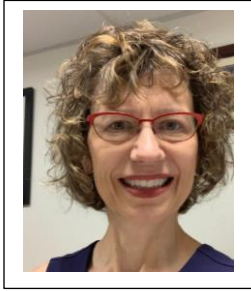


January 19, 2021



Many nominated **Claire Wagner** for a Spirit Award because it's easy to see the results she delivers as head of the Communication & Marketing team. Her efforts and those of her team affect nearly every part of our connection as a congregation. But did you know that the current gift she is to St. John's was wrapped up in a silver-lining bow when the black pandemic-closure cloud blew in? She and her husband retired a hair's breadth before the March 2020 national crisis which disrupted their travel plans as well as many of the Church communication pathways she already had in place. Luckily for us the storm did not stop her, it only revved her up.

Her years as Director of Communication for Miami University might not have prepared her to instantly meet the need for online lifelines to replace the mooring we'd lost. The technicalities of the various media vehicles that could connect us and fulfill our spiritual and social needs must have been overwhelming. But Claire only went faster. Some of the platforms we needed her team knew how to use, some she had to teach herself, but all had to be mastered quickly. She tapped the technical talents of many congregants and reached out to outside experts. She welcomed the help of volunteers and staff, collaborated, and coordinated their efforts to produce the beautiful product that we call Church. Can you picture her doing that week after week while dealing with the inevitable overhauling required to turn breakdowns into solutions in real time? And yet, in her spare time, she managed to mentor other team leaders and members in new ways to frame material, to make it more exciting and yet easy to read, to entice people further with links to additional information, all so they could carry out their commitments. No wonder so many people appreciate and want to thank her!

February 2 - 9, 2021

Spirit Award goes to all who **GOTV**

This is a very unusual Spirit Award but when we explain, you'll understand. Our team set out to identify the person(s) heading up the amazing group of St. Johners involved in 'getting out the vote' this year. In the true spirit of TEAM, there were many nominations - in fact - there were too many! We finally decided it wasn't possible to name just one or two people to fully acknowledge the tireless efforts of so many.



You posted, emailed, texted, distributed information, called, cheered, overcame technological challenges, sent money, and otherwise endeavored to inspire us to do our part and thus, changed the course of the trajectory of government for all of us. This spirited effort extended outward past the local, the states (and there were many), and the national efforts. We've now witnessed how close we have come to losing our democracy. We hope that each of you realizes how proud we are of you. No matter how much or how little you think you contributed, you were on the front lines, and you truly made the difference. Thank you.

February 16 and 23, 2021



As the snowflakes drift, our thoughts turn to spring and the promise of the beautiful garden at St. John's that lies sleeping under a white coverlet. We are lucky to have many dedicated green thumpers who work to make our grounds blossom and we appreciate them all. This first green Spirit Award, however, goes to **David Terry** whose extensive knowledge of horticulture and bright smiles are always given freely.

Even though we weren't there to enjoy the splendor this year, he meticulously maintained our green sanctuary all summer long. His talent for growing plants isn't limited by the season either; we've heard that lemon and orange trees thrive inside his apartment all year round. What touched us most is that when it came time for the pet blessing this year, he asked Rev. Mitra to bless the butterflies. Bless all the creatures who grace our gardens, and all the people who work to make them feel welcome, but especially, bless our very own butterfly man. Thank you, David.

March 9, 2021

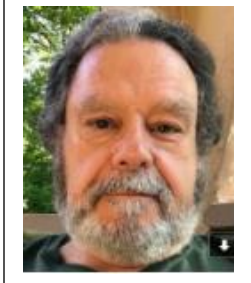
This Spirit Team Award is special because it is about one of the ways our community organized itself to be 'community' for St. John's, especially for those who might feel isolated during the pandemic. We're recognizing **Joetta Prost, Martha McLeod, Nancy Henry, Marty Harrington, Lyn O'Brien, Charles Spencer, Emily Hodges, and Nat Kutcher** for facilitating CommUUnity Group Calls each week. In July, Joetta and Nat launched the program on Signup Genius. Members can choose a time and day that works best to Zoom with other congregants. Joetta looks after the groups, offering optional topics along with tips on how to manage so that everyone gets a chance to talk.



