



Service Committee

# NEWS

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICE COMMITTEE

FALL 2003



Inside this issue of the *Service Committee News*, you will find our annual publication, *UUSC Highlights of the Year 2002-2003*. This insert will provide you with an overview of our activities and accomplishments for the last fiscal year, ending June 30, 2003.

We also invite you to fill out the enclosed **survey** to let us know how you think UUSC is doing and how we can better communicate with you about our human rights work in the coming year.

## UUSC welcomes new president/CEO Charlie Clements

*Veteran human rights activist promises strong focus on member involvement and citizen action*

Charlie Clements, the new president and chief executive officer of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, says the opportunity to lead the organization fulfills a personal dream he often tells others to pursue.

"I teach a class and I tell my students that if they discover their passion and they are good at it and can make a living from it, then they are the luckiest people in the world," he says. "I realized that by taking this position those three things would come together for me. I would be one of the luckiest people in the world."

A human rights activist and public health physician, Dr. Clements, who prefers to be called Charlie, returns to the Service Committee where he helped gain national attention for our work in Central America during the 1980s.

He says that when he was first approached by the Presidential Search Committee, he referred them to other people who might be interested in and qualified for the position.

But a turning point for him and what triggered his interest in the president's position came in January when he traveled to Iraq as part of a human rights investigative



*Charlie Clements, right, and a human rights investigative team from the Brooklyn-based Center for Economic and Social Rights examine the family food rations of a young boy in Mosul, Iraq, in January 2003. Other members of the fact-finding team included Elisabeth Benjamin, left, and Ron Waldman.*

team organized by the Brooklyn-based Center for Economic and Social Rights to assess the potential humanitarian consequences of the impending war.

"The terrible things I witnessed on my trip to Iraq and the subsequent response from people around the world to what I had written made me want to find a place where I could be a full-time human rights advocate," he says.

Charlie says he is particularly excited about taking the helm of a human rights organization with such an active and involved constituency. He says that what impressed him

in the 1980s and what inspires him now is how UUSC supporters put their values into action "in a very energetic way."

### Strong field of candidates

Rick Van Dyke, chair of UUSC's Board of Trustees, says Charlie was selected from among nearly 100 applicants from around the country.

"With an unwavering focus on UUSC's mission to advance justice worldwide, our new president brings enormous energy, dedication and a life-long commitment to human rights and social justice," says Mr. Van Dyke. "We felt that Charlie has the best combina-

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## *A message from our president* **Join together with UUSC to forge a worldwide community**



UUSC president and CEO  
Charlie Clements

*I am proud and honored to be part of an organization whose roots are firmly planted in the Unitarian Universalist tradition of justice-making and that is willing to stand up to tyranny.*

In January 2003, I traveled to Iraq on a human rights mission to assess the vulnerability of the civilian population to a U.S.-led war. As a human rights activist and public health physician, I was asked to examine the water and wastewater systems in the country. What I discovered was that Iraqi children were already under siege and that they had been under attack since just before the first Gulf War began.

This was explained well in a previously classified Defense Intelligence Agency document, dated January 1991, that discussed the sanctions imposed upon Iraq after it invaded Kuwait. The document suggested that if the importation of chemicals was blocked, the already poorly functioning water treatment system in Iraq would soon grind to a halt.

It also predicted that failing to secure supplies would result in a shortage of pure drinking water for much of the population, leading "to increased incidences, if not epidemics, of such diseases as cholera, hepatitis and typhoid." More than 500,000 Iraqi children perished in the decade following.

### **A policy that punishes innocents**

While we were denying Iraq the chemicals to purify its water and treat wastewater, the United States was preventing Iraq from importing antibiotics. While the Bush administration justified the war based on seemingly "trumped up" information about Iraqi biological weapons, our country waged biological warfare on the children of Iraq with cholera, hepatitis and typhoid.

We must never again permit U.S. foreign policy to punish children for the wrongdoings of adults.

### **Giving witness to justice**

In the 1980s, UUSC-led congressional fact-finding missions exposed this kind of rampant human rights abuse resulting from U.S. policies. Senators and members of Congress who are still in office today recall sitting in U.S. embassies and being lied to by their own government. UUSC would not have to take them far to discover the truth, whether it was told to them by peasants, priests or the press. U.S. propaganda contradicted and collided with the reality of our witness in Central America.

