



# The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Waynesboro

## Azimi Family Update

By Suzy Huston

It has been exactly one year since the journey of the UUFW Home Team began. In March 2022, after the Azimis had spent time in two refugee camps and five months in a Waynesboro motel, we were able to settle this family of nine into their new permanent home. With the help of the International Rescue Committee and members of local congregations, including UUFW, we cleaned, painted and outfitted a house in Stuarts Draft. The generosity of our congregation with the purchasing of everything from beddings, rugs and kitchenware was amazing.

After getting the family settled in their home, our priorities were finding jobs, enrolling the children in school and addressing health concerns. We thank members Monte Hackney and Laura Riggan for not only helping with enrollment, but also tracking the children's progress. They are doing very well and becoming quite proficient in English. Thanks to the hard work of Sylvia Woodworth, the adults are working on their English learning as well. Roberta Patterson has gone above and beyond with getting much needed health issues addressed. She had coordinated everything from surgeries for the children, immunizations, and extensive dental work for the adults. The men in the family, Nassim and Obidullah, have been working since last March, and recently we helped Nassim find a better paying job with benefits.

As none of the Azimis had ever driven a car, team members spent many hours helping them prepare for tests and many more hours in practice driving. Next was the job of helping Nassim find a reliable and affordable van for his large family. Along with his contacts in the Afghan community in Charlottesville, we were finally able to help them on their way to more independence. This was cause for great celebration by the Home Team, as we had been taking them to Walmart every week for their shopping and to Charlottesville every Friday to the mosque. Thank you, Ingrid Meadows, for all your scheduling work.

Although our official time with the IRC was six months, the team is still actively involved with the Azimi family. They have made tremendous strides and are becoming more independent every day. However, they still need our friendship in navigating the many challenges ahead, and we will continue to be there for them.

## Riverfest: A UUFW Volunteer Tradition

By Roberta Patterson

This year will be the *Year of the River Otter* at Waynesboro's Riverfest! Riverfest 2023 will be



on April 29, and once again UUFW will support this event with volunteers for the wide variety of activities that have made Riverfest a unique experience for all ages.

Riverfest was started in 1997 as a simple idea: get Waynesboro residents excited by the South River again. In the mid-1990s, many Waynesboro residents saw the South River as not much more than a polluted, flood-prone nuisance with ecologically severe consequences. The South River has seen many exciting changes and developments since then. The City of Waynesboro built a greenway along the river, Trout Unlimited and the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries have established a destination trout fishery (with signs of natural reproduction occurring), and DuPont is actively remediating legacy contamination along the river. Throughout the years, the downtown event has grown to be one of the largest festivals in Waynesboro as more programs, activities, and exhibits are added – all of which challenge people of all ages to protect the environment and our own South River.

I first became aware of Riverfest about eight years ago at a service auction dinner at the home of Urbie and Marilyn Nash. I learned that the first Riverfest occurred in the backyard of Suzanne Goldsmith, a local environmental activist. Thereafter, Urbie and Marilyn hosted Riverfest outdoor events in their backyard, allowing participants access to the river. Their example of generosity and commitment motivated me to volunteer my time to help Riverfest succeed. Rain or shine, Riverfest is both educational and entertaining. I encourage you to attend. Bring your children or grandchildren. I promise

you'll learn something new and have fun.

In addition to volunteering my time on the festival day, I recruit other UU volunteers. Join us. Volunteer for a few hours, half a day, or all day. You can sign up for tasks that match your interest and physical abilities. Opportunities include active outdoor fun: Stream Safari, Fish and Fun Rodeo, and canoe rides. More sedentary tasks under the tent include registration, information desk, kids' arts & crafts and duck sales for the Great South River Duck Race. And, help with early morning setup and evening clean-up is always needed.

Sign-up sheets are posted in the Fellowship Hall. For more information contact me at [robertapzero@gmail.com](mailto:robertapzero@gmail.com).



Our monthly potlucks are back! Thank you, Hospitality Team.

Vernal  
phlox of sheep  
meander the meadow  
from heards of sparrows  
song is hurled  
from the spring  
burbles the brook  
sap of windward  
sugars the whirled  
Joe Good