The calls are an opportunity to chat with church friends and get to know new friends. We discuss a myriad variety of topics such as current events, fond memories, crafts, jokes, music – whatever we choose! Participants report they enjoy getting to know each other at a deeper level both old friends and people they hadn't met before. Some love the informality, the chance to talk about anything. Others relish being connected to discuss important topics. But no matter what, they appreciate the human interaction outside of work and home - having a chance to speak and be heard whether the conversation is serious or mundane, whether it is personal or about vital issues. We thank these generous facilitators who make it happen week after week. It's community!

April 6, 2021

John Kachuba was nominated for a Spirit Award for his smooth and well-organized facilitation of the Social Action meeting in January, where all of the Social Justice groups reported on their 2020 work and their aims for 2021. Being the UUers we are, the meeting could have lasted for hours; under his management, not a minute was wasted, and all were heard. This is not the only occasion that his organizational wizardry has supported us. He is a force behind many-valued undertakings at St. John's. He leads the Outreach team, deciding who and how we allocate money in Split-the-Plate and grants. He is on the board of UU Justice Ohio and in the thick of issues dealing with voter advocacy, harmful Ohio legislation, and several other racial and environmental justice issues. He works with our partner church group, sings in the choir, is part of the men's group and is a former Board member.



His skills have a decidedly fun side, too, as evidenced by the legendary Halloween parties that he and Mary host every year to which all are invited. Spooky decorations beckon from both inside and outside the house and even the ghosts from the many books he's written swoop low to sniff the amazing abundance of delectable treats on offer.

We are thankful for the many benefits of John's unmitigated spirit.

May 4, 2021

A Spirit Award for 'Willingness to be Uncomfortable in Honor of the Greater Good' goes to **Lucy Steiner**. When a new volunteer initiative designed to support Dohn Community High School was announced at St. John's, she knew from her participation in our Beloved Conversation program that she would face unknown challenges. Nevertheless, she jumped right in. Lucy worked at the Young Women's Academy and the Keep Teen Moms in School (KTMIS) program for over two years. She brought creative projects, poetry, even fancy table settings with her to enrich the young women's education. When some efforts were met with a decided lack of interest, when there weren't enough volunteers to implement others, she persevered. With a keen awareness of how her own life experience differed from theirs, she simply chatted over the craft table, listening to stories, remembering how to pronounce names correctly, and complementing strengths. Over time, the young women shared funny asides and asked curious questions about her life. Relationships flourished far beyond differences in age and culture.



When Rev. Alice Diebel left, Lucy stepped up to lead the Dohn Volunteers Praxis group here at St. John's. Sometimes volunteers, who also took on the unknown, operated on shifting sand when they juggled sudden program changes or unclear direction as they struggled to make their efforts at Dohn count. They appreciated Lucy's gentle understanding as she continually held open the space for learning, spiritual connection, and renewed resilience. We, as well as Dohn, will miss her as she and Mike start their new adventure with family in PA!

May 18, 2021 & May 25, 2021



In the “BC” (Before Covid) days, people coming to Sunday services at St. John’s would find themselves greeted by a big hug and warm smile from **Greg Terhune**, a long-time greeter at our church. While we may miss Greg’s physical presence because of the pandemic, we are still blessed by his warm greeting during our virtual services. He remains the “face” of St. John’s that people first encounter and remember.

Over the years that Greg has welcomed people to St. John’s, he has truly exemplified the “fragile art of hospitality” so important to UUs. But Greg’s personal generosity doesn’t stop at the door. Greg, and his husband Bo, can also be relied upon to lend a helping hand in setting up various church events such as the Partner Church soup and bread luncheons and annual Partner Church dinners.

Whether it’s a church service, informal gathering, or some other church event, we can always count on Greg’s friendly personality to help people feel welcomed and connected to the St. John’s community.

June 8, 2021

A special Spirit Team award goes to **Nancy Johnson** who has served as an “anchor” for the Monday – Wednesday - Friday 8 a.m. Reflection Group that Rev. Mitra initiated shortly after the pandemic hit. Nancy is host and facilitator for this early bird activity, collecting inspirational poems or songs from participants and sending one in an engaging message to all before they gather. As many as 25 people have engaged in the group and they have met at least 200 times so far. All receive Nancy’s morning blessing even if they cannot join every time.



All find it uplifting to start the day with a meaningful message and a connection to the community. When the chalice is extinguished, each person reflects on what they are taking with them into their day. While Rev. Mitra created the space for reflection and set the tone for check-in, Nancy has been key to the ongoing blessing that this group has provided for St. John’s members and friends. Thank you, Nancy.