As the new CEO and president of the Service Committee, I plan to resurrect these fact-finding missions in parts of the world where U.S. foreign policy is adversely impacting people's lives. I want to again help our policy-makers see all sides of the story.

But I want to expand this opportunity to activists, ministers and UUSC members from all walks of life. I am in contact with a number of people who participated in our human rights missions in the 1980s, and they still describe their experiences as "inspiring" and "life-changing."

### **Human rights movement comes of age**

I am committed to making sure that all of UUSC's programs are life-changing. Since I served as director of human rights education, UUSC has consolidated its work under a single program department with a human rights focus. I believe that this paradigm offers us a way of conceptualizing and organizing our work, as well as focusing it on several articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Now in its sixth decade, I believe the UDHR has already become one of the most important documents in human history, and its impact has barely begun to be realized. The recent creation of the International Criminal Court is just one way in which the international community can sanction those who commit crimes against humanity, regardless of the country in which these crimes were committed.

### **Taking a stand for justice**

As UUSC's new president and CEO, I am proud and honored to be part of an organization whose roots are firmly planted in the Unitarian Universalist tradition of justice-making and that is willing to stand up to tyranny. For our forebears, that meant often saying no to fear. As we enter a new era of change and progress at the Service Committee, we must do the same.

In the name of this so-called war-on-terror, which seems to cause terror at home and anti-Americanism abroad, we have been encouraged to fear our neighbors and strangers (particularly Arabs and Muslims), to spy on them, to lock ourselves up, to isolate ourselves. By living out our hope and resistance in public, embracing our diversity, we can overcome this catechism of fear. Together, we must forge community here at home and around the world and stand firm in our efforts to affirm the dignity and worth of every person.

*Charlie Clements*

# Africa's future and the presence of war

*In the past, children were regarded as victims of war who required safety and protection. While this is still true today, children have not only become deliberate targets of violence, but active combatants for struggles they do not comprehend.*

A nation's future depends on its investment in its children. As tomorrow's leaders, it will be their responsibility to contribute to the moral and ethical path that their nation takes while increasing its prosperity.

Regrettably, for too many African children, the struggle to merely survive can be overwhelming – for them and their families. Throughout Africa, 20 percent of the children do not live to see their sixth birthday. In countries such as Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo in Central Africa, the chances of survival are even more minimal. The presence of war with its cruel consequences has ravaged these countries for over a decade.

But these statistics do not tell the entire story. Courageous human rights organizations in the region, some of them UUSC partners, are providing immediate and sustained intervention. The

are violated and sexually exploited, and boys are conscripted into armed militia groups, sometimes forced to commit atrocities against their own families.

According to a report released by the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, more than 12 percent of children in the Congo do not live to celebrate their first birthday. There are three million children who have no access to education, and in the eastern part of the country alone, it is estimated that 70 percent of children do not attend school. Approximately 200,000 children under age 15 are infected with HIV/AIDS.

Unfortunately, the situation for children in Burundi is not significantly better. In recent years, Burundi, one of the poorest countries in the world, has faced food shortages that have left more than 50 percent of children malnourished. Approximately 620,000 children in Burundi have been orphaned, and many serve as heads of households. Another 230,000 are infected with HIV/AIDS. Children's exposure to violence has, of course, also resulted in physical and psychological trauma.

## **The roots for future change**

In the past, children were regarded as victims of war who required safety and protection. Today, both governments and rebels around the world deliberately target children. In Central Africa, children are now targeted also for combat. Boys are kidnapped and forced to be child soldiers in a war they do not comprehend. Girls are also vulnerable, forcibly taken from their schools or homes to be porters, cooks or even worse as sexual companions.

A U.N.-backed peace process is in place in both countries, but more international support is needed to ensure their successful implementa-

tion. For example, while some European nations have provided funds for negotiations in Burundi, the former colonial powers could also help to revive the economy and infrastructure. Certainly, the United States, which in 1996 ended all aid except for humanitarian assistance, could help the country reenergize an economy nearly decimated by 10 years of war and the poor policies of the U.S.-influenced World Bank.

