



JAY ROLLER: THE 2018 RECIPIENT OF THE CORNISH “LIVING THE MISSION” AWARD

By Rev. Roger Bertschausen, UUPCC Executive Director

The UUPCC’s Board of Directors is honored and pleased to announce that it has chosen [Jay Roller](#) as the recipient of the 2018 Louis C. Cornish “Living the Mission” Award.

The award is given annually to honor a person who has worked tirelessly to foster the mission of developing and sustaining mutually beneficial congregational partnerships between Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists around the world.

Two years ago, Arliss Unger was awarded the Cornish Award in recognition of her dedicated and highly impactful work on the Balázs Scholars program of Starr King School for the Ministry (SKSM). We noted then the enormous impact Balázs Scholars have had for nearly all of the UUPCC’s existence.



We joyfully return to Balázs Scholars program now to recognize a person who has done so much mostly behind the scenes to make the program work so brilliantly: Jay Roller.

Jay joined the Balázs Committee in 2000. He quickly jumped into working closely with each of the scholars (and their families if they come along) during their academic year in the US. Jay takes them on local tours, responds to medical and personal needs,

provides transportation to Bay Area churches, and helps acclimate them to American culture.

Jay is beloved by the Scholars for his dedicated attentiveness and kindness. They have bestowed on him the name Jay-bácsi—Uncle Jay. Anyone who has had contact with Scholars since 2000 will hear a lot about the legendary Jay-bácsi. A powerful example of Uncle Jay's dedication is the extraordinary care he provided to the Kiss family during and after László's Balázs year. During his László's Balázs year, Jay was present at the birth of Matilda's and László's daughter Anna and was named as her godfather. And he's been there for Matilda and her two children since László's tragically too soon death several years later.



Visit to grave of Rev. Kiss László in 2012

Jay's impact on the Scholars and their families is evident in the nomination letters we received from three alumni Balázs Scholars. Here are some of their glowing tributes:

- “Jay is a great friend, a great person, truly devoted to the international cause.”
- “His priceless guidance offered (a) warm and welcoming environment for all of us who experienced for the first time life in the United States.”
- “Jay's tireless efforts to make our 'American life' better never seemed to cease, his patience, devotion (and) warm heart are proverbial amongst the SKSM students.”
- “As I think about it, Jay Roller was the pillar, the person who got everything in order, who sorted out travels, plane tickets, dreams to reality...He truly brought Unitarians and UUs together, (and) worked so hard to smooth things and process out, to harmonize our lives.”
- “He was and still is the person who is there when he is needed.”

Beginning in 2013, Jay took on serving as the travel coordinator for the Balázs Scholars, soliciting preaching dates at U/U congregations around the US and Canada, and arranging flights, local hosting and ministerial connections. His attention to detail is legendary. Through his efforts, fifteen to twenty North American congregations and thousands of U/U's meet the Balázs Scholar each year. New and reinvigorated partnerships continue to result from these personal connections with the Scholars.

Jay has also been vigorously involved in congregational partnerships since the UUPCC's inception. He has contributed greatly to partnerships between First Unitarian Church in Oakland and Oklánd, First Unitarian Church in San Francisco and Kolozsvár III, and Live Oak UU Fellowship in Alameda and congregations in Kocsord, Nyíregyháza and Vásárosnamény in Hungary and Nagykároly in Romania.



Jay with former Balázs Scholar Rev. Bartha Mária Zsuzsánna—at playground partially supported by Live Oak UU Fellowship

Jay's devotion reaches beyond his congregation's partnerships and Balázs Scholars: when, for example, UU ministers from Transylvania and India flew to California for the International Women's Convocation in 2017, it was Jay who found home hospitality for them.

Through all of his work with partnerships and Balázs Scholars and living in Transylvania for an extended period, Jay has (in the words of one Transylvanian nominator) become "one of the best known American UU persons in Transylvania thanks to his charming personality."
