
SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2023

THE COMMUNICATOR

FOOTHILLS UNITARIAN CHURCH



Labyrinth Walk at the 2023 BaseCamp for New Members, held at Plymouth Congregational Church, this past June



Blessing of Our Animal Friends with Rev. Sean

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THE AMAZING END THAT IS OUR NEW BEGINNING

REV. GRETCHEN HALEY

*“What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to
make a beginning.*

The end is where we start from.”

T.S. Eliot

We finally find ourselves on the precipice of a huge finish line: the completion of our new sanctuary and building expansion. Every day I am compelled to walk around the campus to see what new thing has been completed - and every day there is something that shows we're almost there.

This finish line represents the culmination of more than 15 years worth of dreaming, planning, working, and giving. It represents countless hours of volunteer and staff time, and it represents perseverance through disappointment, setbacks, delays, and seemingly insurmountable fundraising requirements. It represents generosity from over 300 households, and it represents an investment and an act of faith in our future. It is especially meaningful to celebrate this milestone as we also celebrate the 125 year anniversary of our congregation.

We are thrilled to officially announce that we will celebrate our first Sunday in our new sanctuary on October 29th.

We will have two service options at our usual times, 8:30 and 10:30, with receptions after each service. We are planning an amazing celebratory service, so it isn't to be missed.

After our first big internal celebration, we will hold a ribbon-cutting Grand Opening ceremony on Saturday, December 2nd, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

We will be offering tours, and conversations about how we can be a resource both for our congregation and for our wider community. We will also have interactive experiences for kids and families, music, and opportunities to learn about our justice commitments - not to mention food and drink throughout the whole afternoon. We hope you can join us, and please invite friends and people in your network. This is a great chance to share more about who we are, and who we are continually striving to be.

With all of these finish lines, it can be easy to lose sight of the way this moment also marks an incredible new beginning, what is truly a new era for our congregation.

We know that what we have been building has never been just about a building. We have been building a way to share what we love about Foothills with more people, to grow our impact in our wider community, to reach new generations and greater diversity, and to keep looking forward to the next 125 years of our church and investing in the gift we can be for all those yet to come.

New beginnings have a lot of great energy and joy. And, let's be honest, they can often also feel pretty awkward. Because you are doing a lot of things for the first time. And most first times are messy, and inefficient, and don't quite live up to expectations.

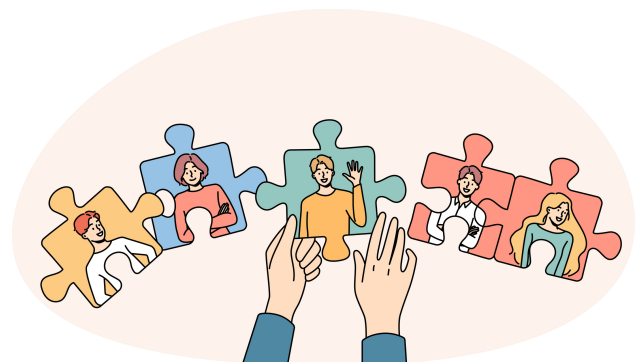
It's why it's helpful to encounter new beginnings with a beginner's mind. Which can be a challenge for those of us who are definitely not new to Foothills! But in a lot of ways, the new building will make us all newcomers. Like we said in our March series, We're all new here! All learning how we will be together in this space.

What will be our “section” in the new sanctuary? What view will we prefer? Where will we look for lyrics, and what’s the best view of the foothills? How can we best sneak in a few minutes late, and how will the new all-gender bathrooms work? Which age kids go to which classrooms, and can we use the new elevator? And for those of you online, how will the new cameras work, and the sound system, and will it feel the same - or totally different?

We are all newcomers at this starting line because this is all new. At all of our ages and stages of life, we all get to be here together for the first time. We all get to learn and grow together. It is a gift.

This is one of the reasons we have decided to consider the year ahead, our Year of Awe. What else can this moment bring us to but that overwhelming feeling of gratitude and wonder? Awe inspires gratitude, generosity, and eases anxiety. It’s a perfect antidote for any awkwardness or other challenges we may face. Not to mention, awe will be a great tool to turn to for the upcoming presidential election year! Look for more information about our Year of Awe in the weeks and months ahead.

