

Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo

Religious Education Prospectus

2011-2012



Interim Minister: Margret A. O'Neill

Director of Religious Education: Sonja Jensen

Religious Education Committee Chair: Jesse Goldberg

Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo

695 Elmwood Avenue

Buffalo, NY 14222

Phone: 716-885-2136

E-mail: dre@buffalouu.com

Welcome to the Religious Education Program at UUCB

We are excited to have you here, and want to make it easy for you to get to know us. Please check in at the Religious Education Table in the Parish Hall before or after the service. There you will find information about upcoming events, resources for sharing Unitarian Universalism with your children, and friendly faces to introduce you to other families.

Our program is inclusive of all kinds of children and families. If your child has special needs, please speak to the Director of Religious Education to collaboratively determine the best way we can welcome your child.

We have a team of committed teachers who value your children. We seek to help our children develop their spirituality in such a way that they carry it with them when they leave our walls.

Each class has an accepting atmosphere that provides a mix of spiritual practices, stories and learning, faith-in-action, and UU Identity building.

We hope that your family makes its spiritual home with us at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo.

How to Get the Most Out of Religious Education

1. Attend regularly. It is the cumulative effect of weekly messages building on each other that help your child get a firm grounding in their Unitarian Universalist Faith.
2. Read the take home materials. Reinforce (or challenge) the values that your children are learning from us when you go home. Have your child share what they have learned.
3. Teach! Teaching is a spiritual practice in itself, and for many people is a very rewarding experience that enriches and deepens their own identities as Unitarian Universalists.
4. Participate in community events. Get to know the other families and help your children see themselves as members of a warm, diverse and inspirational community.
5. Model your own spiritual development. Share rituals with your children, and talk with them about your spiritual practices. Consider taking an adult Religious Education class.
6. Contribute. Supplies, curricula, teacher training, professional staff and our building require financial resources as a foundation for quality Religious Education ministry.



A church is a learning community. At its best, it is a nurturing and challenging place in which children, youth and adults create the foundation to live their values in the world. Religious Education is a central part of our Unitarian Universalist faith tradition, supporting our commitment to open-minded inquiry, reason and spirituality.

The UUCB Religious Education program for children and youth is designed to engage and develop a child's reason and imagination, to ignite a passion for justice, and to support their development through the growing years. As a community of liberal faith, we provide a child with grounding in a Unitarian Universalist identity along with openness to world religious traditions. We encourage a child's questions and exploration along with the development of core values and commitments to guide their life in the world.

As we invite children into the learning spaces of classroom, sanctuary and social hall, we also invite the entire family to explore all this vibrant church has to offer, and to become part of this loving community of faith in the historic liberal tradition of Unitarian Universalism. See you in church!

~ Rev. Margret A. O'Neill, **Interim Minister**



A pioneering Religious Educator, Maria Harris made the excellent observation that: "The congregation is the curriculum."

