



## UCE's 2018 Mitten Tree

### **The Rice Center of the Children's Home and Aid Society of Evanston:**

When a child abruptly leaves a family or foster home due to abuse, violence, or mental illness, he/she may arrive at the Rice Center in Evanston without clothing, personal items, or toys. The Mitten Tree has been serving the Rice Center since 2011. Recently the director, Keith Polan (who is a UU at Unity Temple) told me that our gifts are spot on! We give the right balance of clothes, toys and therapy or educational items. This year we are serving 12 children. Keith also mentioned that the holidays are very difficult for the children at Rice because they are not with their families. The Rice Center houses approximately 36 children. Children live, play and are educated at the Rice Educational Center on Ridge Avenue. District 65 provides schooling. A team of social workers, psychologists, pediatricians, nurses, art therapists and others provide a structured environment to help children build healthy relationships. The goal for the children is to eventually return to their own family, a foster family, or an adoptive family.

**The Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants** is a non-profit, faith-based organization of staff and volunteers called to respond actively and publicly to the suffering of all individuals and communities affected by immigration detention, deportation, and post-detention through pastoral care, advocacy, public witness and other activities. UCE's Immigration Solidarity Team has been working with ICDI this year. Their Executive Director, Melanie Schikore (a UU and member of Countryside Church in Palatine) was thrilled to be asked for gift lists.

The Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants is a prophetic voice for just and humane treatment of immigrants caught in the immigration detention process. Upholding the dignity and basic human rights of each individual ICDI Chicago stands in solidarity with immigrants as a powerful collective voice to minimize the use of detention and to seek justice.

**The Vet Center Program** was established by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems. The goal of the Vet Center program is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to eligible veterans in order to help them make a satisfying post-war

readjustment to civilian life. Vet Centers are community based and part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Evanston's Vet Center is located at Howard and Dodge. Our gifts provide for individual veterans and family members.

**Curt's South** is a non-profit Cafe and training program for teen mothers and at-risk young women. Curt's Café South is just down the street from the church on Dempster Street. We have been partnering with Curt's for a number of years in various ways. The past two years, the auction dinner was catered from Curt's. They also provided a lovely spread of appetizers for the Endowment Cocktail party. A regular group of UCE congregants meets at Curt's on a weekly basis for coffee. We have been sharing Mitten Tree gifts with the student interns and their children for the past three years. This year we are providing fits for a reunion of returning interns. The fact that over 30 are coming is an indication of the success of the program. The young women are proud of their accomplishments.

**Evanston YWCA** has many programs to support and empower women. Among them the YWCA has made a commitment to end domestic violence. They strive to ensure that all survivors of domestic violence who come to the YW finds the safety and support their need to take the next step to break free from abuse. The YWCA provides an environment that is safe, welcoming, and meets survivors wherever they are in their journey. They help survivors increase their access to economic resources and legal protections and help them strengthen their emotional capacity to address the many complex issues they will face in recovering from the traumatic effects of violence and financial abuse, and rebuilding their lives.

Recently the YW was able to purchase a multi-unit apartment building to provide longer term housing as the women move through their journey in surviving domestic violence. We are providing Christmas dinner boxes for each family living in the transitional apartments and gifts for children both in the shelter and the apartment building.

**EI Rescate:** Finding housing for homeless LGBTQ and HIV-positive youth between the ages of 18-24 can be difficult. EI Rescate (The Rescue) offers culturally appropriate, identity-affirming housing for these young adults. Also offered are HIV prevention services, employment, educational resources and life skills training. The program is part of the Puerto Rican Community Centers many programs. Our donation of gifts helps support this wonderful program.