I am filled with awe and gratitude to be on this journey - at this finish line and this starting point - with you.



A NEW FOOTHILLS CHURCH DIRECTORY!!

Have you ever wanted/needed to connect with someone you met at Foothills and wished for a church directory so you could get an email or phone number? Or match a face to a name or a name to a face?

Well, a new directory will be available soon and we hope your information will be included. But you must make that happen!

This directory will be an online version (although, by request, a hard copy will be available).

For those who will use the online directory, you will first want to go to your App Store and download Church Center onto your cell phone. Yes, there are a few hoops to jump through, but once that's done, you will be able to easily:

- 1) check yourself into church on Sunday
- 2) access the church calendar
- 3) view active church groups, AND
- 4) access the Church Directory

You will be able to update your information in the directory yourself (ex., changes in address/telephone number) and renew your photo as desired.

Having everyone, members, and friends, included in the directory is vitally important to enhance our sense of belonging and companionship. Our last directory was created in 2017 and so badly needs updating. We plan to have this edition available in September 2023.

Please join others at Foothills to help make this Foothills church directory complete by adding your name and choice of information. You can email your intent to join to Staff member Jenn Powell at jenn@foothillsuu.org who will then send you the secure link to add your information to the online church directory. Thank you.

Your Foothills UU 2023 Directory Volunteer team:

Lynn Young, Jane Everham, Lola Sorenson, Sue Taylor, and Kay Williams



Water Ceremony 2023

GRANT AWARDS FOR FOOTHILLS UNITARIAN

BY KELSEY DIASTRA, CREATIVE & COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

We are thrilled to share that we have been awarded three significant grants that will greatly support our ongoing justice work and service initiatives. These grants not only recognize our commitment to making a positive impact on our community but also provide us with the means to expand and strengthen our efforts.

1. The Fund for Unitarian Universalist Social Responsibility - \$20,000 for Justice and Service Ministries. We are very pleased to share we have received \$20,000 (\$17,000 in operations support and \$3,000 for technical assistance, including important software) to fund our Justice and Service Ministries. This grant not only empowers us to sustain and grow our justice and service ministries, it also exemplifies that Foothills Unitarian is a leader in our faith community - in bringing Unitarian Universalist values to life through action.
2. The Bohemian Fund Grant - \$5,000 for LBGT+ Justice Work: We are delighted to announce that we have received a generous grant of \$5,000 from The Bohemian Fund. This grant is specifically dedicated to supporting our LBGT+ youth programs, such as True You, and reaffirms our shared commitment to creating a more inclusive Northern Colorado. With this funding, we will be able to further foster a culture of belonging for LBGT+ youth in our area.
3. The Community Foundation Grant - \$6,920.00 for Justice and Service Initiatives: Lastly, The Community Foundation has generously awarded us a grant of \$6,920.00. This grant is intended to support our justice and service initiatives in collaboration with other area nonprofits. By deepening partnerships with other nonprofits, we can amplify our collective impact and create meaningful change in our community.

These combined grants amounting to \$31,920 are not just financial milestones; they symbolize recognition of our shared dedication to extending the reach of justice.

With the momentum of these grants, we are working to amplify our impact even further. We aim to match 50% of the grants we've received – \$15,000 – through individual donations.

As of now, we've achieved 9% of our \$15,000 match goal. To those who have already contributed, we extend our heartfelt gratitude. If you haven't had the chance and are able to contribute to our goal, you can make a gift by bringing a check to the church (please put “grant match” in the memo) or by giving at foothillsuu.org/donate. If you give online, please email kelsey@foothillsuu.org, so we know to count your gift toward our grant match goal! Thank you. Together, we are stewards of a more just and loving future.



Courageous Families enjoy a Potluck Barbecue/Brunch!

SUMMER FUN FOR FAMILIES AT FOOTHILLS

BY ELEANOR VANDEUSEN, DIRECTOR OF FAMILY MINISTRY

Children, youth, and families at Foothills have enjoyed a beautiful summer of fun and fellowship.

