

Womanspirit

NEWSLETTER OF THE FLORIDA DISTRICT UU WOMEN & RELIGION COMMITTEE

Volume 5, Number 3

May, 1992

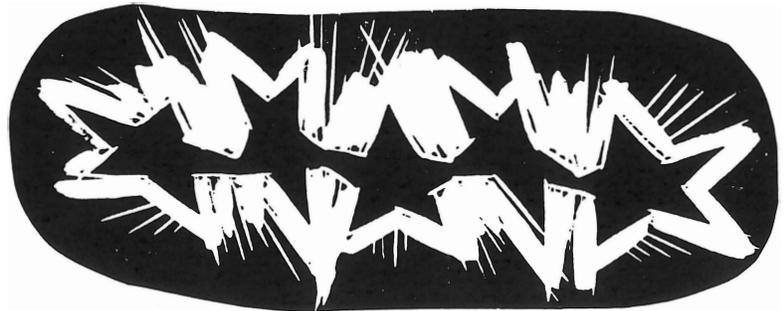
Susan Stephenson Hefte and Emily Williams To Co-Chair Fla. W & R

We are delighted to announce that Susan Stephenson Hefte, of the UU United Fellowship of Seminole, and Emily Williams, of the St. Petersburg Church, will begin July 1 as new Co-chairs of the Florida District Women & Religion Committee, pending formal appointment by the Fla. District President upon consultation with the District Board.

Susan has been a UU since the mid '60's and has been an active leader in religious education for 14 years, facilitating worship, ritual, on-going groups, workshops, training, Board process, two W&R retreats at the Pines, and the meditation portion of the Ingathering at the UU Women's Federation Biennial last year in Ft. Lauderdale. She is a UUWF Circuit Rider and is on the Pines Board.

Emily has been a UU for about ten years. For the past five she has facilitated the St. Pete women's group that is now on its second round of the Cakes curriculum; and she is taking it into the larger St. Pete community by offering it at Brigit Books, a feminist bookstore. In her downtown church, she manages the bookstore, teaches the pre-school class and is developing a curriculum for 3-5 year olds.

Susan and Emily look forward to working with the Fla. UU W&R community and to their discovery of each other as women working together. Please join us at the summer retreat to welcome them!



Diana Fraser, Eleanor Goldbloom, and Esther Nighbert Win 1st W&R Awards

The Florida District Women and Religion Committee congratulates Diana Fraser, Eleanor Goldbloom, and Esther Nighbert--winners of the first Women and Religion-sponsored awards. The winners were announced at the Florida District Annual Meeting in Orlando on April 25.



Diana Fraser was present at the meeting to receive the Olympia Brown Award for taking a public stand and organizing public effort to help achieve a non-sexist society, even at the expense of risk to her own personal well-being.

Diana is a member of the UU United Fellowship of St. Petersburg and former Chair of the Women and Religion Committee. She is known for standing up for her beliefs, including marching for abortion rights and speaking out in her congregation and community against sexist language in writing and speech.

In accepting her award, Diana expressed thanks to the Florida District for both financial and spiritual support to the Women and Religion Committee, and especially to Mary Louise DeWolf-Hurt for encouraging her to become active in Women and Religion.

Eleanor Goldbloom, a member of the UU Church of Fort Myers, is the first recipient of the Charlotte Perkins Gillman Award for using a position of leadership to blaze the trail of empowering others by articulating and modeling in her own life the value of "power with," not "power-over."

Eleanor is a retired physician who learned about contraception while working as a medical student with Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood. Now 82, Eleanor remembers that Sanger's life's work was devoted to giving women control. She has continued to keep this work alive, first through her work as an OB-GYN physician and still through her active contributions to NOW and the Women's Political Caucus of Lee County.

Eleanor's minister, William Miller, accepted her award for her, describing her as a lifelong UU who has recently joined the church. In his enthusiastic praise for her, he stressed her especially remarkable achievement in bringing Planned Parenthood to Lee County.

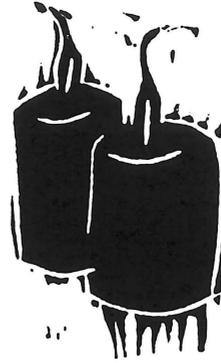


Esther Nighbert is the first recipient of the Eleanor Gordon Award for working over a period of years to foster and invigorate the principles of liberal religion. She is a dedicated 80 year old UU, who has served for many years on the Gainesville Fellowship's Social Concerns Committee. She volunteers at an elementary after-school enrichment program for low-income children, where she uses the techniques she wrote about years ago in a book on creative dramatics when she was a teacher in Washington, D.C.

