

*Keeping the
Faith in*



Lucy Stone organizing group. There is a related story later in this issue.

Boston: The Lucy Stone Cooperative

NASCO Development Services is working with the Lucy Stone Cooperative to purchase a home somewhere in the Boston area. This co-op is different from many other newly formed groups because it is a faith-based group, and also because the zoning codes and building stock in Boston make development of group housing much easier than in many places. This means that starting off with a owned rather than rented building should be possible. Below is an article by the group, talking about their values and motivations. With hard work and patience, they should soon succeed!

For many religious liberal and activists, there is a difference between what we want the world to look like and the way that we are actually able to live our lives. Faith communities and housing cooperatives are two powerful places that people can find support in making the daily decisions to live more in line with their values. To that end, we are forming a faith-based co-op in Boston.

The Lucy Stone Cooperative (LSC) will be a cooperative house for 10-20 housemates informed by Unitarian Universalist (UU) values and our commitment to sustainability, spiritual practice, and social change. We are working to create an intentional community in our house, as well as an extended community of friends, neighbors, activists, and spiritual seekers. LSC will serve as a center for both spiritual renewal and social justice organizing. Our goal is not to withdraw from the world, but to engage more fully with it.

Unitarian Universalism is a liberal religious tradition, held together not by a shared set of specific beliefs about God or heaven or holy books, but by our covenant. A covenant is an agreement not about what we believe, but about how we will live together. LSC will deepen our faith by expanding the idea of covenant beyond the church and into homes and neighborhoods. We also believe that coops are best served by having specific agreements of how we will act toward each other, based in our deepest values.

We're committed to social justice, and cooperation makes it happen. We're committed to spiritual practice, which can be the grounding to sustain social justice work. We're also committed to sustainability. As a part of the interdependent web of life, we are morally obligated to live in a way that is respectful of the earth and each other. By living in community, we are able to overcome many of the barriers we may otherwise face living on our own and can better live out our values.

Our ambitious goals of fostering both a strong house community and a center for social justice have required visioning and organizing. Through monthly planning team meetings and more than 70 one-on-one conversations with community leaders, we're developing a common vision. From this group of leaders, we formed an advisory committee, including the founder of United for a Fair Economy, the executive director of the UU Urban Ministry, one of the co-founders of Boston Community Cooperatives, and other UU leaders, housing activists and co-ops in the area. Meeting with so many individuals has created space for a larger group of people to become invested—with their time, energy, knowledge, and resources—in the Lucy Stone Cooperative. We *need* a larger community to realize our vision; it takes a community to build a community.

The LSC house will be cooperatively-owned through a group-equity model. In addition to engaging in grassroots

fundraising, we are seeking allied loans from churches, individuals, and other nonprofits to make the house as cooperatively-funded as possible. Allied loans allow people and organizations to make socially responsible investments in LSC, and we pay them dividends once each year, often at rates below bank interest rates and to the benefit of our community and our partners, instead of corporate banks. By seeking donations and allied loans from congregations, friends, and community members, we are able to reduce the amount of money we are paying to the bank, allowing us to keep our rent more affordable and making the money we borrow go further.

In November, we had our first big kickoff party and fundraiser. Not only was it a fun event with live music, good food, and dancing, but it also brought together and inspired more than 170 people of all ages, beginning to build the community we seek and enabling us to begin our capital campaign with \$13,000 in donations from over 150 people. This winter, the planning team will start the search for our house and begin our programming with a leadership development workshop, as we continue to shape the future of the Lucy Stone Cooperative. To learn more, or to be in touch, please check out: www.lucystonecoop.org.

And the Fundraising Champs are...

we were overwhelmed by the support and the energy you brought on Saturday night. There were over 170 people in attendance (70 more than our goal) and we raised over \$13,000 (more than \$3,000 over our goal). Your generosity of both money and spirit are humbling.

A few stats:

- Gross amount raised: \$13,000+
- Silent Auction: \$470
- Smallest Donation: \$4
- Largest Donation: \$1000
- Estimated Number of Donations: 150
- Average Donation: \$118
- Youngest attendee: 15 months
- Oldest attendee: 84 years
- Number of volunteers: 20

Continued Growth:

CHUVA adds another house in Virginia!

The expansion of CHUVA from three houses to four houses, to a new total of 18 resident members, resulted 66% from careful planning and 33% from luck and spontaneity. Our coop is well rooted in the community, with members of our group living in our oldest house for close to ten years and our newest house four years.

Periodically through the year our coop reassesses our current operation and direction and we ask ourselves how we can become better aligned with CHUVA's mission statement and the goals of the coop outlined in our bylaws. A frequent topic many of these "directional meetings" in the past couple of years has been the expansion of the coop. During these meeting questions surface faster and easier than answers. Should we expand? Where should we expand to? Should we rent or own? Should we stay in our old house? The answers to these questions, by design, come from every member of the coop. As you might imagine there are many different answers to each question, which usually fuels long hours of good-natured debate and long discussions. Many times these meetings result in a small committee being formed to examine the feasibility of expansion and to report back to the group.

During the past two years the net result of the self-

examinations and coop-wide discussions had been that CHUVA was not ready, nor was it in a position to expand to another house at the present time. However, these meetings and the open dialog throughout the coop laid the groundwork for how and where the coop would expand if we decided to do so.



At the start of last summer, and the close of our talks of expansion for the school year, one of our members noticed a charming 4 bedroom brick house, directly across the street from our oldest house, for rent. Shortly after the discovery, a few members of CHUVA looked at the house and discovered that it boasted a large kitchen and living area, reasonable

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