UUSC program partners are working diligently to bring peace and reconciliation to both countries, ensuring the involvement of women in conflict resolution, the building of civil society and education.

With support from UUSC, the Center for Education and Research on Women's Rights (CERDF) is providing education and human rights training to 50 young girls, ages 12 to 17, who were sexually exploited in Kisangani in the Congo. In addition, CERDF is paying school fees for the girls to return to school and covering medical costs for HIV testing.

The Burundian Association for the Defense of Prisoners' Rights (ABDP), based in Burundi's capital city Bujumbura, provides legal assistance to those jailed in Burundi's prisons. A 2001 U.N. report detailed "the detention of children [in Burundi], without their detention being confirmed." The organization secures prisoners' release, informs them of their rights, documents cases of torture, and investigates and reports on the treatment of detainees and prison conditions. UUSC has the privilege of being the first organization to provide financial assistance to ABDP.

People's Group for the Support and Advancement of Women's and Children's Rights (HADEFE) is located

*(continued on page 5)*



*Children in Central Africa are shown on their way to school. UUSC partners, such as the Center for Education and Research on Women's Rights, are helping African children learn the skills needed to overcome the extreme hardships of growing up in a war zone.*

prospects of the next generation of Central African leaders rest on the work of such groups – and on pressure and resources from the international community.

## **Children and the trauma of war**

One of the most scarring results of the 10-year civil war in Burundi and the regional conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo is the deliberate, wartime violence against children, in which girls

# Free Speech Project participants investigate civil liberties threats in United States

Today's conflict between heightened national security measures and our constitutional rights and civil liberties is alarming. UUSC members and staff are especially concerned about First Amendment freedoms of speech, assembly and dissent. As part of our mission to affirm human rights and advance justice throughout the world, UUSC is rolling out phase two of the Free Speech Project. It is a timely and compelling project, with the potential to mobilize

Unitarian Universalist congregations in the defense of our civil liberties.

## Preliminary findings

During the pilot project, UUSC volunteers in several states interviewed nearly 50 community opinion leaders and identified preliminary findings. A clear majority of participants expressed concern about threats to free speech in the United States and felt that the USA Patriot Act of 2001 and the Homeland Security

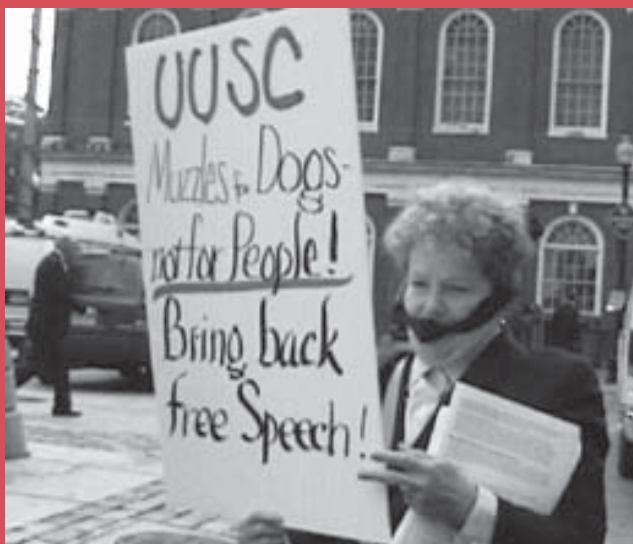
Act of 2002 endanger their right to free speech.

Several respondents compared the present situation to that of the McCarthy and Vietnam eras. The vast majority of respondents answered that recent policies to increase surveillance and national security have distressed them on a level of eight or higher on a scale of one to 10, with 10 being the most distressed. One respondent, commenting on the Department of Homeland Security's color-coded

threat level system, said, "I'm concerned with what would happen with a red alert. No elections? Martial law?"

## Join us!

We are enlisting activists for the next phase of the Free Speech Project. For more information, please contact the Service Committee at 800 388-3920, ext. 218, or [jladd@uusc.org](mailto:jladd@uusc.org). All Free Speech Project materials are free of charge.