A group of parents have formed a new group called *Courageous Families!*

This group provides a place for families to gather informally with their kids for fun and connection. With leadership from Stephanie and Brad Neuberger and Marissa Folz, this group has hosted a potluck barbecue/brunch twice a month after church on our playground. This has provided a sweet opportunity for families to spend more time together - time for parents to chat, extended time for kids to play, and for everyone to enjoy hot dogs (vegan and regular of course) and favorite dishes brought from home. The group also has a GroupMe text group, providing a way to plan spontaneous meetups at events around town like concerts, festivals, and the food truck rally. Thank you to Stephanie, Brad, and Marissa for launching this wonderful place for families to connect.

We plan to resume our *Sunday Parent Circle* this fall.

Stay tuned for a date that the Parent Circle will begin shortly after the grand opening of our new building. The Parent Circle will meet at 9:30 a.m., right before the 10:30 a.m. Family Church Service. Childcare will be provided.

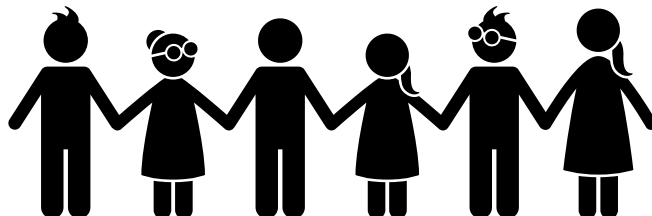


Our annual Chalice Camp for Kids was a huge success!

July 31 - August 4, we hosted 62 kid campers ages 5-12 and 26 youth as counselors for our 2023 Camp. Our camp theme was “Wonder”, and we spent our week wondering about love and justice, the beauty of nature, different ideas about God, interconnection, and how life began. Church members came and shared their gifts and passions with our kids. Willow Sedam led an art experience where we created “Be More Love” creatures. AnneMarie Fore led a Sound Bath experience for the children with beautiful singing bowls and instruments, and Scott Denning shared the cosmic story of creation with our campers. We were minimally impacted by the ongoing construction, thanks to Jenn and Katie, who worked with the contractors to work around us. We also spent two half days at nearby parks and natural areas, enjoying the gorgeous green, after so much rain this year. A highlight of our camp is our annual Blessing of our Animal Friends, with blessings provided by our Ministers Gretchen and Sean.

We could not provide this camp without our Youth Counselors, who form teams of four to lead groups of 10 children ranging in age from 5 -12. Their caring and leadership of our kids make it a wonderful experience for all.

We can't wait for more families returning to church this fall, when we will have even more groups for children and youth in our newly refreshed spaces! Please reach out to me at eleanor@foothillsuu.org if you have any questions about our programs for children, youth and families.





SUMMER
CAMP

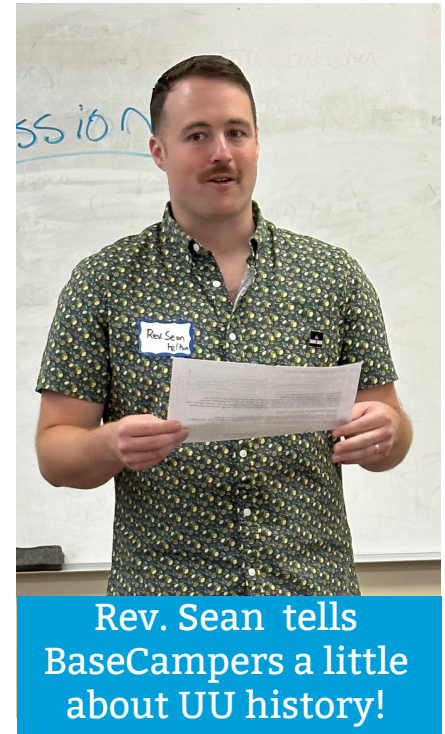
A graphic featuring two stylized green pine trees on the left and right. In the center, two brown wooden signs are stacked vertically, with the word 'SUMMER' on the top sign and 'CAMP' on the bottom sign, both in yellow, bold, sans-serif capital letters.



BASECAMP SUMMER 2023!

BY LAUREN FARLEY,
FAMILY MINISTRY & ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

On July 22, Rev. Sean Neil-Barron and Family Ministry and Engagement Coordinator Lauren Farley led our third BaseCamp of the year! BaseCamp is one of the steps on the path to membership at Foothills. BaseCamp is a one-day retreat that equips attendees with the tools and relationships to connect into our church community, to engage Unitarian Universalism, and to find their place in our Foothills mission to unleash courageous love in Northern Colorado and beyond.



