

# United Action Connecticut

organized interfaith communities and civic institutions  
building a better future

## Fall 2012

### Engaging the healthcare4everyone1 Campaign

#### UACT members engage the State Health Care Cabinet and the Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange for the healthcare4every1 campaign

UACT members took action in October by engaging officials on behalf of the healthcare4every1 campaign. At the October 9th State Health Care Cabinet meeting, Healthcare task force member Mark Kosnoff voiced his support for a public insurance option during the public comment portion of the session. Mr.

Kosnoff pointed to the high cost of healthcare as a result of a system that is set up to generate profits and not to provide care. He also noted that there are “public options” in most other facets of our lives, including public education, public libraries, public trans-

portation, and even public beaches and golf courses.

On October 26, at a Connecticut Insurance Exchange consumer meeting in Glastonbury, Mr. Kosnoff, fellow UACT member Claudia Epright and other healthcare advocates challenged Exchange CEO Kevin Counihan on



what has been perceived as a pro insurance, anti-consumer atmosphere surrounding the work of the insurance exchange up to that point in time. As a result of the meeting CEO Counihan and the Exchange Board

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#### Power In Presence

In May of this year, 2012, United Action contracted with Lorella Praeli and her Power in Presence LLC, to build the base of the organization within several bi-lingual congregations. Goals and objectives were to do One on One trainings, develop core teams within each congregation, and coordinate the implementation of the UACT work plan to meet various grant obligations. To date the Power in Presence team of Lorella Praeli, Tim Eakins and Hafid Dumet have conducted organizational meetings in up to nine congregations and have successfully estab-

lished strong, core team groups in four of them. Much of the success can be attributed to the June 15 announcement by President Obama of a new policy to grant deferred action to undocumented youth and young adults. This announcement has rejuvenated the immigrant rights movement and given passion to the work of UACT and the Power in Presence team. Following are biographical snapshots of the Power in Presence organizers.

Please see **Lorella/3**

#### Points of Interest:

- Healthcare4every1 Campaign
- New Organization Leadership
- Immigration Reform
- Expanding UACT's Presence
- CT Health Insurance Exchange & other Regional Activities

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## Steve Volpini succeeds Michael Verrett as Board of Directors Chairman

In September of this year, 2012, Steve Volpini of the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Meriden succeeded Michael Verrett as Board of Directors Chairman, when

*United Action  
wants to thank  
Michael Verrett  
for his dedicated  
service.*

Michael stepped down due to an increased workload at his job at Residential Management Services. Steve has been an active member with United Action for many years and was instrumental in bringing the U-U church in Meriden back into the UACT fold after a brief sabbatical. Steve is a retired clinician at Rushford Center, a substance abuse/mental health facility with offices in Meriden and Middletown. Before his nonprofit career, he was a journalist with newspapers in Massachusetts and

Connecticut, and most recently held several positions with the Record-Journal in Meriden. He has a BA in Government from Boston University and a Masters in Human Services Administration from Antioch. He

spent two years in the Peace Corps in Colombia as a community organizer. He hails from Southbridge, Massachusetts and he and his wife, Janet Hiller, have made their home in Meriden, Connecticut since 1978, where he has been an active member of the Unitarian Universalist Church. He has been involved in the church's Social Responsibility Committee for many years and was active in the church and in UACT in pushing for fair and accessible healthcare coverage in Connecticut. He is a strong believer in religion as loving action, here and now, and his willingness to join our board gives us confidence of great things to come.

United Action wants to thank Michael Verrett for his dedicated service as Board Chairman over the past few years. Michael has been a tireless supporter of social justice reform for numerous years and we are happy to report that although Michael has stepped down as Board Chairman he remains committed to UACT's work as a voice for justice.

## DACA Clinics

On June 15, 2012, President Obama and Secretary Napolitano announced a new policy to grant deferred action to undocumented youth and young adults. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) through its three subcomponents-Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)- has been entrusted with implementing this new policy. An estimated 1.4 million may qualify for deferred action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a form of administrative relief from deportation. In Connecticut, an estimated 20,000 youth and young adults will qualify for DACA. Four DACA clinics, an opportunity to help eligible ap-

plicants to complete their applications with a reputable attorney for free, were conducted in November with the support and assistance of UACT.

The clinics were held at St. Mary's in New London, the Spanish Community of Wallingford, St. Mary's in New Britain and Sagrado Corazon in Willimantic.



Volunteer Legal Aid assists DACA applicant at St. Mary's in New Britain.

## Healthcare4every1

have set up a series of seven "Let's Chat" events throughout the state that will let consumers ask questions and offer opinions on the progress of the Connecticut Health Insurance Exchange. For more information on a Healthy Chat event in your area see our events calendar or visit [healthychat.com](http://healthychat.com). Connecticut is one of the few states working to benefit from the federal Affordable Care

Act. However, we are not depending on Washington, D.C. to get the job done. Our state is on the leading edge of state-based health reform that will offer better value for our health care dollars, high-quality care that focuses on the patient first, new health plan choices for residents. Connecticut seeks progress through their Healthcare Cabinet, Health Insurance Exchange, Healthy CT CO-OP and State Health Plan Innovations. Visit [uact4justice.org](http://uact4justice.org) for current healthcare news.