## UUSC ACTIVISTS TELL ASHCROFT: "MUZZLES ARE FOR DOGS, NOT OUR NEIGHBORS"

Human rights activists from UUSC joined several hundred other protestors to greet U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft as he visited Boston Sept. 9 as part of a 16-city tour to drum up support for the administration's controversial USA Patriot Act.

The protestors sent a message to the United States' "top cop" to loosen restrictions on civil liberties as a result of the government's Patriot Act. "We

are telling the attorney general that muzzles are for dogs, not our neighbors," says Charlie Clements, UUSC's president/CEO. "The so-called USA Patriot Act curtails the freedoms provided in our great country's Constitution and Bill of Rights, widely respected – and copied – around the world, including the First, Fourth and 14th Amendments. The Constitution and Bill of Rights are the real USA Patriot Acts."

## staffNOTES

UUSC welcomes **Maxine Hart** as our new human resources manager. Born in South Africa, Ms. Hart assisted in the transition from apartheid by coordinating all staffing for South Africa's first free national election and helping reorganize two national ministries. No stranger to conflict and human rights, Ms. Hart was jailed twice for anti-apartheid activities. Ms. Hart joins UUSC after four years of work in Mexico City.

**Nguyen Weeks** was recently promoted to the position of youth program associate. During her eight years with UUSC, Ms. Weeks has held positions in several departments, most recently as communications assistant. As the youth associate, she will be working to create broader networks with local activists and increase education and action opportunities for youth. Outside the office, Ms. Weeks is a marathon runner and bicyclist.



Shari Yeaton (l) and Kim McDonald (r) were each recently honored for 10 years of service to UUSC. They are pictured here with Chief Operating Officer Nancy Moore.

# Awards presented to outstanding social justice advocates

A long-time social justice advocate from Connecticut and a 17-year-old from San Francisco have been honored with UUSC's top awards for outstanding social activism.

The Social Action Leadership Award was presented to **Al Benford** of Manchester, Conn., who was cited for demonstrating a passion for social justice and dedication to social activism throughout the year. The Mary-Ella Holst Youth Activist Award was presented to **Samuel Perryman** of San Francisco, Calif., a student at San Francisco City College and a UUSC local representative at the First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco.

In addition, **Rev. Darcey Laine** was awarded the 2003 Vision of Justice Sermon Award. She is the minister of religious education at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Palo Alto, Calif.

The awards were presented June 28 at the Service Committee's Annual Meeting and Volunteer Recognition Luncheon, held in Boston as part of the annual General

Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

## Social Action Leadership Award

In July 2002, Mr. Benford completed a UUSC workcamp addressing the struggles of migrant farm worker in North Carolina. In February, as part of the UUSC Coffee Project, he joined UUSC on an interfaith delegation to Nicaragua to experience the living and working conditions of coffee growers. He continues to share his experiences with many audiences to further promote social activism and advocacy.

The Social Action Leadership Award honors creative, inspiring and effective leadership by an individual or group working for justice in cooperation with UUSC.

## Mary-Ella Holst Youth Activist Award

Mr. Perryman, the youngest person ever to receive the award, is active in the San Francisco World Affairs Council and a member of the International Association for Religious Freedom. He is also

involved in a number of his congregation's social justice programs.

The Mary-Ella Holst Youth Activist Award recognizes the achievement of young people advancing human rights and social justice through activism and leadership.

## Vision of Justice Sermon Award

Rev. Laine's sermon, "To Act Justly," was delivered Dec. 2, 2002. In her sermon, she said, "By asking those actually living with injustice, instead of imposing their own vision of justice, UUSC is acting out of the humanist faith in the individual's innate wisdom and dignity. Further, to affirm the democratic process, each individual, each community is empowered to participate in the determination of its own destiny."

The Vision of Justice Sermon Award honors a sermon that reflects a clear expression of Unitarian Universalist principles specifically as they are put into practice through current UUSC programs.



*Samuel Perryman accepts the Mary-Ella Holst Youth Activist Award at UUSC's Annual Meeting. Mr. Perryman is a UUSC local representative at the First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco.*

## UUSC at General Assembly 2003

UUSC members, supporters and staff gathered in the Service Committee's hometown of Boston, Mass., for the largest General Assembly (GA) in the history of the Unitarian Universalist Association, which hosts GA. Many events

were filled to capacity, like the Annual Meeting, and others were filled to overflowing, such as the lecture by political activist, Tom Hayden. The annual Human Rights Forum introduced participants to pressing indigenous, women's

and immigrant rights issues, as well as partner and colleague organizations.

