

# SOPHIA

Stewards Of Prophetic,  
Hopeful, Intentional,  
Action



## Standing Up For Justice

SOPHIA of Waukesha County is on the move. Your faith-based community action organization is living out your values. Good things are happening. We are honored and proud to be the recipients of a major, five-year grant from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development that puts us on solid ground. Our task forces in Immigration, Transit, Treatment Instead of Prison, and Health Care are making great strides. And our Religious Leaders Caucus is energized and responding, as we saw in the great response to the Anti-Hate Prayer Vigil on Sept. 21.

In June, our intern at the time, Rachel Meyers, launched our first quarterly update to help keep members apprised of what your Organizer, Task Forces, and Executive Leadership Team have been up to. Here is our second installment.

## Finance

In July, SOPHIA learned it has been awarded a grant of \$55,000 from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. The award will be renewed each year for five years as long as we meet grant requirements. This grant will help pay for our professional staff, especially in our work advocating for immigrant communities. In the award letter, CCHD Director Ralph McCloud writes that “CCHD is rooted in Jesus’ mission “and animates Catholic teaching, which includes a firm belief in the sacredness and dignity of human life and the conviction that people best fulfill their potential in community.” We are humbled and grateful in this award and affirm along with CCHD the sacredness and dignity of human life.

This grant provides us with great confidence in our work over the next few years, but it is not all we need to sustain this organization. SOPHIA’s annual expenses will exceed \$100,000 this year. Additional funding comes from grants, including significant amounts from Wisconsin Citizen Action in support of our work in health care, from our annual Prayer Breakfast, and from Sustaining Members.

From Oct. 7-14, SOPHIA will conduct a Sustaining Member stewardship campaign to continue to build a broad, dependable financial base. Kickoff will be 9 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 7, at First Congregational United Church of Christ, 100 E. Broadway. If you are a sustaining member now, it is especially important that you join us. Your ideas and connections are needed.

## Transit

Sister Barbara Pfarr, chair of the Transit Task Force, traveled to Washington D.C. in September to accept a national Special Achievement Award from the Sierra Club on behalf of the Waukesha County Transportation Coalition. SOPHIA’s task force created this coalition in partnership with local Sierra Club members.



“Transportation is essential for access to work, food, healthcare and social engagement,” Pfarr said.

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Also in September, the Transit Task Force participated in a statewide Photo Petition campaign on social media to underscore the importance of public transit in the state. SOPHIA members worked hard to assure adequate funding for transit issues in the new state budget and celebrated a modest victory: the new budget includes cuts in the proposed billion dollar highway expansion, increases support for local priorities, and keeps specialized transit needs.

Currently, the task force is increasing its relationship-building with local and regional agencies to pursue ways to improve multi-agency, regional transit cooperation; possibly revive the Complete Streets initiative; and leverage the Foxconn deal to encourage development of rail lines.



## TIP

In August, members of the SOPHIA Treatment Instead of Prison task force met with Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow to discuss the status and future of Waukesha County's Criminal Justice Collaborating Council. The group came away from the meeting encouraged by Farrow's interest and knowledge of the issues. The task force continues to work with WISDOM at the state level to encourage parole reform, fight crimeless revocation, and reduce overall prison populations.

## Immigration

The Immigration Task Force supports legislative efforts to allow the state to issue Driver's Cards to immigrants which will help allow them to work at jobs in local industry and services. In July, the task force launched a new Rapid Response network through a cell phone app that notifies volunteers of traffic stops, searches or other encounters involving immigrants so that they may show up in witness or help in any other way when someone is in danger. The network is slowly building. If you are interested in becoming part of this network, please contact SOPHIA Organizer Bernie Gonzalez.

With the repeal of DACA in September, the task group has been speaking out in opposition to the move, and has conducted workshops in Kenosha and in Waukesha to help eligible DACA recipients reapply. The task force members work with a local immigration attorney in advising people faced with deportation.



## Health care

The task force held a Public Health Priorities meeting on August 9, attended by about 35 people. A representative from Wisconsin Citizen Action spoke about current national and local developments. The task force launched a post card campaign to legislators and encouraged people to become sustaining members.

The Health Care Task Force meets at 10 am on the first Wednesday of the month at First Congregational Church, 100 E. Broadway. SOPHIA plans to send someone to Community Catalyst's Substance Use Disorders Advocacy Convening, Oct. 17-18, in Atlanta, GA. If you are interested in attending, please contact Organizer Bernie Gonzalez.

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## Religious Leaders Caucus

Nearly 60 people turned out for SOPHIA's Ant-Hate Prayer Vigil on the corner outside First Congregational United Church of Christ on Set. 21. Speakers from Muslim, Jewish, Latino, African-American, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Unitarian Universalist communities offered prayers and



inspiration, as well as support for marginalized members of our society who are increasingly under attack.

The Religious Leaders will hold their annual breakfast educational event at 8:30 am Wednesday, Nov. 8, at First Congregational United Church of Christ, 100 E. Broadway. This year's speaker is Dr. Nelia Olivencia, professor at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, who will speak on "The Introduction of Civil Rights Legislation, and Recent Attempt to Rescind All the Rights We Gained From It: Why?" Dr. Olivencia currently serves on the executive board of the national Puerto Rican Studies Association, as president of the Wisconsin Women of Color Network and as a member of the newly created Puerto Rican Relief Fund: South Central Wisconsin.

The Religious Leaders Caucus also plans a series of quarterly lunch meetings for area clergy to offer current and in-depth information on the work of SOPHIA's task forces.

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