We are so grateful to our nearby friends and community faith partners at Plymouth UCC who gave us use of their delightfully air-conditioned building for the day, especially because it gave us the opportunity to share a meditative and centering walk through their beautiful outdoor Labyrinth.

BaseCamp is truly for everyone. A few of our attendees were so brand new to Foothills and Fort Collins that BaseCamp was their very first interaction with us - what an honor! We also had several folks with us who have been part of our community for years already and wanted to refresh and renew. Others included a young adult who grew up in the congregation and is now stepping on to their own faith path, some long-time UUs new to Fort Collins, and other folks exploring Unitarian Universalism for the first time.

Foothills is a community of care and belonging, and long-time Members Jane Everham and Heidi Schaub embodied those values by volunteering to deliver lunch to BaseCampers, staying to eat with the group.

They also participated in an exercise where we all explored our personal religious backgrounds, theological orientations, and spiritual practices.

We know that it can be quite a journey to choose a new church home, or perhaps to choose a church home for the very first time, or to reorient and refresh your sense of call and connection to Foothills if you've been around for a long time. If you are a newcomer or are seeking a place to renew, BaseCamp is your next step. You can sign up today at foothillsuu.org/basecamp. You can also reach out to Lauren at Lauren@foothillsuu.org anytime with questions or if you'd like to show care for future Foothills members by serving at a BaseCamp!

COMFORT CHOIR

BENJAMIN HANSON, MUSIC DIRECTOR

One Friday afternoon over the summer, I got an unexpected call from Rev. Elaine. She told me she was going to visit a Foothills member who was in hospice care. and was nearing the end of their life. She wanted to know if I could help share some music at their bedside. Elaine and I, plus a handful of other singers from Foothills, went over to visit them the following day. We shared a beautiful moment with them and their family. We sang songs of comfort and love, shared treasured memories, joined hands, and offered a simple blessing of peace for their journey.

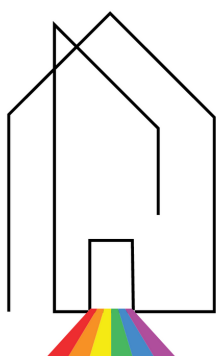
Rev. Elaine and I had another opportunity to sing for a member of our community at the end of their days later in the summer, and the experience was just as magical. It is such a privilege to facilitate a moment of beauty during a transitional or difficult time in a person's life. Music can surround and hold us in a way nothing else can, and the feeling of peace it can create is profound.

Singing groups like this are called “threshold choirs,” because they specialize in sharing songs to honor the transition at the end of life. There is a long tradition of threshold singing groups from all around the world, consisting of people who feel called to use music to bring beauty into a person’s final days and to honor their passing.

After seeing what an impact we were able to make by sharing our music, Rev. Elaine and I started to think about how we could continue to make this experience available to other members of our community. We’ve begun organizing a group of people from Foothills who will be prepared to make visits to hospitals, hospice centers, people’s homes, or wherever else a song is needed. This “comfort choir,” as I’ve been calling it, will be a collaboration between the church’s caring ministries and music program and will be launching this fall. I’ve experienced firsthand just how powerful it can be to share a song during a challenging time, and I’m so happy we will be able to offer visitations from this comfort choir to anyone who needs it.



The final Sunset Summer Vespers service took place on Tuesday, August 22.



Rainbow Villages

RAINBOW VILLAGES

BY REV. SEAN NEIL-BARRON

In the wake of a tidal wave of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and hate sweeping our nation, I want to share with you what has been giving me hope.

For the last three months, we have been working at Foothills behind the scenes to launch what we are calling "Rainbow Villages." Rainbow Villages creates sanctuary and support for transgender and nonbinary people and their families who are seeking a safe haven away from states with anti-trans laws.

In a recent Data For Progress survey, it was alarming to learn that hundreds of thousands of transgender individuals have already left their home states, and over a million more are considering doing the same in the coming months. Many are in need of active support from wider communities to make their relocation possible. That's where Rainbow Villages come in.

In May of this year, we here at Foothills were contacted by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, an organization founded in WWII to help Jews and other persecuted people escape occupied Europe, to aid in an underground effort to assist Trans and Nonbinary people and their families who were relocating to Colorado to find sanctuary.