Both UUSC and UUA placed a particular emphasis on youth involvement. The UUSC Just Works team ran a half-day workcamp on race

issues and media training, which included intergenerational discussions and interviews by youth participants.

*For more about UUSC at GA, visit our web site, [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org).*

## Africa's future

*(continued from page 3)*

in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It defends and promotes the human rights of women and children, providing legal assistance and rights-based training. UUSC is cur-

rently supporting HADEFE's efforts to raise awareness on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers.

Our partners' efforts are creating effective change even

under the difficult circumstances and the daily challenges they face living in conflict. They are, however, in an urgent need for the world's and your commitment to work for peace in order to

ensure that these changes hold for the long course that lies ahead.

*Nadya Khalife recently returned from a trip to Kenya, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.*

**Outstanding local representatives honored**

The Service Committee honors outstanding local representatives for their work in building support for UUSC and its programs in UU congregations around the country. This year's outstanding local representatives are Don and Ruth Ann Ferris of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Lafayette, Ind.; Linda Harris of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco, Calif.; and Molly Canan of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis, Ore.

Local representatives serve as catalysts for membership growth and financial support. They also generate volunteer support for our advocacy work and hands-on social justice projects.

**Social Justice Forum in northeastern Ohio**

UUSC partnered with UU congregations and members to organize a forum held last May at Baldwin-Wallace College in northeast Ohio. Over 350 individuals gathered to

learn more about civil liberties, as well as attend workshops and develop action plans to safeguard civil liberties. Among the many participants, a local congresswoman and ACLU representatives spoke of their common concern for the state of civil liberties in modern America.

Program Associate Jackie Ladd joined Reverends Chris Neilson and Don Rollins in emceeding the event. Ladd states, "These forums are providing a way for us to put people together. They are helping us connect and realize that we are not alone and should not be afraid; we are in the majority."

To learn more, please contact Rachel Binderman, member development associate, at 800 388-3920, ext. 307.

**Youth activists and Cuba**

A heritage tour of Boston, including a visit to UUSC's office in Cambridge, Mass., is often one component of the Coming of Age program for many UU youth. While at UUSC, the groups learn more



*Youth from the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock in Manhasset, N.Y., speak with Senator Hillary Clinton's office about Cuba legislation during a visit to UUSC in Cambridge, Mass.*

about the UU movement's history of social activism and have the opportunity to take action on an issue.

This year, we asked visiting youth groups to write letters and make phone calls to U.S. policy-makers to ask for their support for the peace process in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in changing U.S. policy towards Cuba.

Claudette Dirsmith, who led the Boston trip for North Shore Unitarian Church of Deerfield, Ill., said, "Of all the things we did in Boston, our visit to UUSC was the highlight." Soon after her group called Senators Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and Peter

Fitzgerald (R-Ill.) to ask for their support of the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act of 2003. Sen. Durbin signed on as a co-sponsor to this bill.

**Community projects implemented**

UUSC recently awarded several grants to congregations and community groups that participated in the UUSC project, UUs United for Social Justice. Participants in UUs United learned about social justice issues in the United States. Grants were given to support their work implementing projects and advocacy efforts they developed during the course of the project.

One congregation, the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee, supported the work of Wisconsin's Treatment Instead of Prison Campaign with the help of UUSC. This campaign works to reform Wisconsin's harsh imprisonment policies for drug offenders by advocating policies that try to cure the problem. The grant enabled the Milwaukee congregation to create promotional materials, including 10,000 flyers.

**UUSC merchandise**

Looking for holiday gift ideas? UUSC provides a beautiful selection of jewelry and holiday cards for you and your loved ones. Visit our online store at [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org). To order holiday cards, call Shari Yeaton at 800 388-3920, ext. 310.



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## UUSC welcomes Charlie Clements

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tion of skills, experience and passion for our work, with a strong international background, hands-on organizational leadership skills, a proven history of meeting goals, and a lifelong commitment to helping people help themselves."