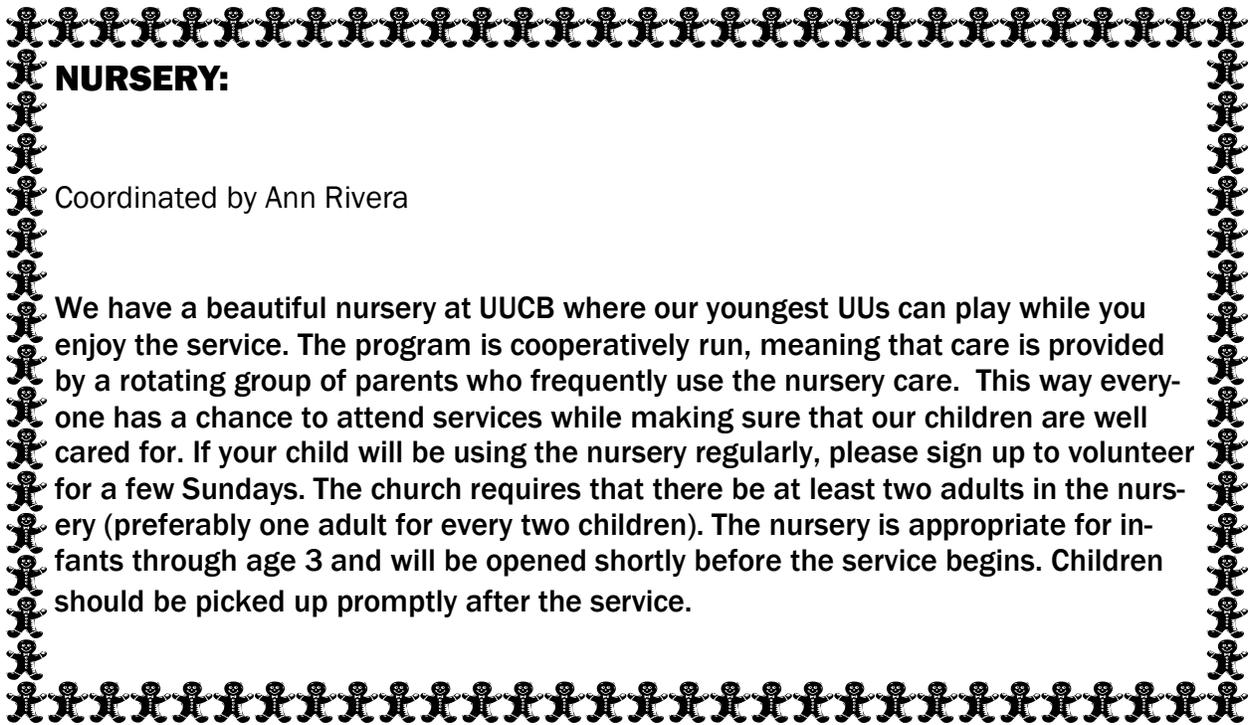
We offer many ways to learn and explore our faith at UUCB, but ultimately it is how we put our faith into action that teaches our children what it means to be a Unitarian Universalist.

At UUCB, our children join with us for high quality worship and music. They delight in the beauty of nature in our lovely gardens where children are allowed to play. At least monthly we have a community lunch where the entire community comes together to break bread and share soup and both children and adults work together to serve.

Children march with gay adults and straight allies in the Gay Pride parade, and help us to prepare for our homeless guests each quarter when we host Family Promise. Youth engage in mission trips to immerse themselves in service learning. They see the diversity in our midst and it is just a part of who we are; A congregation of friends, parents, and elders, all on this beautiful and tender planet.

Sunday morning religious education lays the foundation for all of these things. But it does not stop there. It's in living our religion that our faith comes alive. Come walk with us on this great journey.

~Sonja Jensen, **Director of Religious Education**



NURSERY:

Coordinated by Ann Rivera

We have a beautiful nursery at UUCB where our youngest UUs can play while you enjoy the service. The program is cooperatively run, meaning that care is provided by a rotating group of parents who frequently use the nursery care. This way everyone has a chance to attend services while making sure that our children are well cared for. If your child will be using the nursery regularly, please sign up to volunteer for a few Sundays. The church requires that there be at least two adults in the nursery (preferably one adult for every two children). The nursery is appropriate for infants through age 3 and will be opened shortly before the service begins. Children should be picked up promptly after the service.

Circle Time

A UUCB Curriculum

Ages 3-5

Written and taught by: Eileen Katz and Lucy Sloan

Our Sunday pre-kindergarten program has been staffed for many years by Eileen Katz and Lucy Sloan who create the curriculum in celebration of Unitarian Universalist values every year in collaboration with the children. In the past they have covered civil rights, bible stories, family diversity, and celebration of nature. Each week they provide a new activity in a structured environment. Parents are always welcome to stay with their children.

Wonderful Welcome

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children
Written by: Aisha Hauser and Susan Lawrence

Kindergarten-1st Grade

Taught by: Steve Rao, Laura Hill Rao, Sara Metcalf and Liz Long

The *Wonderful Welcome* curriculum engages and challenges leaders and children alike to engage in radical hospitality. The class will explore how and why we are willing to welcome others into our lives and community. We welcome not

Our Whole Lives K/1 and 5/6

Beginning in October we will offer K/1 OWL at 9am on Sunday morning before our regular RE program. At the same time, our 5/6 OWL will be offered following church. These programs run for eight weeks. For more information see page 9.

only strangers, but family, our peers, our neighbors and even entities that are not people such as our animal friends and nature itself.