The ask was big: find free housing for three months, build a support system for jobs, medical care, and other related life needs, and build a community of care and connection for those who would settle here in Northern Colorado. An amazing group of humans from Foothills not only said yes to the challenge, but two families in our congregation opened their homes and have made it possible for us to welcome and support two people who have already joined us here in Northern Colorado. I am filled with gratitude that our congregation embraced this missional work and is stepping into leadership in a gap no one else was filling.

With so many more individuals and families seeking refuge in Northern Colorado, Rainbow Villages needs to expand. We will welcome more families locally, and I am working with congregations in Colorado Springs, Golden, and Longmont to start Rainbow Villages in those areas. We take up this work because we believe in unleashing courageous love and providing a safe space under the rainbow. And now we need your help to make sanctuary a reality for as many people as possible.

Here are three important ways you can get involved in this critical work:

1. Get Involved as Part of the Rainbow Villages Crew:

We are looking for people like you to be part of a village of support. We need hosts to offer space in their homes, and we need volunteers to provide support in navigating government programs, accessing healthcare, finding employment, and establishing social connections. By joining forces, we can provide a warm and welcoming community for those settling in our area.

Let us know if you're interested at foothillsuu.org/rainbowvillagecrew.

2. Give Money to Support Rainbow Villages:

Our effort to support our new neighbors requires financial resources. Your generous contribution will help us address the practical needs of those seeking sanctuary, respond to their immediate needs, and set them up for success in their new lives. We're also seeking a significant donation of \$30,000 to rent a house and support a family moving here. Your contribution, no matter the amount, will make a meaningful impact and allow us to continue this vital work.

[Give at foothillsuu.org/rainbowvillagefund.](https://foothillsuu.org/rainbowvillagefund)

3. Lean into Your Own Discomfort:

It's essential to recognize that many trans individuals live in discomfort and even unsafe environments daily. Despite not fully understanding all the terms and complexities of gender and maybe sometimes not knowing what to say, we urge you to lean into your discomfort and step in and support these individuals anyway. A great resource to help build your competency and understanding is "Beyond the Gender Binary" by Alok Vaid-Menon.

Thank you for considering these calls to action. Together, we can make a difference and create a safe and inclusive space for those in need of a new home.

Together, we can further the work of liberation.



WELLSPRING 2023-2024 UPDATE

BY THE WELLSPRING LEADERSHIP TEAM: JANE EVERHAM, SUE FERGUSON, KAREN HARDER & LOLA SORENSEN

Wellspring is the 10-month UUA program of spiritual deepening that Rev Sean brought to our church in 2016 and has been offered yearly since. Wellspring is a great next step for committed UUs who are looking to deepen their lived faith. A full description of the various Wellspring programs is available at foothillsuu.org/wellspring, but let's see what is happening this coming year at Foothills.

In August, a Wellspring Sources (WS-S) group is starting with nine participants and two facilitators. Wellspring Sources, the first and only required program in the Wellspring offerings, focuses on our six UU Sources linked here <https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/sources>.

WS-S is also an opportunity to learn a new way to experience a small group – using reflection rather than discussion, and to deeply connect with a small group of fellow congregants. UU Wellspring provides the participants with a rich curriculum. The group meets for two hours twice monthly for ten months. Ninety-two+ congregants have experienced WS-S and committed to the five-legged stool required by all levels of Wellspring. These five legs are:

1. Commit to attending all sessions.
2. Commit to reading all e-materials provided prior to each session.
3. Commit to daily spiritual practice.
4. Commit to monthly spiritual guidance. (There is a minimal cost, and the church has some scholarship money available).
5. Commit to putting your faith into action.

Mark your calendar – In 2024-2025 we hope to offer three groups including one evening group. Watch the church newsletter next spring for applications.

Additionally, we have formed three groups of the next level of offerings called Sacred Arts which combines creativity and spirituality through a UU lens. Each Sacred Arts group consists of six to eight participants. The second level Wellspring programs are self-facilitated, each participant taking a turn or two at preparing and facilitating a group meeting.

Other ten-month offerings after WS-S are: Spiritual Practices, Faithful Action, Sacred Arts, and Spiritual Ancestors. A shorter program called Sacred Earth, which does not have a prerequisite, will begin in the new year in partnership with Journey groups. Questions? Just ask us.



Meet the Editor!