## Lorella Praeli, Bi-lingual Organizer

Lorella Praeli has been contracted as a bilingual organizer to help lead UACT's efforts to empower members to work for social justice. Lorella graduated Summa Cum Laude from Quinnipiac University with a B.A. in Political Science and Sociology. She is the Co-founder and Lead Coordinator for Connecticut Students for a Dream and a member of the National Coordinating Committee of United We Dream in New York. She has also worked as an intern for the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization and the Service Employees International Union, Local 32BJ. Although Lorella's forte is in the area of Immigration Reform, her work ethic, communication skills and organizing experience make her a valuable asset in all of UACT's organizing efforts. Lorella is fluent in both

English and Spanish and has formed her own LLC, Power In Presence, a group that specializes in enabling people to take charge of their lives. Recently Lorella has been featured in Time Magazine in a cover article that described the plight of children of undocumented immigrants and also was the subject of discussion on MSNBC during the Democratic Convention. Lorella is now viewed as a national leader in the movement for comprehensive immigration reform.



Tim Eakins & Lorella Praeli.

## Timothy Eakins, Bi-lingual Organizer

Timothy Eakins is a community organizer based out of New Haven who has been working with the immigrant community in many different capacities for the past three years here in Connecticut. Passionate about immigrant youth and adult empowerment, he has acted in different capacities to achieve this end: as former core leader and organizer for CT Students for a DREAM, Eakins worked to advance the organization's mission, which is to empower, educate, and advocate. He worked primarily with youth in the college access program and was a facilitator. He also works as lead organizer for Somos CT, whose mission is to build power in the immigrant community to build a progressive pro-immigrant, pro-worker state. Eakins has also been serving the immigrant community as an interpreter for the Legal Services Organization at the

Yale Law School in matters of asylum, domestic violence, housing, and workers' rights for the past three years. A graduate of Trinity College majoring in Hispanic Studies, Eakins combines very strong language skills, extensive time living and working with Latino communities, and profound commitment to immigrant rights in his work as a community organizer. Tim is fluent in English, Spanish, and French. He also speaks Portuguese and Japanese. Tim Eakins also has extensive experience working in other social justice issues, such as educational equity, school-to-prison pipeline, and prison reform.



Hafid Dúmet

## Hafid Dúmet, Bi-lingual Organizer

Since 2010, Hafid has been an activist at the local and national level for issues that affect the undocumented immigrant youth and young adult community, and their families. A DREAMer who has felt, first hand, the injustice of the law and the possibilities for new social change, Hafid was an active leader throughout the in-state tuition campaign in CT, which lowered tuition rates for undocumented students in the state. He was a co-founder and core leader of CT Students for a Dream, and has now transitioned to start a new project called, Somos CT,

where he brings the same desire to inspire, change, organize, and agitate the immigrant and broader community.

Hafid is originally from Ica, Peru, and graduated from Western Connecticut State University with a BBA in Accounting this year. He is currently serving the New Haven community as a community organizer by interning at La Junta for Progressive Action.

# United Action Connecticut

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19 South Canal Street  
Plainville, CT 06062  
(in Our Lady of Mercy Church)

860.595.2284  
uact4change@gmail.com

Visit Us at  
[www.uact4justice.org](http://www.uact4justice.org)

## United Action Connecticut (UACT)

United Action is an interfaith, multi-racial, multi-lingual organization of congregations and community institutions crossing political, economic and urban/suburban boundaries.

## UACT's Mission

United Action's mission is the building of powerful, broad based community organizations rooted in faith and social justice values, working to make concrete improvements in the lives of families and individuals. By identifying and developing leaders and by organizing around well-defined, winnable issues, UACT enables people to understand their own power and to acquire the skills and allies necessary to exercise power collectively and effectively. United Action seeks to strengthen local congregations, and through them to bring regions together and find common ground for the common good.

**We would like to thank the following for helping us to fund our programs this quarter:**

*The Universal Health Care Foundation  
Catholic Campaign for Human Development  
E. Doolittle Justice & Outreach Committee  
as well as Individual Contributions, Dues & In-Kind Support*

## Mark Your Calendars



CT Health Insurance Exchange "Let's Chat"  
**December 4**, 5:30pm to 7:00pm  
NEW LONDON—Mitchell College,  
437 Pequot Avenue, Clarke Center Auditorium

"Coming to America" : Immigration Reform Forum  
**December 6**, 6:00pm to 8:00pm  
MERIDEN—Unitarian-Universalist Church,  
328 Paddock Ave.

CT Health Insurance Exchange "Let's Chat"  
**December 6**, 5:30pm to 7:00pm  
NEW HAVEN—Hill Regional Career High  
School, 140 Legion Ave.

A Conference in Defense of Civil Liberties and to  
End Indefinite Detention  
**December 8**, 9:00am to 6:00pm  
NEW BRITAIN—Central CT University, Semes-  
ters Hall, Student Center

CT Health Insurance Exchange "Let's Chat"  
**December 11**, 5:30pm to 7:00pm  
NEW BRITAIN—Central CT University, 1615  
Stanley St., Memorial Hall, Constitution Room

CT Health Insurance Exchange "Let's Chat"  
**December 13**, 5:30pm to 7:00pm  
STAMFORD—University of CT Stamford, 1  
University Place, Gen Re Auditorium

CT Health Insurance Exchange "Let's Chat"  
**December 18**, 5:30pm to 7:00pm  
BRIDGEPORT—Bridgeport Holiday Inn Hotel,  
1070 Main St., Harbor Ballroom

UACT Planning Retreat  
**January 26, 2013**—Time & Location TBD

**For more events & updates, visit our website,  
[www.uact4justice.org](http://www.uact4justice.org).**