Esther is an activist for peace and justice. She is on the National Board of Infact, a group that boycotts corporations it considers immoral. She has worked for justice in Nicaragua and El Salvador and has participated in "Guerilla Theater." Whether speaking up during Sunday services to urge action or sitting all day at a table collecting signatures, Esther is always living out her dedication to UU principles.

Amy Jo Smith accepted the award for Esther and read Esther's message: "In searching for words to express my thanks for the honor you have paid me, I can only say that in today's world Unitarian-Universalist values are constantly in jeopardy. For me, political and social action captures my imagination giving me a sense of hope when all seems hopeless."

Diana, Eleanor, and Esther-- the Women and Religion Committee salutes you. Your very lives are models for all women. Congratulations, and thank you!

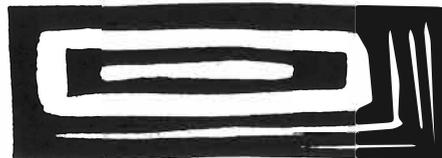


Woman Spirit is the newsletter of the Women and Religion Committee of the Florida District of the Unitarian Universalist Association. It is published three times a year with occasional special issues.

Subscriptions are free to Unitarian Universalist women of the Florida District who attend Women and Religion Committee programs and to others by request.

Co-editors: Barbara Child
Amy Jo Smith

Send subscription inquiries, address changes, and all other correspondence to: Amy Jo Smith, 2417 NW 104 Ct., Gainesville, FL 32606. Phone (904) 332-1350.



Spiritual Autobiography Retreats

—At the River by Sarah E. Walker

The first weekend in May found seven women sharing Barbara Child's cabin on the Santa Fe River. We opened with a circle expressing what each of us wanted from the weekend, both for ourselves and the group, and then we created a safe space for opening up our lives and hearts to each other.

Through silent reflection, drawing, and, most of all, writing, we each explored various events in our lives beginning with childhood and ending up in the present and future. Much of the time was spent in silence.

As the group gathered together again, we each took turns reading our stories aloud. There was no critique of style or technique. Just six pairs of eyes and ears to watch and listen, and six hearts and minds sharing the tales of our lives.

Every woman touched every other woman with her story. And at the end of the weekend we realized we had created something very personal and special together, and have set a tentative time period for our next chapters to be written. Like any interruption in the middle of a good book, I am eagerly awaiting the next opportunity to listen to my friends' stories. And the river and the cypress are joyously awaiting our return.



—In the Pines by Harriet L. Little

I was drawn by the title "The Stories of Our Lives -- an autobiographical spiritual journey." That the retreat was to be held on a beautiful Spring weekend in the tranquility of UU in the Pines at Brooksville was the cincher. I had to do this!

April 17-19 brought nine UU women together in what would become an intensely intimate and insightful experience.

Writing, drawing, listening and sharing, we explored what spirituality was. In typical UU fashion we concluded that we each had our own definitions. Learning from each other, we each broadened our understanding and appreciation of what gives meaning to our lives.

Many thanks to Barbara Child for coordinating and facilitating the weekend and to all for participating so caringly.

Area Reps Take Note!

The next meeting of the Florida District UU Women and Religion Area Representatives will take place at UU in the Pines on June 14 immediately following the Summer Retreat.

Please send in your registration right away!! There is a limit of 50 participants at this retreat, first come, first served, and you don't want to get closed out.

We set a record at the last meeting in Orlando-- ALL AREA REPS PRESENT! Let's do it again. We would like to have an Area Reps' group picture to send in to *Sunshine*, the Florida District UU Newsletter. Please make sure you're in the picture! Register TODAY for the Summer Retreat. See the registration form enclosed in this newsletter.



UU in the Pines

7029 Cedar Lane

Brooksville, Florida 34601

(904) 796-4457

From Exit #61 on Route I-72, go about 6.2 miles west on St. Route 50 towards Brooksville. Turn south on Cedar Lane. Go about 1/2 mile to UU in the Pines on the right.

