For Immediate Release

WORLDWIDE YOUTH NETWORK CONTINUES EXPANSION & BRIDGE BUILDING

- In Few Months UUWYN Expands Africa & Latin America Work
- Brings Youth from Three Continents to Transylvania Conference
- Seeks to Provide Opportunities for Underprivileged & youth and young adults

Hartford, Connecticut, USA, October 10, 2025

UUWYN Granted 501c3 Tax Exempt Status

The worldwide youth network UUWYN Inc. (pronounced "you win") (Unitarian Universalist Worldwide Youth Network) see UUWYN is pleased to report that it has been granted 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status as a non-profit charitable entity by the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS). "This milestone affirms UUWYN's commitment to empowering youth and young adults, advancing social justice and opens new doors for growth, collaboration, and impact" explains UUWYN's Vice-President Rev. Justine Magara.

As a recognized nonprofit, all donations made to UUWYN are now tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. What this means in that UUWYN:

- may now receive tax-deductible donations, including here: Donate – UUWYN
- is eligible for more grants and funding opportunities
- is officially recognized as a public charity committed to serving the community

SarahRuth Wekoye Davis

"We are deeply grateful to everyone who has supported us on this journey. Your belief in our mission made this possible—and we are just getting started," points out Chaplain and UUWYN Secretary and Treasurer Reverend SarahRuth Wekoye Davis, further elaborating "This organization, building upon the prior youth exchange work of our founder, has taken off quickly, demonstrating the need of progressive faiths, such as Unitarian Universalism, to focus on our youth and young people, who represent the future."

UUWYN's Focus on Underprivileged Youth and Young Adults

"Even before our new designation, we had decided to focus on underprivileged youth and young adults; our goals and objectives, along with youth safety and other policies have been on our website for some time now," UUWYN-GOALS.docx explains international diplomat, activist and UUWYN Advisory Group member Bruce Knotts. This focus was also explained in a video about UUWYN https://youtu.be/Y3Ov8XHSTYc.

UUWYN Will Expand its Latin America and Africa Work

The last few months at UUWYN have apparently involved a whirlwind of activity. "So much progress has been made in a few months, including the strengthening our focus in both Africa and Latin America with the addition of our remarkably-talented new members," emphasizes UUWYN founder and President Shahan Islam. "The new members will add focus to these represented regions and increase our attention toward disability justice, which is very consistent with our emphasis on providing opportunities for underprivileged youth and young adults. The African expansion is facilitated by the recent joining of Chaplain Wekoye, who brings a multicultural background to her work and her ministry, grounded in African, disability, and queer theologies." "Wekoye" is SarahRuth's Luhya name, as she was raised in a

UUWYN, Inc.
50 Bloomfield Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105 USA
WhatsApp: 347-735-3599
Email: shahan@uuwyn.org
Website: uuwyn.org
Social Media:

small village in Western Kenya. She holds degrees in communications, psychology, and business administration and served in the United States Air Force as an Arabic linguist.

The Latin American expansion will be spearheaded by new UUWYN Board member Doris Maldonado Mendez, who holds degrees in International Relations (Latin America), Spanish Language & Literature, Linguistics, Political Science and a Master's in Education–Spanish. Her resume includes a lifetime of work in disability justice, uplifting foster care and disability communities with dignity, bilingual access, and youth-designed solutions. She is the national founder of Alpha Sigma Omega Latina Sorority Inc., an international Bold Beauty Project model redefining disability through art and a member of Family Voices' International Culturally Responsive Committee. Her advocacy spans trauma-informed youth mentorship, disability lifespan programming through the National Association of Mental Illness, RevUp (Register, Educate, Vote, Use your Power!) https://www.aapd.com/about-rev-up/, Yale University and United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) National Latinos with Disabilities Conference, bilingual catechism for children with disabilities and proposed legislation for language access.

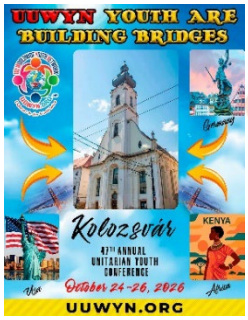
Doris A. Maldonado Méndez

"In addition to the stellar multicultural and international work of both Chaplain Wekoye and Doris, they coincidentally are giants in the area of disability advocacy such work will fit in well with our goals to as serv underprivileged youth and young adults, explains Reverend Magara.