As director of human rights education at UUSC from 1986-88, Charlie continued the practice of organizing delegations of members of Congress to travel on fact-finding visits to Central America, pioneered by the Service Committee. He also testified before Congress on several occasions about his firsthand experiences of the ravages of war in the region.

### The horrors of Vietnam

A Vietnam War veteran whose experience there transformed his worldview, he says, "The consequences of war have never left me."

Charlie served in Vietnam after graduating with honors from the U.S. Air Force Academy but left military service after he refused to fly missions in support of the invasion of

Cambodia. "Out of the experience of Vietnam, I dedicated myself to nonviolence," he says.

Charlie also lived the horror of war in the early 1980s when, as a physician, he worked in Guazapa, El Salvador, where he was responsible for health care and preventive medicine for 10,000 civilians in rural communities. He developed public health campaigns, training programs for medics, and the provision of acute medical services in conditions of extreme duress. He saw firsthand how the policies of the U.S. government were destroying the social fabric of the people and communities of El Salvador, as Guazapa became a "free-fire zone that was bombed, rocketed or strafed daily by U.S.-supplied aircraft."

### Campaign to ban landmines

"In El Salvador, I would often see children whose lives were wrecked by landmines, perhaps that were buried by government soldiers next to a mango tree," he says. "I got a firsthand sense of what a hor-

rible weapon this is and the damage it can do. It's an issue most of us will be involved with all of our lives."

Later, as a board member for Physicians for Human Rights, he participated in the Nobel Peace Prize-winning campaign to ban landmines and represented the organization at the award ceremonies.

Dedicated to human rights since leaving UUSC, Charlie has created a nonprofit organization that establishes e-mail networks for health sectors in African countries. He has also served on the board of directors of a number of nonprofit organizations.

Most recently, Charlie was executive director of Border WaterWorks, a New Mexico-based nonprofit that assists U.S. communities along the Mexican border to deal with water and wastewater issues.

His work on the landmines campaign and with Border WaterWorks has strengthened his commitment to and passion for human rights work. For example, he hopes to continue to stress "the concept of

access to clean water as a basic human right."

Charlie has been recognized nationally for his human rights work, including the Thomas Paine Award, the Catherine Dunfey Award and the Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award. He has also been a Senior Fellow at the Center for Development Policy and a Fellow at the Center for Health Communication at Harvard University School of Public Health.

Charlie said he returns to the Service Committee without any preconceived plans about its future focus, but rather looks forward to working "collaboratively and collectively" with the board and staff in developing a vision and strategic plan for the next several years.

*For more information, including a biography and a presentation by Charlie to our Board of Trustees ("An open letter from Charlie Clements"), please visit our Web site at [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org).*

## SERVICE COMMITTEE NEWS — FALL 2003

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The *Service Committee News* is a publication of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, a membership organization working to advance justice throughout the world. UUSC members receive the *Service Committee News* three times per year. UUSC is supported by individual members, Unitarian Universalist congregations and private foundations that share our commitment to building a better, more just world. UUSC is an associate member of the Unitarian Universalist Association, but receives no operating support from the association.

### UUSC Mission Statement

Grounded in Unitarian Universalist principles that affirm the worth, dignity and human rights of every person, and the interdependence of all life, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is a voluntary, non-sectarian organization working to advance justice throughout the world.

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 Printed on recycled paper

Printed in the USA

## WE WELCOME LETTERS

The *Service Committee News* is grateful to readers for their interest and support. We invite you to share your questions and comments by submitting a letter to the editor.

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Jessie Pounds of Oak Ridge, Tenn., paints a farm worker housing unit.

## Workcamp volunteers provide service, advocacy to farm workers

Volunteers from across the country traveled to Greenville, N.C., this summer to participate in a UUSC workcamp examining the living and working conditions of migrant farm workers. For more about the workcamp, visit [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org).



Vivian Amorcho, UUSC's on-site workcamp director, serves dinner to the farm workers.



Workcampers like Hannah Rapp, of Harvard, Ill., expressed support for the farm workers by picketing against the Mt. Olive Pickle Co., a company which refuses to negotiate with farm workers who want to unionize.



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