

Voice of the Poor

Notes from Voice of the Poor Planning Meeting

Wednesday, October 17, 2007

3:30 p.m. Vincentian Support Services Conference Room

Present: Father Pedro Villaroya, Father Bill Fitzgerald, Kathy Jorgensen, Inge Casey, Ron Meyer, John Feit, Frank Barrios, Walt Gray, Julie Douglas, Lucy Howell

The meeting was opened with a prayer by Father Fitzgerald. Father Pedro Villaroya, Spiritual Advisor to the Western Region, was welcomed to the meeting.

Meeting reports:

Frank Barrios, Tom Finnerty and Kathy Jorgensen have met with Democratic party leadership reaching out to faith-based groups. VOP members stated that it should be made clear that we are not representing St. Vincent de Paul and that VOP is a non-partisan effort. The Catholic prolife position is understood.

Tom Finnerty attended a meeting organized by Ron Johnson, AZ Catholic Conference, regarding elimination of the baseline year requirement in the AZ charitable tax credit this session. Participants were not encouraging since the state estimates a serious revenue shortfall this year and a change in the baseline requirement would be a cost to the state.

Julie Douglas attended a City of Phoenix Conference for Faith-Based Organizations. The program emphasized financial education and a program leveraging funds (as example, EITC refunds) for the purchase of a home by low income first time buyers. The website for the Newtown Individual Development Account (IDA) Program – matching 3:1 is info@newtowncdc.org or www.newtowncdc.org. or (480) 517-1589. The City of Phoenix offered Arizona Saves workshops on financial education in Oct. at Hope VI including free dinner. Contact information: info@arizonasaves.org or (602) 246-3500. This information will be passed onto District and Conference presidents using Up to Date.

Frank Barrios offered a workshop on Voice of the Poor at the recent Poverty Conference hosted by Catholic Charities. Inge Casey and Kathy Jorgensen attended.

SVdP Center Tour:

Chryl Bohnenkamp of PhoenixDay (non-profit daycare center in South Phoenix) and Michael Nowakowski (candidate for District 7, Phoenix City Council) toured the center with Lucy Howell, Walt Gray, Kathy Jorgensen and Julie Douglas earlier today. Phoenix Day is promoting a program called HealthLinks to assist eligible low income families with applications for programs including AHCCCS and KidsCare. This program may be of use to Conferences.

Issue updates:

Small Dollar Credit Study Group (Kathy Jorgensen)
Housing First (Walt Gray)

Nothing to report
Nothing to report

Immigration – Lucy shared Tom Finnerty’s e-mail to the committee expressing deep concern about the content of initiatives to further tighten immigration law in AZ. The committee discussed the fact that there is not unanimity within the Society regarding this issue. How to bring people around to a more reasonable approach is the question. It was suggested that the bishop is the best spokesperson to Catholics and that Lucy should contact Ron Johnson and ask the bishop to make a statement. Ron Meyer has a contact in his Conference, a writer for the AZ Republic, and was going to discuss the possibility of an editorial with him.

Voice of the Poor Job Description:

The attached job description, initially drafted by Ron Meyer, was approved by the committee and will be placed in the VSS newsletter for November. VOP is always looking for additional contacts. There is no limit to the number of participants per Conference although at least one representative must have access to e-mail.

VOP Legislative Agenda for 2008:

The committee was asked to look over the final version based on VOP discussion in July and get back to Lucy with changes. The agenda will be presented to the SVdP Executive Board on November 7.

Communication from VOP:

A letter requesting emergency LIHEAP (Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program) for Arizona was sent to all members of the AZ congressional delegation and Secretary Leavitt by Frank Barrios and Steve Jenkins.

An SCHIP Action Alert has been sent to all members of VOP.

Father Pedro recommended that all Conferences obtain and study the new workbook and video produced by national on The Manual. Part 7 of The Rule dealing with St. Vincent de Paul and Civil Society is addressed in this booklet.

The committee was led in closing prayer by Father Pedro.