods. Volunteers mobilized to call neighbors and ask if they needed the gift cards. A humbling number said no, they could do without one—and requested it be given to someone who needed it more.

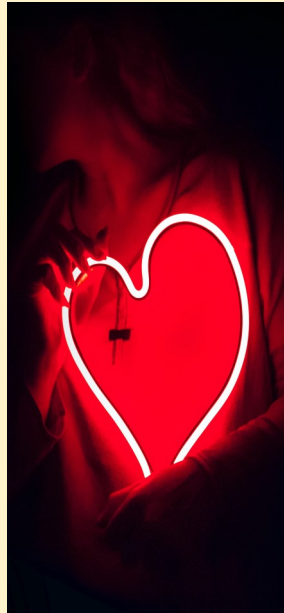
Silverman, Baeta, and the team have been strategizing about how to sustain volunteer energy for what could be a long-haul effort. They're interested in preparing neighbors to help meet each other's needs, especially if and when movements to defund the police yield results. And they're conscious of the social inequities the pandemic has only laid more bare.

Silverman shares a story attributed to Rev. Desmond Tutu, and repeated to her by Dr. Camara Jones, the epidemiologist and civil

rights activist. There once was a place where babies came floating down a river, and villagers set up ways to feed the babies and clothe the babies and take care of the babies. But no one ever went to see where they were coming from. "There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river," Tutu would say. "We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."

Adds Silverman: "The need for mutual aid is showing these deeper issues that exist in our society. I think this is only sustainable if we have some strategy for meeting those immediate needs but also looking upriver."

The full article is also available on our [website](#).



STORIES OF THE HEART - A Story Circle in Rectangles!

Warmth emanated from our Zoom rectangles as folks joined DCIC's "Stories of the Heart" story circle in June. We started with a story and a question, "What have you been missing or what insight have you gained?" People missed hugs, having a sense of purpose to their day, and celebrating important events. One woman enjoyed the opportunity to slow down. Others shared hopes for what will be on the other side of the mountain.

Kusum Gupta invited family members from Canada to hear her story from the Hindu tradition making this our first ever international story circle. Ron Sopyla shared a marvelous video of tabletop puppet show based on a Lithuanian tale about the Sun and the Moon falling in love.

Many asked for more! On Thursday, July 30 we will hold our second zoom story circle, 7-8:30.

To attend, please register by sending an email to: DCICstory@optonline.net

Once you register, you will receive a zoom link for the gathering.

In memory of all those who have lost their lives due to Covid-19 . . .

The number of confirmed deaths due to Covid-19 has surpassed 100,000. Those who have died were mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, friends, beloved members of their community. In remembrance of those in our communities who have passed away from the virus, Dutchess Interfaith Council has established a "In Memoriam" page on our web site listing the names, ages, and a one sentence tribute of those who have died. Dutchesscountyinterfaith.org

[CLICK HERE](#) to leave the name, age and a one sentence tribute to be added to our websites "In Memoriam" page.



DUTCHESS COUNTY INTERFAITH COUNCIL, INC. 9 Vassar St., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
845-471-7333
office@dutchesscountyinterfaith.org

Visit our web site at www.dutchesscountyinterfaith.org



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