Moral Tales

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children

Written by Alice Anachecka-Naseman and Elisa Pearmain

Grades 2-3

Taught by: Cara Resnick, Jesse Goldberg, Marika Frankenstein and Steven Steck

Each session has a central story in which participants meet real and fictional heroes and heroines who have displayed moral courage and spiritual greatness. They will hear about characters who have struggled, but who have chosen justice, goodness, and love. Children will have regular opportunities to create and share their own stories, in which they are actors for justice and goodness. The stories in *Moral Tales* draw upon many of our Unitarian Universalist sources, portraying moral dilemmas and paths to goodness and justice through a variety of cultural and religious lenses. Yet every story resonates with Unitarian Universalist principles and purposes, which are intentionally integrated into the sessions.

Toolbox of Faith

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children

Written by: Kate Tweedie

Grades 4-5

Taught by: Shawn Sweet, Rebecca Humphrey, and Aimee Neri

The expectations of life depend upon diligence; the mechanic who would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools. — Confucius

Toolbox of Faith invites fourth- and fifth- grade participants to reflect on the qualities of our Unitarian Universalist faith, such as integrity, courage, and love, as tools they can use in living their lives and building their own faith. Each of the 16 sessions uses a tool as a metaphor for an important quality of our faith such as reflection (symbolized by a mirror), flexibility (duct tape), and justice (a flashlight).

Love Connects Us and Neighboring Faiths

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Children and an old favorite. *Written by Michelle Richards and Lynn Ungar*

Grades 5-6

Taught by Kilissa Cissoko, Morgan Lord and Rebecca Yots

Love Connects Us celebrates important ways Unitarian Universalists live our faith in covenanted community. Moved by love and gathered in spirit, we embrace our responsibility toward one another and the world at large. We encourage one another's search for truth and meaning. We strive to be active in peace-making and other efforts to improve our world. We will continue the *Neighboring Faiths* Tradition of Visiting Neighboring Religious Communities and learning about the way that they practice their faiths.

Jr. High Curricula

Heeding the Call: Qualities Of A Justice Maker

A Tapestry of Faith Program for Youth

*Written by: Nicole Bowmer and
Jodi Tharan*

7th Grade (and those who are not participating in COA)

*Taught by: Ken Mernitz, Jackie James,
and Liz Parke*

Heeding the Call is a social justice curriculum that not only explores linked oppressions in our society, but also encourages participants towards personal growth in values that counteract the marginalization of others. Workshops on empathy, courage, abundance, joy, and other qualities ask participants to recognize how these standards can be tools for justice. Additionally, the program includes more concrete tools, such as suggestions on how to be a good ally and tips on the language of conflict resolution. True stories of courage, sacrifice and collaboration, role-plays, games, and a program-long justice project will feed youth's rising realization that as people of faith we are all called to love justice—not just with our words, but also with our deeds.

Jr. High Our Whole Lives (OWL)

Taught by Jay Jacot and Raederle Phoenix West-Jacot

Youth in 7th through 9th grade are encouraged to attend OWL classes in a special after church program starting in October. A mandatory parent meeting will be held in late September. Watch your order of service and the church email blast to be sure you don't miss it. saves lives. For more description on OWL see page 9.

Coming of Age Program (COA)

A Preparation for Rite of Passage

Written by Multiple Sources

8th Grade

Taught by : Ashera Buhite and Suzanne Pflegger

When Unitarian Universalist Youth reach 8th grade, they are challenged to examine their individual faith. Throughout the year, many facets of faith, belief, values, and personal mission and service are explored. They meet with adults in the congregation to hear what guides grownups in their spiritual decision making and life choices and engage in dialog as they explore their own views.

Toward the end of the program, they set to work crafting a very individual statement of their core values, or credo, which will serve as a jumping off point for their adult search for truth and meaning.

The culmination of the spiritual trek is a ceremony in the worship service where the youth will share their credo with the congregation as a symbol that they are now ready to take ownership of their faith development from this point forward.

