Summary of Grants Awarded by the Carolyn Hurdis Fund for Social Justice
Committee: Gail Burchard, Penny Hall, Jeff Berry and Jean Bowen

When longtime UUCSC member Carolyn Hurdis died in February 2021, she left the congregation a generous $50,000 bequest. After working tirelessly throughout her life for racial justice and women's rights, she directed that the funds be used to advance social justice in South County. Members of UUCSC and nearby communities could apply for support for projects that promoted greater understanding and justice. A committee of four of Carolyn's friends reviewed and approved applications to ensure they met her criteria.

Youth and Teen OWL (Our Whole Lives): Lee Cowen and Beth Sorrentino received funds to train facilitators. ($3000).

Adult OWL : Lee Cowen and Beth Sorrentino received funds to train facilitators for the adult program. ($3000)

Peace Dale Elementary School: The Tomaquag Museum Staff presented a program on the culture of the Narragansetts. Caitlyn Restivo and Natalie Herbermann received the grant. ($790)

"There Are No Strangers" at HERA Art Gallery : Barbara Pagh facilitated a grant for an exhibit, which brought together the work of ten artists who immigrated from South America, Central America and Africa. ($1060)

Special Education class at South Kingstown High School : Michelle Steimle received funds to purchase supplies for her incentive program ($750 per semester). The Tomaquag Museum staff also presented two student assemblies at South Kingstown High School on Indigenous food sovereignty, supported by a grant awarded to Rosemary Colao ($900).

Gentle Farm: Pam Santos received a grant to make the farm more accessible and provide some basic amenities. ($750)

Davisville Middle School, North Kingstown : Sandra Makielski applied for and received a grant to support Afro-Asian cultural introductions and related artist programming ($2,500).

Drop-in Community Sewing, UUCSC, Organized and led by Nancy Dean and Rosemary Galiani, to build both skills and community. Sewing machines, ironing and supplies are in the Oneto Room twice monthly.($500)

Playground at Fournier Estates, Peace Dale This contribution was requested by Claudia Swain from Peace Dale Congregational Church acting as fiscal intermediary for the project. ($2500)

Tomaquag Museum
Museum Educators presented on the history of the Narragansetts at an evening event in our sanctuary. Penny Hall applied for funds on behalf of the Social/Racial Justice Team. ($790)

Picking up Stones : "An American Jew Wakes to a Nightmare:" This was a well-attended one-woman play by Sandra Laub, which explored the grief and moral dilemma experienced by many after October 7, 2023, and the war in Gaza. Bina Holzmann from Adult RE arranged for the grant. ($390)

The Silk Road: Davisville Middle School, North Kingstown : An all-school event with food, art, and a puppet show to give students an opportunity to experience Asian and African cultures. The Hurdis Fund supported the program for two years. Sandra Makielski applied for and received the grant. ($2500 for 2 years).

Davisville Middle School, North Kingstown ($2,500)

This cultural broadening program used puppets to educate children on the Silk Road. Spring 2024 and 2025.

Tomaquag Museum,

UUCSC Anti-Racism Committee requested ($700) for two programs on environmental awareness and indigenous food. Both were held 3/2025.

Witness Stones Project,

Kingston Congregational Church requested ($5,000) for a 3 part program. The Witness Stones project is an educational initiative with a mission to restore history and honor the humanity of enslaved individuals who helped build our communities. They provide local archival development, a classroom curriculum to chronicle local history of slavery. The program invited the Compass School middle schoolers to participate. Then placement of witness stones and plaques, honored Cuffey and Sylvia Torrey who were owned by Reverend Richard Torrey.

Beyond the Binary,

UUCSC Anti-Racism Committee requested $1,000 for a forum featuring parents of trans and non-binary children 4/2025. This program was facilitated by Eli Nixon.

Wunder Academy,

Lee Cowen, Religious Exploration Director, UUCSC requested. $2500 was approved but only $450 was spent for scholarships for children to attend 8/2025.

Communication Facilitator

The Committee on Ministry requested $500 for Barbara Farmer, “Meeting with Joy and Empathy” 05/2025

We Are All Readers

TANK, North Kingstown requested $2,000 (Our funds were used to obtain a greater sum by encouraging matching gifts.) to support their 4th annual Community Festival emphasizing inclusion and distributed free books to attendees. 04/2025

Beyond the Binary, UUCSC

Anti-Racism Committee requested $600 to support a panel discussion featuring non-binary students and young adults. This was facilitated by Eli Nixon, 4/2026.

Kingian Nonviolence Training,

Cathy Solomon asked Claire Sartori to organize a one day training. This non-violence training provides a methodology for appropriate conflict resolution. Thupten Tendar and multiple trainers from the Center for Nonviolence at URI led the discussion. 3/2026 $400

Davisville Middle School, North Kingstown

This successful program draws large community interest on the issues of hunger. The Empty Bowls Project received $1,000. Donations from the sales of the bowls benefited Dorcas International Institute 02/2026

Juneteenth Celebration

Johnnie Rodriguez requested $700 for speakers including Sylvia Soares and Charles Roberts. Awards were presented to local residents, including in memoriam to a black revolutionary soldier Thomas Ray. Sponsored by the Westerly Anti-racism group. 06/2026

Wunder Academy

Scholarships for 7 children to attend 08/2026. $333. All remaining funds are committed to this program in perpetuity. $5,116 remains, which the Committee has voted to set aside for this program.