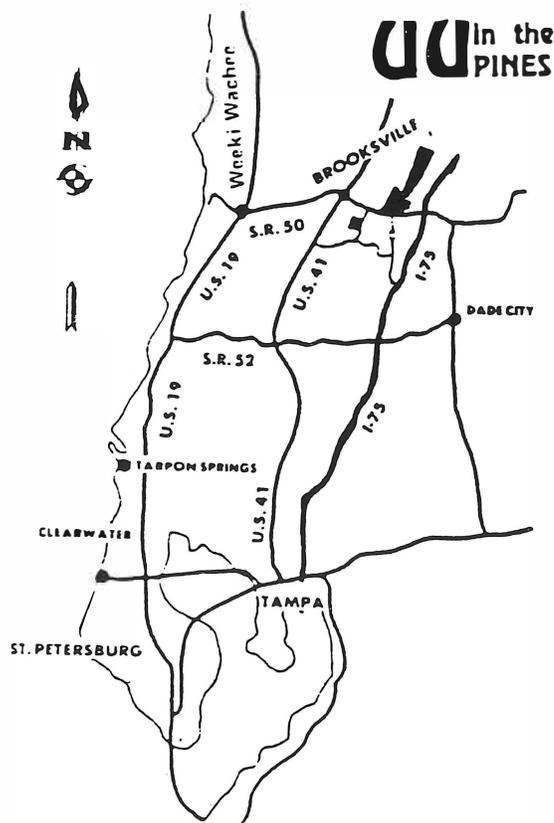
Buildings are air-conditioned. Pillows & blankets are furnished. Please bring linens & towels, also your bathing suit.

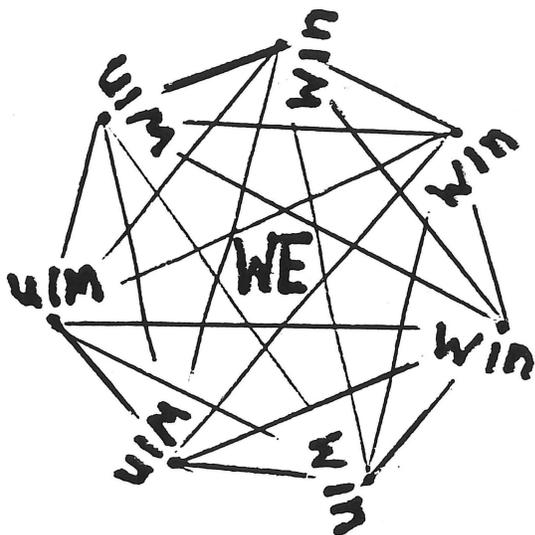
Powerful Opportunities Await You at Summer Retreat!

--**Singing Power.** Share your singing power during the summer retreat. To be part of the "choir," sign up at registration. Gloria Marvin will coordinate music and empower choir members for a special Sunday morning service.

--**Storytelling Power.** Share your storytelling power Sat. night. Jill Oldenski and Emily Williams will share stories at our evening celebration. You can tell a story too! Sign up at registration or anytime before Sat. night.

--**Creative Writing Power.** Join Pamela Leavy, Jean Siegfried, and Nancy Young for breakfast Sun. morning to share ideas for a special fall arts issue of *Womanspirit*.





Women, Power, and Process

Summer Retreat

Program:

Florida District Women & Religion invites you to the Pines Retreat Center June 12-14, 1992, for a weekend exploring women's ways of working together and strengthening community.

--How do we empower ourselves & other women?

--Are "leader" & "follower" still appropriate terms?

--What is "feminist process"?

We will tackle the tough issues--power, competition, charisma, and conflict.

Facilitator:

Dr. Martha Peters is an educational counselor and psychologist beloved by students and faculty alike at the University of Florida, where she works with individuals and groups on stress management and feminist process.

Come try out some new ideas with her while relaxing in the peaceful setting of the UU Pines Retreat Center.

