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Secretary – Bob Lynn Jr.

2009 Annual Report

What a year this has been! There was not a single month in which Toledo JwJ didn't participate in some action or unique activity. During a strategic planning session in 2007 the executive committee set health care reform as the work priority for the next few years. That prioritization will be reflected in this report. However, other work did occur and will be highlighted.

Two new organizations were added to the Toledo JwJ family; the newly established **The Village Church**, and, the **Ohio Conference on Fair Trade**

In 2008 a number of strategic relationships were developed with local, state and national progressive organizations working for health care reform. During 2009 these relationships strengthened our work, and hopefully theirs as well. Regularly scheduled conference calls with activists from **Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage (OCHC)**, **Health Care for America Now (HCAN)**, **HCAN-Ohio**, **Faithful Reform in Health Care**, and **Universal Health Care Action Network (UHCAN)** provided opportunities to plan together and share information on the reform environment. Strong, ongoing relationships with **Toledo Area Ministries (TAM)** - with their weekly e-newsletter, the **Multi-Faith Council of Northwest Ohio**, **Community Shares of NWO**, and the **Erase the Hate Campaign**, enabled us to reach more widely diverse audiences.

As health care reform debates increased, **Northwest Ohio Universal Health Care Action Network (NWO/UHCAN)** became an excellent vehicle to reach those who might not have interacted with JwJ in any other way. NWO/UHCAN provided education, expanded and up-to-date information at a monthly meeting. A core group of regular participants subsequently shared information with their own networks. The unique e-list for this member organization grew from a couple dozen to nearly 500. It was used to provide meeting and action reminders, late breaking information, targeted educational tools, and to elicit rapid response actions.

The year began with **UNITY** meetings in Columbus and Cleveland, facilitated and led by national UHCAN, and sponsored by a number of healthcare activist groups. The goal was to bring the diverse philosophies within the health care reform community together for dialogue, accurate information sharing and to encourage collaboration where appropriate. Toledo JwJ was involved in planning both the initial and follow-up sessions: developing agenda; creating the invitation list, evaluating outcomes and developing strategies for future collaborations.

As has been the case for the past several years, JwJ volunteers participated in the community **Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration** as part of the leadership processional.

During the winter, leaders participated in **OCHC strategic planning**, and joined or endorsed the **Ohio Family Coverage Coalition**, the **Campaign to Protect Ohio's Future**, the **Faithful Reform in Health Care Initiative – Faith Inspired Vision of Health Care** and the **Faith Community Leaders letter in support of EFCA**.

Cover the Uninsured Week in March, again brought Resolutions of Support from both Toledo City Council and the Lucas County Commissioners, solicited by JwJ leadership, and an opportunity to speak (meetings are televised) on the challenges of the local uninsured and the potential for movement in state and national health reform efforts.

The recently developed **Alliance of Informed Citizens of Northwest Ohio**, an affiliate of Ohio ARA, launched into quarterly meetings targeting retirees with timely information – frequently including Medicare and health care reform. JwJ sits on the steering committee, along with other affiliated organizations, and provided an educational table at each public meeting.

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Interfaith Worker Justice calls upon our religious values in order to educate, organize, and mobilize the religious community in the U.S. on issues and campaigns that will improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for workers, especially low-wage workers.

Bob Lynn Jr. --- Secretary JwJ



The final report of the Ohio Department of Insurance, **Ohio CHATs about Healthcare: Voices of the Uninsured** project was released with the Toledo JwJ logo prominently displayed on the Coordinators page. We had assisted with recruitment of participants, site location and facilitation for 2 of the 18 statewide sessions; the second Toledo session targeted ethnic minority participants.

One of our JwJ activists was instrumental in developing – and leading – a **Community Action Board** within the local CLC – another opportunity to share information about JwJ activities.

In March, our social justice chair began a relationship with the local **Organizing For America** (OFA) volunteers and staff, to provide expert information to their networks, on the health care reform proposals moving through the US Congress – she participated in at least ten OFA educational programs, two Women’s Coffees, and numerous rallies through much of Northwest Ohio - receiving great coverage in the local press. OFA activists also joined and promoted most of the JwJ health care related activities. Likewise, events sponsored by **Move-On** were supported and, in one case JwJ recruited a health care provider to deliver the keynote speech.

April 1st brought the first of many “road trips” for JwJ activists. UHCAN Ohio sponsored an **Action Day at the Statehouse**, with the emphasis being the proposed health care reform items in the Ohio budget. Thirteen JwJ members from Toledo and Bowling Green traveled to Columbus for a short educational session followed by meetings with all the area state representatives, or their key staff. One of the Toledo area House Representatives is also Speaker Pro Temp, so the visit to the Speaker’s suite was especially memorable – especially for those who had not visited the statehouse before. On the 17th, eleven of our members were on the road again, this time to Cleveland Heights where we participated in an HCAN-Senator S. Brown sponsored **Forum on Health Care Reform** (HCR).