Youth Group

Advisors: Kathleen Powers, Joe Ott, Kristin Rose

Mission Trip Coordinator: Bill Parke

Youth Worship Advisor: Paul Zanolli

OWL teaching Team: Kristin Rose, Lauren Smith, Michael Sulzbach

District YAC Representative: Mary Lister

We have a thriving youth group at UUCB. After youth pass through their coming of age years, they begin their individual spiritual journey in community with other youth. The role of the adults in their space changes from teacher to advisor, and much of the agenda is set by youth **leaders**, in our **Youth-Adult Committee**, otherwise known as YAC.

They are guided by the Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources and incorporate all of the Six Components of a Balanced Youth Group,

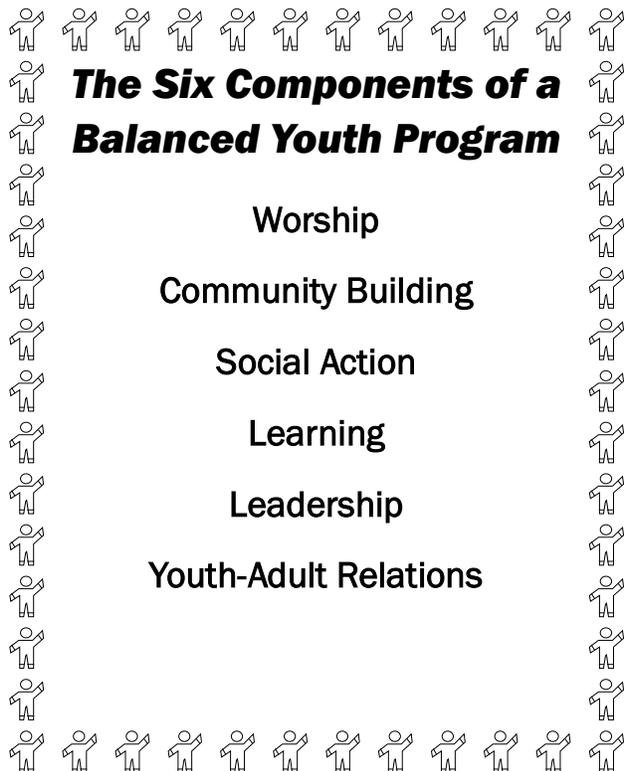
A typical Sunday starts with a chalice lighting followed by check-in. The youth group strives to **build a community** that is a safe place to be real in a world that often presses our youth to conform. This is followed by a **learning** activity or discussion of a topic of spiritual relevance to the group and/or planning for upcoming events.

The Youth also present an annual **worship** service with the congregation. This is typically youth led and includes original material from the youth.

Last year our youth began a tradition of **Social Justice** Mission Trips. This year our youth plan to travel to Boston, MA over the April break to learn more about our UU heritage and engage in service projects

Sr. High Youth will also be offered OUR Wole Lives (OWL) in an after church format in January. See page 9 for more details and watch your order of service and newsletter for the mandatory parent meeting.

A large part of youth life is participation in District Youth Conferences where the youth of our church travel to other churches and spend time with groups of up to 150 other young UUs. The first of these will be October 21-23 of 2011 in Albany,



Multi-Identity Committee

We celebrate diversity in our community, and in some cases within our families! For families with multi-ethnic, multi-racial and trans-racially adopted children, there are issues of belonging that may come up as children mature. Here at UUCB we are seeking to create a community that creates a safe place for owning one's entire identity in a community that is a reflection of all the ways we can combine to make a family. In cooperation with Adoption STAR, we have set up several programs that will launch this year.

The **multi-identity committee** at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo and Adoption STAR are excited to announce a screening of the film "**Off and Running**,"

"Off and Running" tells the story of Brooklyn teenager Avery, a track star with a bright future. She is the adopted African-American child of white Jewish lesbians. Her older brother is black and Puerto Rican and her younger brother is Korean. Though it may not look typical, Avery's household is like most American homes — until Avery writes to her birth mother and the response throws her into crisis. She struggles over her "true" identity, the circum-

stances of her adoption and her estrangement from black culture. Just when it seems as if her life is unraveling, Avery decides to pick up the pieces and make sense of her identity, with inspiring results."

