

Voice of the Poor Meeting Notes
November 17, 2008
3:30 p.m. Vincentian Support Services

Attending: Tom Finnerty, Kathy Jorgensen, Ruth Ballas, Lucy Howell, Inge Casey, Frank Barrios, Ron Meyer and Julie Douglas

Old business – meeting reports:

Frank Barrios reported he had been part of a meeting of **The Alliance** this afternoon with Phoenix Councilman Michael Johnson regarding proposed budget and program cuts by the City of Phoenix. Cuts of 30%-40% proposed have included closing the 7th Ave. Family Service Center, selected senior centers and youth programs. Organizations participating in the effort to lobby the City against making cuts in human services programs are Chicanos por la Causa, Urban League, Jewish Social Services, Phoenix Collaborative, NAACP, Foundation for Senior Living, Basic Needs Coalition, Catholic Charities, PAFCO, AZ Community Action Association, CASS and SVdP Voice of the Poor. Teams from The Alliance are meeting with several members of the Council and Mayor Gordon to (1) request that cuts not be made to programs impacting low income residents (2) consider alternatives such as a four day work week, salary reduction at top levels and (3) requesting that they will be a champion for this purpose during Council budget discussions.

Councilman Johnson was very supportive. He stated that the most effective thing organizations could do would be to send letters to members of the AZ congressional delegation as a followup to requests for federal assistance by Mayor Gordon and Governor Napolitano. The VOP committee recommended that a letter be drafted for President Joe Riley to the AZ congressional delegation requesting funding and the plight of Phoenix and charitable institutions like SVdP.

Lucy briefly reported on Strategic Crisis Management meetings attended along with 70 other non-profits, faith-based organizations and state agencies on how to most efficiently deal with the increase in need for services in a time of less resources. A pilot program using 30 organizations that are part of AZ 211 (same as CIR) asking for a daily status report of resources available is being tried. The goal is to see if there is a way to divert the needy to organizations capable of giving help vs. a series of unproductive phone calls.

VOP Database:

Lucy has recently gone over the e-mail addresses and made corrections to her list and to Inge's list. She sent letters to each of the 12 district presidents asking them to verify VOP Conference Representatives and recruit additional members. It is hoped that Chris Quintenz will work with Inge to determine which program might be most effective in managing the database and that they return to the committee with a recommendation. It is understood that there may be a cost associated with such a program. Susan deQueljo

is using Constant Contact for her online newsletter. Lucy will inquire if we can piggyback with Susan.

VOP Christmas Party:

Planning committee members and spouses are invited to Ron Meyer's home on Monday, Dec. 15 at 5:30 p.m. Ron's home is located at 225 W. Belmont in Phoenix. Directions: Northern to 3rd Ave. South. Go 3 blocks and make a left on Belmont and look for Christmas decorations! There will be a brief meeting prior to dinner. A sign up sheet was passed around. Lucy will send out an e-mail reminder for those not present today as well and include directions to Ron's home.

New business:

State Leg:

Tom reported that the new legislature has conservative leadership and majorities in both houses. The House is 35 R and 25 D and the Senate is 18 R and 12 D. There are a number of new members. Tom suggested that the Kingman VOP meet with Steve Pearce and that Flagstaff meet with Sylvia Adams. Lucy, Inge and Julie will contact Eric Meyers (District 11). Dates for a Special Session have not been announced but it is likely to happen between Thanksgiving and Christmas with \$1 billion in cuts anticipated. As soon as the session is announced, will need to compare cuts by JLBC and the governor. Tom indicated that VOP's role will be to follow the cuts as they are introduced and object to those impacting low income Arizonans. Bottom line will be to tell our stories and offer alternatives.

AZ Congressional Meetings:

Ron will be confirming participation in the Annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering at the end of Feb. at our December meeting. He will schedule meetings with local offices prior to the D.C. visit as a preparation. To maintain continuity, he would like to have the same teams visit the local offices as visit the D.C. office. These meetings will start after Jan 1.

Conference Survey:

The committee reviewed a survey developed for Conferences by Julie Douglas and Kathy Jorgensen. The purpose is to find out what Conferences are able to offer needy families, what kind of demand they are seeing and an idea of how many families are turned away due to lack of resources. This information will be used in communicating elected officials at all levels. The survey will go out in Up to Date. Lucy will distribute copies to district presidents at Wednesday's board meeting.

SVdP VOP Legislative Agenda for 2009:

Essentially identical items to the 2008 agenda with two additions – child tax credit has been added to EITC due to recent increase in eligibility and a paragraph stating that VOP anticipates this will be a year of standing ground for programs already in place serving

low income Arizonans. Lucy will take agenda to December Ex Bd as agenda item for December board meeting.

Jan. 10 Social Services Workshop:

Kathy Jorgensen has designed a great flyer announcing this opportunity for Vincentians to be updated regarding programs available to low income families. Lucy has been in touch with Katie Kahle at AZ Community Action Association who is helping us with speakers on food stamps, WIC, KidsCare. A speaker from the Consumer Credit Counseling Services will talk about what they offer and also have information about the Earned Income Tax Credit/VIDA sites and changes in child tax credit. Handouts will be available. Ruth Ballas and Cathy Gomez have volunteered to help Kathy the day of the workshop.

Tucson Council VOP Introduction:

Jan. 17 (Sat.) is the date selected by Carmen Simbari. The Basic VOP Workshop will be given by Lucy. Planning to go to Tucson are Kathy, Tom, Frank, Lucy and Chris. This will be an opportunity for committee members who have not seen the workshop presented to be trained.

The meeting was closed with the Vincentian prayer at 5:15 p.m. We will next meet on December 15 at 5:30 at Ron Meyer's home.

Dates to put in VOP calendar:

- Dec. 15** VOP meeting and Christmas party at Ron Meyer's at 5:30 p.m.
- Dec. 20** SVdP General Membership Meeting (Flyer distribution; survey reminder)
- Jan. 10** VOP Social Services Workshop (8:30-11:30) in Vincentian Hall
- Jan. 17** Trip to meet with Tucson Council (time and location TBD)
- Jan. 19** VOP 3:30 p.m. VSS
- Feb. 15** VOP 3:30 p.m. VSS
- Feb. 22-25** Annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington, D.C.
- March 16** VOP 3:30 p.m. VSS
- April 20** VOP 3:30 p.m. VSS
- May 18** VOP 3:30 p.m. VSS