Andrea Hidalgo is honored to serve as editor for the Foothills Communicator, a position that resonates deeply with her. A Fort Collins native, she returned to the area after a long absence in 2020, and joined the Foothills community in December 2021.

A former newspaper reporter and graphic designer, Andrea works as

a Product Operations Manager for TD Synnex in Louisville, and lives here in Fort Collins with her fiancé, Corey Bairre, daughter Tobie, two dogs, one cat, and a snake! She enjoys cooking and writing in her spare time. Through her work with the newsletter, Andrea is excited to bring members news of upcoming and ongoing events, and highlight the good work done at Foothills, to bring our values of compassion, inclusivity, and positive impact to the wider Front Range community.

UPDATE ON GROUPS AT FOOTHILLS AND OUR NEW SHARED MINISTRY COVENANTING PROCESS

REV. SEAN NEIL-BARRON

Want to hear something incredible? Over the past three months, more than 24 of our Foothills groups and ministries have successfully completed their Shared Ministry Covenant (SMC). Now, if you're reading that sentence and wondering what in the world an SMC is, don't worry, we've got you covered.

Shared Ministry Covenant: Our Mosaic Tiles

Imagine Foothills as a grand, colourful mosaic, showcasing the work of a love so courageous it literally changed everything. Each group is a unique tile, offering its own vibrant hues and textures.

The SMC is how each tile finds its place in the mosaic, aligning with our collective vision and enriching the overall pattern. It's our way of ensuring that all groups resonate with Foothills' mission.

Less metaphorically, the SMC is an articulation of what each group is up to and how they are living out our mission. And it's not simply the articulation that matters, it's the process by which each group has a moment to stop and reflect on what they have accomplished, what they have learned, and where they are going. And to receive meaningful feedback from one another, and members of our staff team.

Review Cycle: Our Evolving Mosaic

Core to our faith is the claim that 'truth continues to be revealed'. This conviction shapes our mosaic, making it a living, evolving artwork. We have designated three times a year that we will intentionally review our mosaic -- in May, November, and January.

There are times when new groups and initiatives will be considered, and all existing groups that are ongoing will go through the review process. If you're a group leader, don't worry! Once you have a review completed, you are good to go for a whole year. This process, which is initiated by the Board of Trustees, allows us to see how our mission is living out in our groups, who are truly the heart of our church.

Nuturing Group Leaders

This year we are bringing an intentional focus on supporting our Group Leaders. We have already had more than 60 people attend Group Leader Trainings and will continue to host those throughout the year, alongside other trainings in small group facilitation, governance, anti-racism, and trans/queer inclusion. And it doesn't stop there. This year we are piloting monthly leaders-only small groups, led by our Ministry Team. Plus, our dedicated staff lead, Jenn Powell, is always ready to provide support on the technical sides of building use and our online groups system, Planning Center Online. This empowering environment ensures our group leaders are not only prepared for their tasks, but are growing personally, too. Let's continue honing our skills and weaving our colorful threads into the ever-evolving tapestry of Foothills.



Produce from the Community Garden, planted, tended and harvested by church members! Thanks to these folks, Sunday service attendees were able to pick up and take home produce August 20!



JOYS & SORROWS

We mourn the losses and celebrate the lives of these members of our community:

- Geoffrey Lake, son of Steve and Roberta Lake, who died on July 11 at age 49.
- Bob Fromme, who died on July 27 at age 92.
- Art Leissa, who died on July 28 at age 91.
- Francie Lane, who died July 29 at age 87.
- Karen Hart, who died August 4 at age 74.
- Dan Leatherman, who died August 23 at age 85.

We celebrate with:

- Bill Timpson and Gailmarie Kimmel, whose daughter, Kellee Campbell Timpson, married Foothills community member Mike Truitt on July 17.
- Chris Wilcox and Joann Clark, whose daughter, Kate Wilcox, married Eric Dooley-Feldman on August 12.
- Katy Kohnen and Dan Siegfried, whose first grandchild, Morrison James Dunn, was born July 19.
- Erin Hottenstein and David Grumbles, whose grandson, Henry, was born on July 16.
- John and Jennifer Dunkle, whose grandson, Harold George Stephenson, was born July 18.
- Laurie D'Audeney, whose grandson, Rowan Field D'Audeney was born on June 6.

