

Voice of the Poor
Notes
July 18, 2007
3:30 p.m. Vincentian Support Conference Room

Attending: Julie Douglas, Father Bill Fitzgerald, Terry (Parker Conference), John Feit, Kathy Jorgensen, Lucy Howell, Al Morales, Frank Barrios, Ron Meyer

The meeting was opened with a prayer and reflection from Vincentian Module IV on Catholic social teaching.

Old business:

Frank Barrios reported on his **recent trip to Washington** as part of a delegation led by Phoenix Councilman Greg Stanton. The group also included Councilman Johnson and representatives from UMOM, the Urban League, APS and several central city churches.

The purpose of the trip was to request that Phoenix, as the nation's fifth largest city, be given its fair share of federal dollars in Head Start, CBDG (Community Block Development Grants) and LIHEAP (low income heating and energy assistance program). Formulas for allocation, developed many years ago, heavily favor older eastern cities. Meanwhile there is a western migratory trend with 5,000 or more moving into Phoenix every month, including low income persons needing assistance offered by these programs. .

The group saw Congressman Mitchell and Pastor and met with staff in the offices of Congressman Shadegg and Senator Kyl. They also met with Dean Aguillen and Cheryl Parker Rose of Speaker Pelosi's office. The group was received well and the message understood. Although Section 8 was not discussed at this time due to problems with administration by Phoenix, it is anticipated that the request for more housing vouchers will be on a future agenda.

Representing St. Vincent de Paul, Frank made the point that the Society gave out \$2.2 million in rent and utility assistance to needy families last year. There is never enough money to cover the need. This trip was looked upon as the start of a continuing effort to secure additional funding for Phoenix in these programs.

Lucy reported on a recent **Housing First meeting**, the program that has proven to be successful in keeping chronic disabled homeless men off the streets in other cities at a cost savings over time. Housing First has been on the VOP legislative agenda for the past two years. It is hoped that members of the legislature can be educated about the effort and a Housing First pilot program developed in Phoenix.

Three **members of the State legislature** (Representatives Chad Campbell, Adam Driggs and John Kavanaugh) along with a staff member from Congressman Mitchell's Scottsdale office visited the St. Vincent de Paul Center earlier in the day. VOP members

Father Bill Fitzgerald, Julie Douglas, Kathy Jorgensen and Lucy Howell accompanied the legislators on the tour led by Susan deQueljo, Community Relations Manager. Over lunch in the Hall of Banners, the visitors received copies of the Society's annual report and the Voice of the Poor legislative agenda. Housing First, the proposal of a state earned income tax credit and simplification of the AZ charitable tax credit were discussed.

New business:

Tom Finnerty and Kathy Jorgensen are collaborating on a **legislative report** for our membership. A draft was distributed and committee members asked to make suggestions and get back to Tom and Kathy by e-mail. The report will be part of the VSS newsletter in September.

Last year's **advocacy questionnaire to Conferences** from VOP was distributed. Members were asked to bring suggestions to the September meeting. The questionnaire will be part of the October VSS newsletter.

The **VOP legislative agenda** for 2006 was reviewed and suggestions made. It will be revised and considered at the September meeting for presentation to the diocesan council in November.

Ron Meyer spoke about the need to **recruit for VOP** outside of Conferences since most active Conference members are too busy to devote time to advocacy on top of home visits and meetings. Ron noted that a **job description** is needed as a recruiting tool. Others suggested that recent graduates of JustFaith would be a perfect match for VOP.

Jennifer Prine, SVdP Communications, has asked if VOP e-mail addresses might be used to receive the **new SVdP e-newsletter** she has put together. The committee's response is that we have to be very careful about the amount of e-mail we send out. It was suggested that Lucy might select information from the e-newsletter to send from time to time or that Inge ask the network to let her know if they wish to receive this information.

Kathy Jorgensen described the initiative put together by Representative Marian McClure to ban payday loans in Arizona. Members were not in favor of supporting the ban, concerned that it would have unintended consequence. A better route discussed earlier in the day with Rep. Campbell would be the identification and development of an organization willing to make small loans at reasonable rates.

There will be no August meeting. The next VOP meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 19 at 3:30 p.m. in VSS. The meeting was adjourned with a prayer led by Father Fitz at 5 p.m.