

Voice of the Poor Planning Committee
Meeting Notes
December 17, 2007
3:30 p.m. Vincentian Support Conference Room

Attending: Kathy Jorgensen, Lucy Howell, John Feit, Frank Barrios, Inge Casey, Tom Finnerty, Father Fitz, Chris Quintenz, Julie Douglas

The meeting was opened with a prayer dedicated to Ron and Roxanne Meyer. Members signed the prayer to be delivered to Ron.

Ron Meyer's talk at the General Membership meeting on Dec. 15 was extremely effective. There were 30 plus new presidents in attendance. Julie Douglas has volunteered to follow up with calls to each of them to confirm VOP participation for their Conference by at least one member. She will make sure they have a copy of the Conference VOP Rep job description as well as information about what members can expect to receive e-mail.

Terry Wilson stated he had not heard a better description of why VOP is important to SVdP and suggested that the talk be written up and submitted to national. Ron has already volunteered to give the talk to a national audience. Lucy is looking into a video/DVD format for the talk for wider distribution.

Following up on VOP outreach discussed on 12/10, the following committee members volunteered to call district presidents and ask for a few minutes district meetings agendas:

District One (Flagstaff/Sedona)		Lucy to contact
District Two (Parker)	Jan. 20	Tom Finnerty
Lucy to get location and other dates		
District Three	Jan. 8 or Feb. 12	Kathy Jorgensen
St. Elizabeth Seton	9 a.m.	
District Four	Feb. 5	Kathy Jorgensen
St. Joan of Arc	7 p.m.	
District Five	Jan. 15 or Feb. 19	Father Fitz
OLPH Scottsdale	7 p.m.	
District Six	Feb. 13	Tom Finnerty
St. Thomas Apostle	6:30 p.m.	
District Seven	Feb. 13	Frank Barrios
Vincentian Support Conference	6:30 p.m.	

District Eight		Lucy to contact
District Nine Holy Cross	Jan 11 or Feb. 8 6:30 p.m.	Lucy Howell
District Ten St. Germaine, Prescott	Jan. 29 1 p.m.	Julie Douglas
District Eleven Our Lady of Joy	Jan. 24 Time?	Lucy Howell
District Twelve		Lucy to contact

Give brief overview of what VOP is doing – LIHEAP funding, KidsCare Outreach on 2/14 statewide (looking for parishes to participate in certain zip codes), D.C. trip – Fair Share for AZ – Section 8, LIHEAP. State issue = BUDGET!!! Handouts – Conference VOP Job Description – must have e-mail and check it 2-3 times weekly. ASK FOR THEIR SUGGESTIONS!!

Conference VOP Issue Survey: Kathy Jorgensen reported that a total of 25 Conferences participated. (Same number as last year). First three priorities for Conferences were (1) utility assistance (2) affordable housing and (3) lack of healthcare. Lucy will put summary in VSS Newsletter along with other issues in descending order. Also noted were calls for additional gasoline assistance and need for eldercare.

Small dollar loans/predatory loans /payday loans: Kathy Jorgensen continues to participate in study group coordinated by Rep. Chad Campbell. Some in group are supporting initiative to outright ban payday loans in AZ but concern remains that, without alternatives, unanticipated consequences could be worse. Initiatives, once passed, also require $\frac{3}{4}$ of vote to change. Study group is looking at classes on financial literacy, limit on interest rate charged, limit on rollovers. Database has been raised but is a red flag to many at the legislature.

Love Your Kids Feb. 14: Kathy attended an organizational meeting re KidsCare outreach sponsored by the AZ Hospital Association. Senator Carolyn Allen was the keynote speaker. Handouts including zip codes of targeted areas identified by the State where significant numbers of eligible but uninsured children reside. Lucy will summarize and submit information to both Up to Date and VSS newsletter in the hope that some Conferences in these zip codes may come forward as locations for outreach on 2/14. VOP members will help – this will be a screening day. Volunteers will not be asked to complete AHCCCS/KidsCare forms. This outreach is a direct result of advocacy by many organizations, including St. Vincent de Paul, to put money in the budget for this purpose. Kathy will find out how many volunteers are needed per sites and the deadline for site identification.

Annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering – Feb. 24-27 in Washington, D.C.

Participants will visit members of AZ congressional delegation on the afternoon of Tuesday, Feb. 26 from 12:30 to 4:30. VOP will have 8 members plus national V.P. Terry Wilson in attendance. Also from AZ will be two or three from Catholic Charities (Tricia Hoyt) and two from Tucson's Diocesan Office of Peace and Justice (Joanne Welter and a priest). Ron Meyer will be contacting the various offices and organizing the schedule of visits. He will be asked by the congressional offices what issues we wish to discuss with our elected representatives or their staff (see below).

Issues discussed and confirmed by committee for discussion with congressional delegation:

(1) Arizona's Fair Share in Federal Programs such as LIHEAP (emergency utility assistance) and Section 8 housing vouchers.

Frank Barrios has confirmed with Councilman Stanton that requests for additional Section 8 housing vouchers are appropriate. Frank will be receiving additional information on the numbers of Section 8 vouchers in AZ for use during our meetings.

(2) SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) – support, along with our national organization, renewal of the program with adequate funding to cover all children eligible up to 200% of the federal poverty level (estimated additional 4 million children for a total of 10 million covered).

(3) Immigration – Support position of the USCCB for a comprehensive approach; seriously concerned about the impacts of state and local laws passed in the vacuum of federal inaction. Include Republic editorial calling for pilot guest worker program in AZ in addition to enforcement.

(4) Homelessness – Support, along with our national organization, the Housing First approach (Examples of successes with this approach and AZ efforts in this area).

Communication with AZ Legislators:

Tom reminded the committee that this will be a year of defense of existing social service programs due to serious budget constraints. VOP members need to continue the dialog with elected reps who are our friends – Senator Carolyn Allen, Trish O'Halleran, Michele Reagan were mentioned. Regarding what might be given/sent to members of the legislature from SVdP, Tom was asked to come up with a one page summary of what we are trying to achieve for AZ's needy in tough economic times.

Immigration: Frank Barrios reported his attendance at the Town Hall at South Mountain High School called by Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox. The purpose was a community hearing for the four officials delegated the responsibility of determining what Phoenix Police will/will not ask when stopping individuals who may or may not be undocumented. The big issue is racial profiling.

The meeting was adjourned with the prayer for Ron and Roxanne Meyer led by Father Fitz.. VOP will next meet on Monday, Jan. 14, 2008 at 3:30 in Vincentian Support.