

**Information about Our Whole Lives (OWL) for 8<sup>th</sup> graders**  
**First Unitarian Universalist Society**  
**2016-2017 Program Year**

Greetings!

This information is both for families within our congregation and for all others who are interested in our OWL comprehensive human sexuality program.

Overview

The OWL curriculum we use is written for a 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade age range. At First UU, most participants are 8<sup>th</sup> graders, though a few families wish to enroll their children in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Additionally, there are various reasons why a few 9<sup>th</sup> graders sometimes request OWL as well, and we welcome their applications.

OWL is actually a comprehensive sexuality curriculum *series*. There are components available for various age groups, including young children and adults. We are excited to be working on offering more levels of OWL in the future! You can find out more about all of OWL on our website ([uusociety.org](http://uusociety.org)). You can also view a pdf which includes an introduction to the middle school program, its goals, assumptions, and values.

OWL Teachers

OWL is taught by a team of volunteer teachers, each of whom has completed a required, 15-hour training in the Do's, Don't's, and How To's of implementing the lessons. It is a highly acclaimed, well-written and comprehensive program, and teachers are trained to follow it essentially to the letter. Two or three gender-diverse teachers lead each class session.

Each year, the OWL teaching team is comprised of lead teachers and substitutes. We strive to have a diversity of gender identities represented in the team. Several of our teachers have been teaching for multiple years and usually each year, we bring at least one new teacher onto the team. We take care to recruit prospective OWL teachers who have demonstrated commitment to teaching and/or who have relevant professional experience (ie social work, medicine, etc.).

Plans for this OWL year

Over the last number of years, we've watched the interest in OWL grow, so much so that we've begun to explore how to increase our capacity to serve even more participants. While eventually, we'd like to be able to run two groups, for now, we can only run one, which can take up to 20 participants.

## OWL Application process

The value and importance that this curriculum has for UU families, combined with the strong reputation it has gained in the wider Burlington community, has meant a need for us to develop a clear and fair process for families to express to us their interest in enrolling their child in OWL. We have therefore created a special application form, the link to which you will find on this website. **All families, whether part of First UU or not, must first submit the OWL Application form to express their desire to enroll their child in OWL.**

Important instructions are included in the application form itself.

Interested? Mark your September calendars now:

**Parents of OWL participants are required to attend an introductory orientation** before the program begins, where they will receive a special OWL Permission Slip, which must be signed in order for their child to participate. We strongly expect all custodial parents of each child, who reside locally, and who can, to attend an orientation. At minimum, one parent must attend. Orientations are held at First UU. We offer two orientation times, in order to accommodate busy schedules:

- 12:15-2:15 PM on Sunday, September 25, (lunch provided)
- 5:30-7:30 PM on Wednesday, September 28 (light supper provided)

## OWL class schedule

Classes meet Sunday mornings. Each class session is 1 ½ hours long, from 11-12:30; We offer several double sessions, which run one hour longer: from 11-1:30.

OWL starts the first Sunday in October, and it usually runs into early-mid April. The program has a strict attendance policy, such that a student who misses more than three sessions will be asked not to continue with the class. To facilitate everyone's compliance with the policy, OWL has a special schedule which avoids Sundays on long weekends and during local public school vacations. This schedule, which lists Sundays when there is no OWL, as well as Sundays when we will have "double sessions," will be distributed at the parent orientations.

## OWL Program cost

OWL costs significantly more to provide than our other religious education programs. This is due largely to annual expenses incurred in training new teachers, but also to paying honoraria for several guest presenters and panelists, and special supplies for the class. Therefore, participants must either pay a program fee or be currently contributing members or friends of First UU for the OWL program year. Please see details in the application form.

## Registration for Religious Education as an OWL participant

Because OWL is part of First UU's Religious Education Program, participants (whether UUs or not) must register in our R. E. Program, along with completing the OWL application form. Due to some systems upgrades currently in process at First UU, the 2016-2017 registration form will hopefully be ready by mid-June. UU families registered in the previous year will receive email notification that it is ready. Otherwise, please check our website ([www.uusociety.org](http://www.uusociety.org)) and find access to it via the "Register Now" part of the Religious Education menu. Make sure you complete the form for the proper year!

## Questions?

We've tried to provide the answers to all your OWL questions on our website, but if you have further questions, please contact Martha Dallas, Director of Religious Education, at 862-5630 x28 or [martha@uusociety.org](mailto:martha@uusociety.org).