"Off and Running" is a co-production of ITVS in association with the National Black Programming Consortium and American Documentary/POV and the Diverse Voices Project, with major funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Any interested UUCB members are encouraged and welcome to attend! **Saturday, September 24th from 7 to 9:30pm** at the UUCB. Please RSVP by 9/21/11 to Michael Hill, Project Lead, Adoption STAR, by calling him at 639-3900 or e-mailing him at [An illustration of a globe with several diverse people of various ethnicities and ages holding hands around it, symbolizing global unity and multiculturalism.](mailto:mi-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

chael@adoptionstar.com. The movie is suitable for adults and youth Jr. High and above. There will be a discussion to follow.

Multicultural Playgroup for children 0-5 will be meeting two Mondays per month in the UUCB Nursery. The group is coordinated by Michael Hill and Kristina Church. Please contact the church office for dates, or email Michael Hill.

K-6 kids will be meeting up for several outings this coming year. Contact Michael Hill or Sonja Jensen DRE@BuffaloUU.org if you would like to be included on mailing lists for these events.

For Adults, we will be offering the class "Building the World We Dream About" a Tapestry of Faith curriculum that takes us step by step through a Journey of reconciliation of the past to the future we wish to create. This class is designed to be taken by people of all identities who seek to create a world where racism and oppression are diminished. The class will be taught by Jean Ott and Kristina Church. Contact Sonja Jensen to be added to the class mailing list.

Our Whole Lives

Lifespan Sexuality Education Curricula

Our Whole Lives is a series of sexuality education curricula for six age groups: grades K-1, grades 5-6, grades 7-9, grades 10-12, young adults (ages 18-35), and adults.

Our Whole Lives helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. It equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas: human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. Grounded in a holistic view of sexuality, *Our Whole Lives* not only provides facts about anatomy and human development, but also helps participants clarify their values, build interpersonal skills, and understand the spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of sexuality.

Our Whole Lives uses approaches that work. The curricula are based on the Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education produced by the National Guidelines Task Force, a group of leading health, education, and sexuality professionals assembled by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS).

Our Whole Lives covers topics and skills that both parents and students want to have available but schools are less likely to cover. The Kaiser Family Foundation has an interesting report on this subject called "Sex Education in America: A View from Inside the Nation's Classrooms." New national surveys are challenging the convention that Americans are reluctant to have sexual health issues taught in school, the surveys show that most parents, along with educators and students themselves, would expand sex education courses and curriculum.

The *Our Whole Lives* values are:

- Self Worth
- Sexual Health
- Responsibility
- Justice and Inclusivity

Each level of *Our Whole Lives* offers:

- Up-to-date information and honest, age-appropriate answers to all participants' questions
- Activities to help participants clarify values and improve decision-making skills
- Effective group-building to create a safe and supportive peer group
- Education about sexual abuse, exploitation, and harassment
- Opportunities to critique media messages about gender and sexuality
- Acceptance of diversity
- Encouragement to act for justice
- A well designed, teacher-friendly leaders' guide
- Parent orientation programs that affirm parents as the primary sexuality educators of their children
- *Sexuality and Our Faith*, an optional religious component for Unitarian Universalist and United Church of Christ settings.

Our Whole Lives is appropriate for use in a variety of congregational, school, and community settings, including classrooms, after-school programs, and youth groups. Although developed by two religious organizations, *Our Whole Lives* contains no religious references or doctrine. Religious references are provided in a Unitarian Universalist and United Church of Christ companion publication, *Sexuality and Our Faith*.

Souper Sundays

Chief Cook: Jesse Goldberg

On the second Sunday of each month, we will have a community lunch of soup and bagels that is prepared by Jesse Goldberg and a team of volunteer helpers, and served by the Children in the Religious Education Program. Each month a different class will work with our “chief cook” to present a meal for the whole community! Parent volunteers assist in the serving and the parish hall is full to the brim. The soups come from a variety of ethnic origins and are sometimes tied to lessons in the curriculum.



This is a FUN/D raiser so the focus is fun, but we make a few dollars for the church as well so there is a modest charge of \$4/bowl.

Our chef is a fan of food justice so, there is always at least one vegan soup. Ingredients are always listed to honor the needs of people with food allergies.

