



Marchers carry the IHCC banner in the Fairport Fourth of July parade 2009

### **Rochester Interfaith Health Care Coalition Works For Health Care Justice**

The Interfaith Health Care Coalition (IHCC), a working group of GRCC, believes health care is a human right, and has been working continuously this past year toward an equitable universal health care system, namely single payer. Our main thrusts have been 1) strengthening our collaborative work with local, state, and national single-payer groups, 2) educational outreach, and 3) representing our views in the halls of power.

This year, our numbers have grown as like-minded groups have come together to create a more powerful coalition in support of a national, nonprofit health care system. The IHCC has worked with local chapters of Physicians for a National Health Program, Progressive Democrats of America (Healthcare not Warfare campaign), and the League of Women Voters. Professors at the University of Rochester, St. John Fisher, and MCC have hosted speakers to spread information about health care reform to a new generation. Local labor unions, such as AFL-CIO support our mission. We've joined Single Payer New York and Healthcare-Now in the exclamation, "Everybody in, Nobody Out!" All of the work outlined below has been done in coalition with our partners.

Last summer, we published our brochure, "Health Care Truths and Myths," which has been invaluable in getting the message out. We have distributed it at forums, parades, petition drives, etc. Special thanks to Peter Mott, Joe Brown, and Sue Ladwig for completing this project. We have had requests from several groups to use the brochure. A revised version will be published soon, and can be accessed on the GRCC website.

After holding several *Sicko* showings with panel discussions the previous year, we continued educating the public with a well attended forum on "Health Care Reform in the US and Canada," at the Brighton Library last July. We held a September press conference and tour of St Joseph's Neighborhood Center to highlight the plight of the under- and uninsured. Several politicians attended to hear Donna Smith of *Sicko* speak and to pledge support for a single-payer system. We marched in the Labor Day parade with our banner "Health Care is A Human Right—Rochester Interfaith Health Care Coalition," and recently in the Fairport 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade as well (see photo). IHCC

members participated in Human Rights Day events in December at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church and Petition Sunday at the Universalist Unitarian Church in March.

This spring, we turned our focus to federal level work as the state legislature stagnated and the Obama Administration pushed for reform. We held our own “Obama” health care discussion in January and delivered our opinion (despite the bias of the provided format) that a Medicare For All, single-payer plan would best address the nation’s health care crisis. We held a Downtown Community Forum in March called “The Faces of the Under- and Uninsured,” where health outreach ministry directors spoke of the exponentially growing need in our community. We cosponsored a May 30 forum at the RMSC featuring Congressman John Conyers, sponsor of HR676, the Improved and Expanded Medicare For All bill in the House of Representatives. Close to 500 people attended, and a new group, Rochester For HR 676, has sprung up in its wake.

There have been many letters to the editor and speaking out columns published by coalition members, as well as a multitude of radio appearances, especially by members of the Finger Lakes Chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program (Ted Brown, Leon Zoghlin, David Stornelli, and Larry Jacobs).

IHCC members and our coalition partners have met with Susan John, representatives of Robert Duffy, Louise Slaughter, Charles Schumer, and Joe Morelle. We have been to Albany to work with our partners Hunger Action and Single Payer New York. We have written countless letters, sent hundreds of emails and made phone calls to state and federal politicians.

Health care reform on the state level has been difficult—the Governor’s Partnership For Coverage Commission has not returned to meet with us since hearings in November 2007, and is withholding study results done by the Urban Institute on the best ways to cover all New Yorkers. State representatives have not been forthcoming, and federal representatives have not been much more responsive.

The IHCC and partners continue to meet and work over the summer for a reform plan that truly covers everyone in a financially sustainable way. Some of us will be boarding a bus to DC on July 30 for a rally called by the Leadership Conference on Guaranteed Health Care. Look for an end of August forum featuring John Conyers to keep the momentum going.

We invite you to join us!

The IHCC meets the third Monday of the month at 4 p.m. at St Joe’s Neighborhood Center. For more information, please contact Betsy Frarey at 473-8724 or [lfrarey@rochester.rr.com](mailto:lfrarey@rochester.rr.com).