

Recipients of the Joan Lindeman Interfaith Opportunities Award for 2014 are Amherst's Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, along with its partnering organization Critical Connections in East Longmeadow, and the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst. These awards are given by the Amherst area Interfaith Opportunities Network (ION), a lay interfaith organization that strengthens communication among the participating religious congregations for education and collaboration. The awards are given to individuals or groups in recognition of exceptional efforts to promote interfaith cooperation and to increase understanding of and respect for all religious faiths, plus they also honor Joan Lindeman, the recently retired founder of ION.

The Karuna Center and Critical Connections were recognized for their efforts to provide events where community members could engage in an analysis of the relationship among Muslims, Christians, Jews and others in order to lay the foundation for mutual understanding and respect. The Unitarian Universalist Society was commended for its program Our Neighboring Faiths, in which seventh and eighth graders were offered the opportunity to increase their awareness of other faith communities by visitations to several houses of faith, follow-up discussion and a final presentation to their own congregation.

Everyone in the Amherst-Hadley wider community is invited to recommend individuals or groups who have made exceptional efforts to increase understanding of and respect for all religious faiths during 2015. Please check the ION website (www.interfaithamherst.org) for more details on how to make a nomination.



On left: Olivia Stokes Dreier, Executive Director, Karuna Center for Peacebuilding
On right: Mehlaqa Samdini, Founder & Executive Director, Critical Connections

Rev. Alison A. Wohler, minister Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst with some participants



in Neighboring Faiths program. Left to right: Augusta Fricke, Lilah Redonnet, Anna Stanforth