Schedule:

Fri., June 12

5:00-7:00	Registration
7:00-8:00	Dinner
9:00-10:00	Ingathering

Sat., June 13

8:00-9:00	Breakfast
9:30-12:00	Program
12:00-1:30	Lunch
1:30-4:00	Program
5:30-6:30	Reception
6:30-7:30	Dinner
8:30-10:00	Celebration

Sun., June 14

8:00-9:00	Breakfast
9:15-10:30	Program & Closing

Registration Form

- Please send this registration form (or a copy of it if you want to keep the information on the other side) to: Pamela Leavy, Registrar, 121 20th Ave. North, St. Petersburg, FL 33704.
- Make checks payable to Florida UU Women and Religion.
- Postmark your registration before June 1. This retreat is limited to the first 50 paid participants.
- Send requests for scholarships to Pam Leavy with a short written explanation and statement of how much you can pay.
- For questions about registration or scholarships, call Pam Leavy at 813-823-2472.
- For questions about the program or selling arts & crafts, call Barbara Child at 904-377-8945.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Day Phone: _____ Night Phone _____

_____ I have ritual art (mask, quilting, etc.) to bring to show.

_____ I would like to sing in a choir during the closing service.

_____ I will be bringing the following musical instrument _____

_____ I will be bringing the following to sell _____

I would like to room with _____
(Rooms will be assigned in advance.)

Cost covers the retreat plus room and board (Friday dinner through Sunday breakfast). Please bring your own towels & linens. Bring comfortable clothes, and remember your bathing suit!

_____ Bed in dormitory with pillow and blanket provided. (\$65)

_____ Pines Life Member (\$55)

_____ R.V. Hook-up (\$50) _____ Space for your tent (\$38)

_____ Vegetarian Special diet or other special needs:

Welcome, Dorothy, and Welcome Back, Fran

We have endorsed the idea of co-representatives for the Florida District areas, and so we are delighted that Lucy Knights now has a co-representative for the Miami Area. We join Lucy in welcoming Dorothy Carey Menadier.

Lucy has sent in a sketch of Dorothy to introduce her. It gives us the idea to invite sketches of all our area reps, maybe two or three per issue. So, how about it? Will you send us a sketch of your friend who is an area rep--or an autobiographical sketch if you are an area rep? Read about Dorothy in this issue, and see if it starts your creative juices flowing!

Also, we are delighted to welcome back our old friend, Fran Boyle, as area rep for Tallahassee. Fran is well known to many Florida District women, both as former editor of this newsletter and as the organizer of a wonderful Women and Religion Spring conference in Tallahassee in 1990. After Fran's long bout with illness, it is grand to have her back in the W & R fold.

Best wishes to Dorothy and Fran,

--Amy Jo and Barbara

Introducing Miami Co-Rep Dorothy Menadier

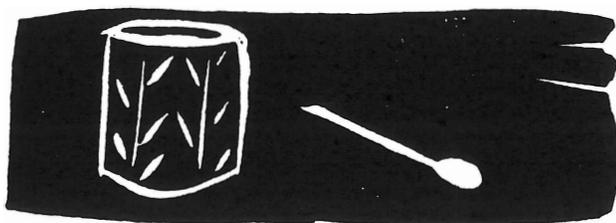
Dorothy is a native New Yorker, married to John for 40 years, and mother of Jill and Guy. She is an Evangelical Unitarian, and became one in the 50's when there was raging controversy about religion in the schools. As she still says, "They have trouble teaching reading, how can they hope to teach religion...and if they could...whose?"

Dorothy loves being involved with Women & Religion, especially young women, who have so much to offer, so many hurdles before them, and so much to teach her, their peers, and society.

Dorothy feels that reaching out to our sisters is the name of the game! She feels we should be more supportive, less judgmental, less competitive, and we should be exerting pressure to recognize our many talents.

She would like to see W&R cutting a wide swath through Florida, the U.S., and all of the world. She says, "If I can make some small contribution, if only one of my sisters hears something of value in what I have to say, I will keep on speaking, working, striving for something better, for all of us."

--Lucille M. Swenson-Knights



Spirituality and Social Action In St. Pete

by Pamela Leavy

The women of the St. Petersburg area have been embodying the W&R objective of "providing resources and a network for women to affirm our spirituality, increase our self-esteem and empower us to action for change." Diana Fraser coordinated Women's Herstory Month for the UU United Fellowship of Seminole. A highlight was Karen Frank's portrayal of Susan B. Anthony and Carol Sievert's of Clara Barton.

A special event was Carolyn Taylor's workshop on "Goddesses and Wild Women" at the U. of So. Fla. Over 100 women attended. It was a goodbye gift from Carolyn to our area and an introduction to a new kind of spirituality to many women.