During the month we endorsed the **Community CARES Campaign** to promote home care and child care provisions over institutional care for the 15,000 individuals with physical/cognitive challenges living in Ohio. We also endorsed and signed on to a **Letter to Congress, supporting EFCA**, authored by IWJ. Our officers became part of the planning efforts for the new **NW Ohio Forum on Comprehensive Immigration Reform**, along with FLOC, the Campaign for Migrant Worker Justice, ACLU of Ohio, the Catholic Diocese, and Advocates for Basic Legal Equality. This relationship led to the presentation of two area forums on the need for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, one in Toledo and one in Tiffin.

The invocation and benediction for the **Workers Memorial Day** program, April 26th, was provided by the Rev. Cheri Holdridge, pastor of the Village Church – our newest member organization - on behalf of JwJ. The United Labor Committee program planners asked that she return in 2010.

Finally, near month end the **Fifth Annual Chili Mac and Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser**. Total income of \$6,105 produced a profit of \$5,100. Very impressive in Toledo’s down economy, during which all local charitable giving has been reduced. The success of the endeavor is totally attributed to the Sponsors and the 30+ volunteers who sell tickets, cook, set up and clear tables, serve the meals, clean up and leave the church in such good condition that we are always welcomed back. In spite of all the hard work – the kitchen crew must have fun – they keep coming back. A professional chef, who frequently visits the event, always compliments the staff on the quality of the food, the amount, and the presentation. It is clear that this event has become a “must do” for many in the progressive community. Just wish the volunteer staff had more time to mix with the crowd.

May Day was an opportunity for CWA 4319 to hold an informational picket at AT&T, to spark contract negotiation talks. **One Union, One Fight, One Future** brought out approximately 150 union members representing most unions in the area – impressive. Both the JwJ and IWJ banners were visible in local press coverage. Toledo JwJ also signed on to a **“Religious Leaders for Justice at Comcast” letter** – along with nearly 300 faith leaders. It was presented at the company’s 2009 annual shareholders meeting. Reports from CWA & IBEW, the unions that represent Comcast workers, indicated the company had become less resistant to negotiating union contracts.

Local NWO/UHCAN and JwJ members participated in a **national HCAN coordinated Call in to Congress**, telling the senators and representatives that we want quality, affordable, health care that can be counted on for everyone in America; and asking them to support a budget with a fast track for health care reform in 2009. This was the first of numerous Call-in efforts as the health care reform bills moved in jerky fashion in the congress.

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JwJ provide a table at the 2nd **TAM Impact Awards Dinner** – informing the participants of the Faithful Visions for Health Care Reform campaign. Later in the summer the same material was made available with a display during the annual Interfaith Blood Drive. The Vote Healthcare purple bus returned to Toledo, and provided media visibility for the event and the faith based link to health care reform.

June created an opportunity for another “road trip”, this time with a chartered bus, allowing 39 area residents to support the Campaign to Protect Ohio’s Future’s rally: **A Reality Check, It’s Time for Leadership**, calling for sufficient funds for vital health, education and social services in the Ohio Budget. After the rally, the participants had the opportunity to talk with one area legislator and staff from 2 other legislative offices.

Sadly, just after leaving our June Steering Committee meeting, Robert Brundage, PhD, an activist with many area organizations, was struck by a teenager, knocked from his bike and sustained what became fatal injuries. He was on his way to another meeting where he planned to distribute flyers promoting the first Interfaith Prayer Service & Vigil for Health Care Reform. During the subsequent week, several vigils were held, and after Bob’s death a very large memorial service with wide community participation at the Collingwood Arts Center (another of Dr. Bob’s passions). JwJ was honored to participate in the vigils, memorial and subsequent honors.

On June 24th, as an ECHO event to an Interfaith Prayer Service in Washington, DC for Health Care for All, the first of four **Interfaith Prayer Service & Vigils** was held in the Toledo area. These events were sponsored by Toledo JwJ & IWJ, and co-sponsored by TAM, the Multi-Faith Council; NWO/UHCAN, UMAT and Faithful Reform in Health Care. Faithful Reform provided basic materials that were adapted for local use. The events were held outside various houses of worship, Augsburg Lutheran, Corpus Christi University Catholic Parish, The Village Church, and the final event on Dec. 17th, was held at the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo. Attendance ranged from 35 to over 100, program participants included clergy and members from the Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Unitarian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist communities. Hundreds of participants signed the **Faithful Visions pledge** during these events.

We Won! During July, it was learned that the OCHC supported state health care reform items had survived the budget process, providing coverage on parent’s plans for dependent youth up to age 28, decreased premiums for those with pre-existing conditions, and significantly improved reporting of expenditures by insurers. The Ohio win, gave activists a boost to continue the national reform work.

