



Joel
Fox

YAs, get ready for the best ACM ever!

If you are a UU young adult (YA), start packin' your bags for ACM 2008! Okay, it's a bit early – but start thinkin' about it because this is THE year to be at the ACM. It's going to action-packed, with more YA-oriented stuff than ever. Thirty or more YAs are expected, making this the biggest turnout of all time.

I am happy to announce YAs will be recognized during the in-gathering and will proudly carry a YA banner of our own in the parade. These are important advances, as they represent that we do, in fact, exist – which is the first step in getting our needs met (such as seriously-needed ACM travel subsidies).

We have a very nice selection of YA workshops (including some by YAs themselves) from the informal banner-embellishing and e-zine-creating workshops to one on key transitions in YA congregational life. You'll enjoy a fun, new speed-networking event, "U & I: Friendship in the Fast Lane", an open mic, a special YA-only outing, and a highly anticipated YA-youth hang-out. This year, bridging ceremonies await both youth, and YAs entering older adulthood. The youth service is always something to look forward to, and, of course, the Soulful Sundown you will definitely not want to miss. In fact, you may even want to join the SS team!

This year there will be a "Noise and Music Area" where YAs and others can casually network, relax – and make some noise! There will be message boards for YAs and other groups to keep each other in the loop of any spontaneous workshops or activities. And let's not forget all the friendship and networking potential! With so many YAs from all over Canada, you'll be on the cutting edge of YA plans and happenings, and you'll likely connect with others in your region. Got ideas? Bring them and see what happens.

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International

Love and Laughter To Russia with Patch Adams, MD

She is a 10 year old girl who is blind and lives in an orphanage for children who are blind, or deaf or mute. She can hear and cannot see nor speak. We tried to put ourselves in the other's world as we played. I let her explore my face, my pigtails, the bells on my clothes, my feathered scarf and big clown shoes. I became her marionette as she moved my arms and legs in her discovery.

We met during my trip to Russia with an international group of forty volunteer Humanitarian Clowns. We went with Dr. Hunter Adams, the real-life clown doctor made famous by Robin Williams in the 1998 movie *Patch Adams*. Patch's annual mission, since 1985, has been to offer friendship and love to those in need, due to loneliness from war, poverty or isolation. He believes we can change the world's value system from one based on money, power and greed to one of compassion and generosity. Why the clown figure? The clown is an ambassador of play and friendship and 'fast-tracks' friendship.


There was no formal training on this trip: the learning was in the "doing". And we "did". We clowned everywhere, including airports and Red Square, practicing 'guerrilla style' or impromptu clowning with our "weapons"-- kazoos, balloons, and red noses. We sang, offered hugs and danced.

While the memories fade, some of the moral and ethical questions re-



Clowns Unite to do Good: Ahna Difelice, a member of the Neighbourhood UU Congregation in the Beaches area of Toronto, is on the left (arm and leg sticking out). They are posing in front of Catherine the Great's Palace.

main: "How is it that I have so much and others, so little?" "What can I do? Do I walk away because the need is so great and larger than I am?" "So why can't I maintain this intense love with my spouse, my children, my co-workers, with all of humanity, now that I am home again?"

The trip may have ended; however, the journey has just begun! 

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To learn more about Dr. Adams' organization, The Gesundheit Institute, visit www.patchadams.org