Emily Williams of the St. Pete church is leading 25 women through their "first slice" of Cakes for the Queen of Heaven. Some are having their "second slice" by repeating the sessions. Emily will offer a Cakes class beginning June 5 at Brigit Books in St. Pete for women who might not feel comfortable with any church.

The group pilot-testing the curriculum "Rise Up and Call Her Name" continues in Seminole, with emphasis on African and African-American women. We have prepared to make a quilt, looked at Afro-Centrism, examined prejudices and myths, and had a charged discussion on the racial crisis facing America today.

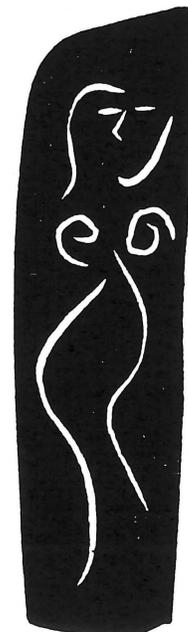
News from Miami

**by
Lucy Knights and
Dorothy Henadier
Co-Area Representatives**

In March we celebrated Women's History Month at the UU Society of Miami with Dr. JoAnn Lordahl as speaker at our Sunday morning worship program on March 22. This was followed by a well-attended women's meeting and also by an organizing meeting on April 12. We have planned for our next meeting on May 17 when Brian C. Perlin, an attorney, will discuss trusts, probate, estate planning, and real property with special attention to the needs of women.

During April we presented Clara Barton Sisterhood awards to Iantha Whittaker and Agnita Heldt during a Sunday worship program. Lucy Knights received a lifetime membership in the UU Women's Federation.

We are pleased to say that Women and Religion is really beginning to take root in the Miami area.



**Ten Women Plan
"Full Moon/Whole Earth
Celebration" in
Gainesville**

by Winny Ruffino

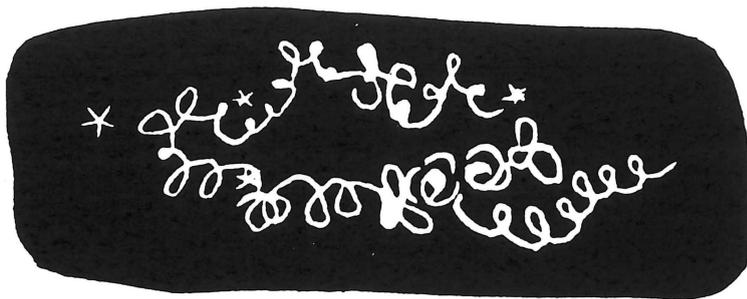
Ten women responded to the call to help plan the spring equinox celebration. Some had just returned inspired by the W&R conference with Margot Adler in Orlando. Some were new to the monthly moon circles in Gainesville.

After brainstorming on (the inevitable) newsprint and sharing resources, we were a model of consensus, and the circle was ready to cast!

Approximately 70 people gathered around a blazing fire on the west field of the UUFG property on Fri., March 20. The four directions were lovingly laid with altar cloths decorated with personal treasures. Flowers and Easter eggs were everywhere.

We encouraged the children to be present, each given a crown and necklace and individually blessed in the ritual. We chanted, drummed, and danced, remembering our ancestresses and heroines. We invoked the Goddess, and voiced the affirmations we held, while lighting candles. Each person called out their wish and then placed a candle on the outside of the fire, until the flames of our hope surrounded it.

Each Gainesville Full Moon/Whole Earth Celebration seems to get richer and more creative. The May circle will be led by the men. Blessed be.



**Nancy Young
Gives Workshop on
Feminist Spirituality
at Florida District
Annual Meeting**

"Feminist Spirituality: The Sacredness of Everyday Experience" was the theme of the workshop given by Nancy Young, representing the Women and Religion Committee, at the Florida District Annual Meeting in Orlando on April 25.

Nancy began by reading some poems from *Cries of the Spirit*, edited by Marilyn Sewell, choosing especially poems from the section called "Sacredness of the Ordinary," including some of Nancy's favorite poems by Denise Levertov. She sang Lynn Wadley's beautiful song, "Ordinary Days," followed by a guided meditation, some writing, drumming, and talking about why the goddesses have become important to many women. She concluded by reading her own poem, "Contemporary Witch."

When a participant asked Nancy about her definition of spirituality, she recalled Margot Adler's words and said it is the "deep, juicy joy that one feels!" Blessed be.