"As UUWYN expands its global reach," proclaims Ms. Maldonado Mendez, "I am honored to help center youth and young adults in Latin America, the Caribbean, and those living with disabilities-individuals whose lived experiences, culturas, and resilience are vital to our collective futuro. This appointment is not just a title, it is a calling and commitment to co-create spaces where young people of all abilities do not wait to belong, but actively become: become leaders, become bridge-builders, become the change their communities are called to manifest and the future our faith calls us to co-create. Juntos, we will shape systems with dignity, language and communication access and youth-powered solutions grounded in our Unitarian Universalist values of equity, compassion, and interdependence."

This month the United Way of Connecticut and FOX61 television station will recognize Ms. Maldonado Mendez and present to her the **Impactful Woman Award** at its 3rd Annual ImpaCT Awards Ceremony as a female leader whose mission is to help and empower those within her community.

***Building Bridges* Campaign**



While UUWYN has applied for grants, it has also launched a crowdfunding campaign for its ***Building Bridges*** program, which will send youth from Europe, USA and Africa to attend the 47th Annual David Ferenc Unitarian Youth Association on October 24-26 in Cluj Napoca, Romania EVENTS - National Dávid Ferenc Youth Association.

Cluj-Napoca (known historically as Kolozsvár) has been the spiritual, cultural and educational cornerstone of Unitarianism and is the location of the famous John Sigismund Unitarian Academy JZSUK and the Unitarian Church of Cluj-Napoca Cluj-Napoca Unitarian Church - Lovin' Romania , which is a symbol of enduring faith and cultural identity. "Kolozsvár holds profound significance as the spiritual and historical epicenter for the Unitarian faith, especially within the Hungarian Unitarian tradition rooted in Transylvania, the birthplace of organized unitarianism in the 16th century, following the Edict of Torda," explains Reverend Alan Taylor, UUWYN Advisory Group Member and its Ambassador to Transylvania. The edict, proclaimed in 1568, was the first legal guarantee of religious freedom in Europe. "Cluj-Napoca represents a living connection to one of the oldest surviving Unitarian traditions and is often a site of pilgrimage,

partnership, and interfaith dialogue—especially for those interested in the global expressions of liberal religion," sums up Taylor.

UUWYN's **Building Bridges** crowdfunding campaign Fundraiser by UUWYN Inc : Help Underprivileged Youth Attend International Conference will raise funds to connect youth from different parts of the world and will inspire them to help underprivileged youth and young adults make connections to benefit the world as they bring back their experiences to their local communities. Indeed, the narration of the fundraiser points out its inspirational goals:

> **Every young person carries a dream inside them. A dream to discover who they are, to connect with others, and to step into a bigger world. But for so many underprivileged Unitarian youth, those dreams feel distant, locked behind walls of circumstance. When youth attend international conferences, they won't just attend events. They'll join hands with peers from across the globe, exchange stories, share cultures, and discover that they belong to something greater. Imagine the courage they'll gain when they see that their struggles and hopes are shared by others. Imagine the spark lit inside them when they realize they have the power to create change, not just for themselves, but for their communities back home. That's where UUWYN steps in.**
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> **When youth are given the chance to connect internationally, something powerful happens. They discover courage in themselves. They learn that the challenges they face are not theirs alone. They build confidence, leadership, and vision. From attending international conferences, to joining projects with peers abroad, to engaging in heartfelt conversations that bridge cultures the impact is transformative. These are not just trips. These are life-changing experiences. They plant seeds of compassion, unity, and empowerment that ripple through entire communities. Every story of connection is a story of hope. Imagine a young person who has never left their neighborhood stepping onto a plane for the first time. Imagine the look in their eyes as they realize the world is bigger than they ever dreamed and that they belong in it. This is the change we are working for.**

Spiritspeed UUWYN!

The **Unitarian Universalist Worldwide Youth Network (UUWYN)** is a global community dedicated to empowering young people to become leaders for peace, social justice, and community service. Our organization was founded by a passionate group of individuals who saw the need to engage young people in meaningful, transformative experiences that transcend borders and build connections across cultures.

As Unitarian Universalists, we believe that the world can be a better place through mutual understanding, love, and compassion. Our goal is to inspire and support youth as they explore new perspectives, grow as individuals, and contribute to positive change around the globe.

Donations to UUWYN's generally at uuwyn.org at Donate – UUWYN

Donations to our Building Bridges campaign may be made at: Fundraiser by UUWYN Inc : Help Underprivileged Youth Attend International Conference

Contact: SarahRuth Wekoye Davis
UUWYN Email: wekoye@uuwyn.org
Website: UUWYN.org
Phone: 347-735-3599

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UUWYN, Inc.
50 Bloomfield Avenue
Hartford, CT 06105 USA
WhatsApp: 347-735-3599
Email: shahan@uuwyn.org
Website: uuwyn.org
Social Media: