



2021 'STEWARD OF PARTNERSHIP' Award Recipients

Each year, the UUPCC is pleased to present its Steward of Partnership Award to people who provide exceptional care for their own congregation's partnerships. Long-term partnerships do not automatically sustain themselves. They take time, attention, and loving care to maintain long-distance connections and nurture friendships. Often these efforts are not publicly recognized even though this is the crucial grassroots work that keeps the partnership thriving and the congregations involved.

These Stewards are recognized stalwarts in their congregations for fostering good communication, organizing worship services, keeping congregations engaged, making friends, and sharing stories—and their lives—with their partners in other countries. They have cooked, served, and cleaned up at countless fundraising events. They have visited their partners and helped their partners come here. Each of them is a hero of partnership.

The UUPCC is proud to honor these Stewards of Partnership:

Carol Bertaut, Cedar Lane UU Church, Bethesda, MD

Between 2003 and 2018, Carol Bertaut (*second from right*) was the heart of the Cedar Lane Partner Church Committee and later of the Partner Church Ministry Team.



Thanks to Carol's tireless dedication and leadership for more than 15 years, Cedar Lane was able to generously support their partner church, the Unitarian Church from Dicsöszentmórton in Transylvania, Romania.

During her tenure as chair and cochair, approximately 70 high school students received scholarships to help their university education, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Also, numerous construction and building maintenance projects were funded (with additional help from the local congregation), as were an English language program and an elderly assistance program.



Over the years, Carol coordinated the physical and financial efforts of many visits of CLUUC representatives to Transylvania and Transylvania partners to the US. She participated in planning numerous fundraising events, including programs featuring different musical ensembles and a "Transylvanian Dinner." Carol's emphasis has always been on the spiritual aspect of partnership and maintaining meaningful relationships.

Dana and Kathy Booth, First Parish in Concord, MA



Dana and Kathy have been involved with the First Parish in Concord's partnership program since their first trip to Székelykeresztúr in August 2002. This was Concord's first large group pilgrimage, and Dana and Kathy were truly transformed by their visit. What resulted was the beginning of a long-lasting friendship with their host family that continues today. In August 2007, the Booths returned to Keresztúr, this time with many refurbished laptops, to help establish the Berde Moszész Unitarian High School's language lab, a project that Dana faithfully continued for many years. They also collected and distributed reading glasses and hearing aids.

Over the years, the Booths have sponsored scholarships for a number of students at the Unitarian High School in Székelykeresztúr. In 2012 and then in 2019, they returned to Székelykeresztúr to attend graduation ceremonies of 2 of their sponsored students. For many years, Dana served as class liaison for members of Concord who sponsored scholarships for students, and currently Dana serves as cochair of the subcommittee that seeks sponsors and organizes the scholarships. Dana has also been a faithful member of our Partner Congregation Committee, and he continues to inspire us with his dedication.

In addition to traveling to our partner congregation six times, the Booths have acted as welcoming hosts for many of our Keresztúri visitors since 2006, including organizing square dances in their barn. Whether providing amazingly generous and delicious contributions to our many potluck suppers or hosting the Partner Congregation Committee in their home, the Booths have genuinely embodied the same radical hospitality that we have experienced from our partners in Transylvania.



Bill and Becky Coalson, Eliot Unitarian Chapel, Kirkwood, MO



Relative newcomers to partnership at Eliot Chapel, Bill and Becky Coalson have made 3 trips to our partner church in Nyárádszentmárton. The first time was with an Eliot group in 2016, which included touring the area with local residents and singing at our partner church's Sunday services. Their interest piqued, they made second and third trips on their own in order to broaden their acquaintance with the minister and members in the village, learn the needs of our partner church, and to express appreciation for the culture of the area's people. During these trips, Becky's special interest in crafts helped develop lasting friendships with our partner church crafters (*see left*) as she shared her skills and learned about theirs. Becky has also evaluated and facilitated sales

of our partner crafters' work at Eliot with proceeds going back to our partner church's women's group. Bill took much pleasure learning about the partner village and its businesses, including building materials and the town's bakery.

Bill has served for the past 4 years as Chair of Eliot's Partner Church Committee. He has promoted annual financial contributions by the congregation during our Thanksgiving service that goes toward the bread program that helps to feed the elderly of Nyárádszentmárton. Together, the Coalsons have made sizable financial contributions to enable the bread program to be available year-round.

Bill's photography has been featured at the Partner Church Committee's fund- and friend-raising Hungarian dinners at Eliot Chapel. He and Becky have shared their love of folk dancing with the Eliot members and Transylvania partner villagers. Throughout their involvement, Bill has maintained email communication and expressions of mutual support with our partner church minister, especially during the coronavirus pandemic. They are both heavily involved in discussions for bringing our partner church's minister, wife, and others to visit when it is safe to travel.



Doug Strobom, East Shore Unitarian Church, Bellevue, WA

Doug's diverse talents and sustained dedication over the years have generated amazing growth in our partnership with Khasi Unitarians. Since he began cochairing our partnership team with Barb Clagett in 2017, Doug (*right, with Khasi school children*) has promoted and funded the construction of a much needed 3-classroom addition to the English-medium primary and preschool that we helped Kharang Unitarians launch in 2007, developing a sponsorship program that enabled 20 children from the most disadvantaged families in Kharang to attend classes. Recently, he submitted a proposal for a commercial center in Kharang that could support the Khasi church's eventual goal of making the Friendship School self-sustaining.