Summer Retreat Features Women Working Together

Women and Religion's Summer conference, June 12-14 at the Pines, is not just about shared leadership. It is being planned by a group of women rather than a single facilitator. Diana Fraser, Pam Leavy, Jill Oldenski, Sarah Snyder, Susan Stephenson, and Emily Williams are planning rituals and entertainment, and Pam is serving as Registrar. Lucy Knights is in charge of hospitality, and Gloria Marvin is in charge of music. Nancy Young designed the logo for the brochure. Barbara Child is handling arrangements with our guest facilitator, psychologist and educational counselor, Dr. Martha Peters.

This retreat is being designed to bring to Florida District women a program on the same topics as the UU Women's Federation's Pre-General Assembly program in Calgary, which is called "Ladders into Circles."

The Florida retreat brochure with registration form is enclosed in this newsletter. Register right away because this retreat is limited to the first 50 paid participants. Your registration should be postmarked before June 1.

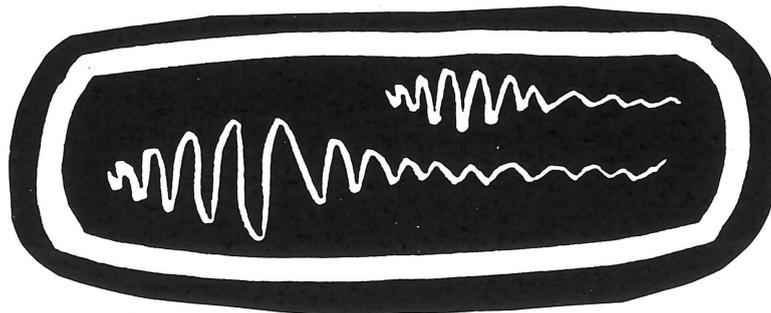
Activists Take Note!

In November 1991, Barbara and I went to Boston to meet with other Women and Religion conveners. While there, a group of us discussed the need for a UU women's caucus. The aim of the caucus would be to move every level of UUA toward a cooperative model of governance based on feminist principles of leadership.

Five months later, six of us from various parts of the country met to continue the dialogue. We shaped a common vision, generated a mission statement, and outlined an organizational structure. We planned the formation of local study and action groups who will participate in continent-wide activities.

The UU Women's Caucus is now ready to expand its circle with a larger number of women. Those of you who join the Caucus in 1992 will be known as "Founding Partners." If you are interested in learning more about the UU Women's Caucus, drop me a note. I will send you an informative brochure.

Amy Jo Smith
2427 NW 104 Ct.
Gainesville, FL 32606
(904) 332-1350



A Gathering of Women in Boca Raton

by Mary H. Cadwell

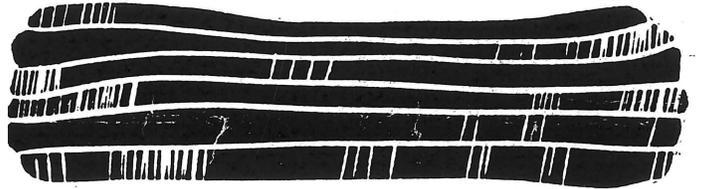
"A Gathering of Women: Celebrating our Diversity" was the theme for our March 15th Women's Sunday service at UUFBR. Eight women joined with Co-minister Sylvia Howe in a shared presentation of readings and personal stories, which opened with the traditional "calling" of the four directions. Musical backdrop for the spoken service included a 14 voice women's choral ensemble in chants arranged by Libana, plus women's piano compositions performed by our Co-Director of Music, Susan Kimball.

This "Women's Sunday Service," in honor of National Women's History Month, is becoming a tradition at the Boca Fellowship. We are happy to share the 1992 service outline, and readings used, with other U-U women for possible use in similar services. Contact Mary Cadwell, W&R Representative (407) 391-3755.

District Support Vitaly Needed

The Florida District makes possible the publishing of *Womanspirit* and enables the Women and Religion Committee to offer its programs at a very low cost. Local UU societies provide operating funds for the Florida District. If this support is lacking or late, the Florida District's programs suffer the effects.

If your local society has not made its contribution to the district, please encourage your Board to see that this is done soon. The following are behind in their payments: Clearwater, Ft. Myers, Gainesville, Hollywood, Naples, St. Croix, and Tallahassee.



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* * * * * SERVING UU WOMEN IN THE FLORIDA DISTRICT * * * * *

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