Several of our members participated in **Congresswoman Kaptur’s telephone Town Hall meeting** in early August. Earlier in the summer members had joined the Congresswoman’s DC and local health care staff in an **invitation only session** to update local leaders on proposed US House reform language.

Membership in Northwestern Ohio Community Shares, and participation in their fundraiser, **Hot August Night** at the ballpark, provided another chance to set up an informational table, highlighting JwJ’s numerous activities – especially health care reform - and to add new names to our contact list.

September was a huge month for JwJ activities. Another “road trip” took 43 Toledo and BG area activists to a huge HCAN sponsored statewide rally at the Ohio State Fairgrounds, **We Want Health Care Reform & We Want It Now**. Featured was a theme wrapped bus that was touring the country with riders including Senator Sherrod Brown, Congresswoman Kilroy and a number of state elected officials. Toledo JwJ made a unique impression by chanting while approaching the meeting hall. Apparently that is not typical Columbus behavior; all of our banners were then clearly displayed in the hall.

Labor Day always provides a variety of opportunities for visible events. Several local congregations used **IWJ Labor in the Pulpit** materials in a variety of ways, and our activists delivered sermons, speaking on the moral aspects of health care reform in three area churches. JwJ again promoted a health care reform theme in the **Labor Day Parade**, with at least 43 participants, including medical professionals in lab coats, several attorneys, at least seven members of the clergy, activists and family members.

In mid month, many of our members joined the SPAN Ohio, PNHP, and Northwest Ohio Peace Coalition activists in a rally and march **Health Care not War Fare** – promoting a single payer solution. The next day JwJ, NWO/UHCAN, OCHC, and Local 50 sponsored an educational session, **Fix Health Care Now! We Need a Public Option**, presenting: the local problem, the value of non-profit co-ops as a part of the solution, overview of the

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elements in the latest congressional proposals, and status of the public option. Kate Byrne, Health Care Specialist, Congresswoman Kaptur's office, spoke to 50 attendees.

On Saturday the 19th, a **Fix It Now! Rally** was held in a union owned lot across the street from the Congresswoman's office. A strong plea was made for inclusion of a public option. A local band played several selections and food was provided for about 200. The music was quickly followed by speakers including: two uninsured persons, a Toledo city councilman, a local physician, two clergymen, and a representative of Senator Brown. Congresswoman Kaptur made a surprise appearance at the podium. 100 statements supporting the public option were signed as well as 66 OFA postcards, as messages to area members of congress. Activists from several local organizations made this event possible through their significant support. The rally received excellent press coverage.

On the 26th, our social justice chair presented a session at the Northwestern Ohio Synod ELCA **Cross Training Workshop**, utilizing both synod and Faithful Reform Visions for Health Care Reform materials.

The next day, Local 50, SPAN Toledo and PNHP hosted the **Mad As Hell Docs** stop in the Toledo area.

We Moved! On Monday, September 28th, JwJ moved our Steering Committee meetings to the Collingwood Arts Center. Our previous meeting site was no longer available on Monday evenings – and the location chosen was also viewed as another tribute to Bob Brundage.

In October JwJ signed on to a Member of Congress letter authored by national JwJ, ” **Break Up the Banks and Make the Economy Work**”; also joined IWJ's endorsement, both organizational and religious, of a Wage Theft Campaign, **A National Day of Action to Stop Wage Theft**, State Senator Sue Morano, introduced Ohio's first Stop Wage Theft bill.

Members participated in **AFL-CIO National Call-In Days for Health Care Reform**; and the **UFCW 75 Unmask Wal-Mart event**.

Along with TACCA, JwJ sponsored a **program with John & Paula Ewers, and Dan Rutt** highlighting the Ewers many experiences on behalf of workers in Central America, particularly Columbia. Dan, a JwJ activist, had recently visited rural Columbia with a Witness for Peace delegation. In early November, 6 JwJ area activists participated in **SOA events** at Fort Benning, Georgia.

UFCW 75 held a rally – **American Workers Need Health Care Reform**, joined by JwJ activists.

During the Congressional Thanksgiving recess, four JwJ/HCAN activists presented a **Thank You** poster, held a press interview, and spent 45 minutes with Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, to thank her for her vote on the House version of health care reform. Immediately following our visit, an OFA contingent – with many JwJ activists - presented her with a large Thank You card.

JwJ remains active in the **Erase the Hate Campaign**, participating on the steering committee monthly meetings and various activities. One of these activities, sponsored by UMAT was a screening of Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think. Another, sponsored by the Multi-Faith Council, was Creating a More Compassionate Community event, celebrating the new UN Charter for Compassion, including a screening of the film Fremont USA followed by structured dialogue groups. JwJ leadership assisted in group facilitation.

Near the end of the year, JwJ endorsed a **Boycott Home Depot** campaign, sponsored by the Northwestern Ohio Building and Construction Trades Council. Home Depot was building a huge distribution center in nearby Findlay, Ohio, using out of state workers.

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