Junior Choir

Led by: Marion Reslow

Children in Grades 2 and up are invited to sing in our Junior choir. Rehearsals are from 10 am to 10:55 each Sunday in the Alliance room. No experience is necessary and there are no auditions! You just have to show up, love music and be willing to learn.

It is a known fact that children who participate in music programs grow in confidence and poise. According to Nick Page, music also benefits reading, writing and group skill.

Marion will be registering children in the parish hall after church in early September. She can be contacted at 833-3615 or mreslow@juno.com

UU Children's Music Sundays

Led by: Kilissa Cissoko and Sharlynn Daun-Barnett

On the second Sunday of each month K-3 classes join together in the Alliance Room to worship and learn through music, movement and creative dramatics. Each month songs and activities will explore a theme from the Seven UU Principals:

1. Each person is important
2. Be kind in all you do
3. We're free to learn together
4. And search for what is true
5. All people need a voice
6. Build a fair and peaceful world
7. We care for earth's lifeboat



Our UU Principles for Kids

- Every person is important and valuable
- All people should be treated fairly
- Our church is a place where we accept one another and learn together
- Each person is free to search for what is true and right
- All people have the right to speak out and vote on things that matter to them
- We work for a peaceful, fair and free world
- We take care of the earth, the home we share with all living things

The Six Sources

These ideas come from many places:

- the sense of wonder we all share
- women and men long ago and today — people whose lives remind us to be kind and fair
- the ethical and spiritual wisdom of the world's religions
- Christian and Jewish teachings which tell us to love all others as we love ourselves
- the use of reason and the discoveries of science
- the harmony of nature and the sacred circle of life

Thankful for all of these ideas, we want to learn even more. We come to church where we freely share our thoughts and feelings and promise to trust and help one another.

Adult Religious Education Offerings

Building Your Own Theology I & II

(BYOT I & II)

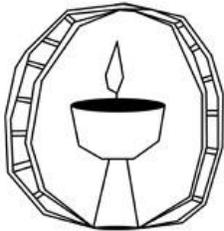
Written by Rev. Richard Gilbert

BYOT I Taught by Larry Congdon

BYOT II Taught by Sonja Jensen, DRE

Many people come to Unitarian Universalism as adults, or went through their Coming of Age class years ago. We offer building your Own Theology to give adults an opportunity to go through the Credo process.

In these classes, we will explore and discuss specific issues about our beliefs. Such as: What is basic human nature? is there good and evil? What was your image of the divine when you were children? When you were a youth? Now?



There are reading assignments, homework, and soul searching. By the end of the first class, you will have a working Credo.

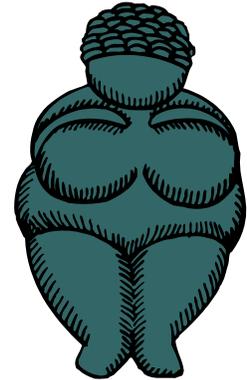
The second class gets into questions about life and death, and our role in the universe. As you progress through the BYOT II, your credo will deepen, expand, and refine. And you will be creating bonds with people in this community that you will carry with you when you leave the class.

BYOT I will be offered in the Fall and is open to all. BYOT II will be offered in the Spring and is open to anyone who has taken BYOT I or has developed a preliminary Credo.

Cakes for the Queen of Heaven

Written by: Shirley Ranck

Taught by: Tracy Kassman
and Genella Birch



“Cakes for the Queen of Heaven” is a woman honoring adult RE curriculum. It examines pre-Judeo Christian cultures that may have worshiped the female as divine. The concepts of equality and reverence for the female in a religious setting are eye-opening to many participants.

More than Goddess 101, this workshop series examines important elements of today’s women’s lives; personal, interpersonal and societal. It examines how our culture has been influenced by Judeo Christian values. The primary question raised is: How would your life have been different if, when growing up, the divine had been imaged as female? Participants are encouraged to share their own experiences and beliefs, creating trust and strong bonds of friendship.

Change your Thoughts, Change your Life Workshop with Nicole Urdang

In this interactive three session workshop for teens and adults we will use cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques to unleash our best feelings. Drawing from psychology, philosophy, spirituality, and cutting edge research on gratitude, we will re-frame parts of our inner dialogue that no longer serve us. Contact Nicole Urdang@buffalo.com, at 882-0848 for more info.