We are grateful to Doug for many more innovative leadership initiatives, and his very generous financial contributions that have made projects like these possible. The student sponsorship program has not only stimulated new support from East Shore members during the current pandemic, but has taken partnership to a new level, with more members of the congregation becoming intimately involved with families in Kharang.



During frequent visits to our partners, and now through his virtual presence on WhatsApp and other global communications tools, Doug encourages our rural Khasi friends to share their dreams and concerns, while taking care to respect their traditions, and not impose our own assumptions and cultural norms on them. He brings stories of their joys and celebrations to East Shore youth and adults at worship services and partnership events and prepares beautiful audiovisual presentations to illustrate the strengths of their family lifestyles and interpersonal connections.

Doug Strobom's advocacy and leadership skills have helped develop our Khasi Hills partnership into one that is constantly improving the lives of Unitarians here and in Northeast India.

Viki Shilaos, UU Fellowship of Corvallis, OR

(Viki was nominated for this award just prior to losing her battle with cancer on March 26, 2021. The UUPCC extends our condolences to Viki's family and friends at UUFC.)

Viki has been a major guiding force for the UUFC partner church program since 1998 when she joined the committee until she had to gradually step back a few years ago. Her role as high school youth advisor quickly proved to compliment her partner church role when organizing a youth conference in 2000 with UUFC's partner in Körispatak, Transylvania, Romania. Viki had a calm approach in dealing with both youth and adults, and managed situations that arose with ease. Often working from the sidelines, Viki always remained fully engaged. It was evident she truly loved being among their Transylvanian partners!



In 2002, Viki worked tirelessly coordinating bake sales and writing donor letters to raise funds to finance Transylvanian youth traveling to the United States. As Chair of the UUFC Partner Church Committee beginning in 2003, she spearheaded many fundraisers, including supervising and playing head chef at annual dinners *(see right)*.

Traveling a total of 4 times to Transylvania, Viki became known for her unwaivering commitment to the youth and Unitarian Universalism. On a trip in 2011, Rev. Katalin Szasz-Cserey fondly recalls when Viki carried an overpacked suitcase full of supplies to Körispatak to distribute at their first children's summer camp. Rev. Kati writes, "Right away she came across as kind and empathetic, and made close connections with both our adult and child church members." During that week, Viki met with congregants helping to establish foundational rules for running scholarship programs that are still in place today.



Left to right: Partner minister Rev. Kati, (translator), Viki, Kati's husband Boti & dune buggy drivers.

Other committee members have visited our partner village and enjoyed the friendship for which Viki has contributed so much. We are all endlessly grateful for her many contributions and commitment to the partnership.

Viki was also instrumental in establishing the connection between UUFC and First Unitarian Church of Omaha, which resulted in joint sponsorship of Rev. Kati's trips to the United States in 2013.



Viki w/Corvallis youth learning about their Körispatak partners.

In addition to our nominees, the UUPCC Board has chosen to award Steward recognitions to our wonderful staff:



Katrina Priese, UUPCC Office Manager, is the proverbial “glue” that holds us together. For the past four years she has been a committed, professional, and talented member of the PCC staff. Interfacing with every aspect of partnering from database management to newsletter production, Trina is often the first point of contact with domestic members, international partners, vendors, and random inquiries. In all these activities, she emulates the spirit of “radical hospitality” that she experienced when she traveled to Transylvania with Eliot Chapel (her home congregation).

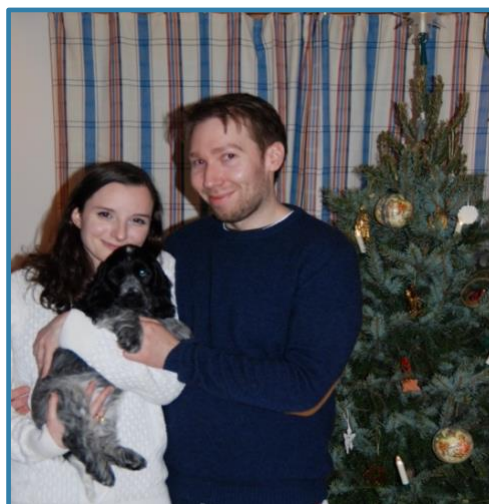
Trina shared that “the partnership people I’ve had the privilege to meet during my tenure have all been interesting, gracious, intelligent, fun, inspiring, moving, and way more dedicated than I ever thought possible, especially our Board members!”

Trina’s caring, compassionate, and honest interactions contribute to the UUPCC’s stellar reputation and are a blessing to us all.

The UUPCC’s bookkeeping is performed by Simple Office Services LLC — that is, by UUPCC member **Libby Hanna** and her daughter **Caroline Meadow**. Already a UU, Libby joined our staff ten years ago in the Boston office under Director Cathy Cordes.

Caroline joined her mother’s business a year ago, just after getting married and moving to Norway with her new husband (and puppy). She shares the same keen eye for details and numbers as Libby and says “Truly it has been our pleasure working with all you lovely people to help further the mission of the UUPCC.”

Both Libby and Caroline bring to this work their extraordinary gifts of inspiration, insight, compassion, the all-important ability to sniff out budget crunching opportunities, and their great sense of humor! Together they diligently walk with the PCC as caring, professional, and responsible partners and advisors, exceeding all expectations. We give thanks for their dedicated service.



A special shoutout to our very talented **Sharon McCarron, former part-time St. Louis PCC office staffer and current keen-eyed volunteer publications editor.*
