

# Opportunity Conference Steering Committee

## Meeting Agenda

March 2, 2010

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Department of Social Services, 3433 S. Higuera, Room 115, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

<b>Steering Committee Members</b>	<b>Agenda Items</b>	
<p>Evelyn Ruscki, Chair</p> <p>Belinda Benassi, Social Services            Casandra Blangsted, Social Services            Phyllis Braiotta, CAPSLO            Dawn Catimer, CHC            Tom Clough, HSOC            Pam Dudley, Public Health            John Eifers, SLO County Office of Ed            Robert Ellis, CAPSLO            Joyce Fields, Social Services            Susan Fuller, Social Services            Pati Garcia, Social Services            Mark Haas, Social Services            Carl Hansen, Food Bank            Jenny Hart, Social Services            Barbara Hoffman, Cuesta &amp; Aspiranet            Diana Horn, Social Services            Vickie Jarvis, CAPSLO            Abby Lassen, California Rural Legal Assistance            Kat Lauterback, Social Services            Leslie McKinley, CAPSLO            Jan Maitzen, The LINK            Christopher Monza, Social Services            Julia Miller, Social Services            Shana Paulson, CAPSLO            Hunter Perry, Cuesta College            Debbie Peterson, City of Grover Beach            Shanta Rao, Social Services            Elise Roberts, Social Services            Nancy Shakeri, Social Services            Melinda Sokolouski, CAPSLO            Teresa Tardiff, CASA            Dee Torres, CAPSLO            Susan Warren, North Co Connection            Connie Willard, CCTA</p>	<p><b>Introductions and Welcome</b></p> <p><b>Opportunity Conference</b></p> <p><b>Subcommittees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fundraising</b></li> <li>• <b>Opportunity Conference</b></li> <li>• <b>Committee Child Events</b></li> <li>• <b>Recruitment (Navigators &amp; Participants)</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Other Business</b></p> <p><b>Next Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>April 6, 2010</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Evelyn Ruscki</b></p> <p><b>Natalie Walter</b></p> <p><b>Evelyn Ruscki</b></p>

## **Poverty Steering Committee Meeting Minutes of March 2, 2010**

**Present:** Belinda Benassi, Cassandra Blangstead, Phyllis Briotta, Tracy Buckingham, Lee Collins, John Elfers, Joyce Fields, Pati Garcia, Diana Horn, Vickie Jarvis, Abby Lassen, Kat Lauterback, Leslie McKinley, Christopher Monza, Shana Paulson, Debbie Peterson, Shanta Rao, Elise Roberts, Evelyn Ruscki, Nancy Shakeri, Melinda Sokolowski, Dee Torres, Natalie Walter, Connie Willard

**Absent:** Dawn Catimer, Tom Clough, Pam Dudley, Robert Ellis, Susan Fuller, Mark Haas, Carl Hansen, Jenny Hart, Barbara Hoffman, Jan Maitzen, Julia Miller, Hunter Perry, Teresa Tardiff, Susan Warren

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### **Introductions and Welcome**

- Evelyn Ruscki opened the meeting with a welcome and introductions.

### **Opportunity Conference**

- Natalie Walter reported that one of the goals of the Poverty Steering Committee is to work toward an Opportunity Conference. She explained that an Opportunity Conference is a fun, educational program designed for and by people living in poverty. The agenda is focused on building hope, motivation, and skills for moving out of poverty.
- Dr. Donna Beegle will deliver the keynote address. She begins the Conference by relating her own experience of living in poverty. Donna works with participants to unravel the shame, blame and isolation of poverty. The focus is on setting the stage for finding hope and moving forward.
- The conference will include:
  - ✓ Building capacity for moving out and staying out of poverty: participants learn strategies for moving out of poverty.
  - ✓ Connections to Navigators: participants are connected to “Navigators” (community members who have completed Poverty 101 training as a foundation for assisting people on their journey to moving out of poverty).
  - ✓ Child care and age-appropriate activities for children of participants will be provided.
  - ✓ Transportation will have to be arranged for participants.
- The total estimated cost of an Opportunity Conference can run over \$45,000, which would include Dr. Beegle’s fees, coaching fees, facilities, food, incentives for participants, training materials, etc. The hope is that a fundraising committee will be able to reduce the costs through donated items.
- Natalie estimated it will take about 12 months to plan the conference. The Committee agreed that late February or early March of 2011 would be the best time to have the conference.

### **Subcommittees**

- Evelyn Ruscki and the group came up with several subcommittees that will work on various aspects of the Opportunity Conference. A sign-up sheet was circulated for the following:
  - Fundraising
  - Opportunity Conference – logistics, etc.
  - Child Events
  - Recruitment (Navigators and Participants)
  - Media Relations / P.R.

- Volunteer Committee
- Elderly and Disabled
- Website
- We will solicit additional subcommittee members and leads by email as well. Jaci will get the subcommittee lists out with the notes from this meeting. We will include those on the Poverty Steering Committee Interest List and see if some of them would be willing to get involved with the subcommittees. Committee members may also recruit others and get them involved.

## **Other Business**

- Lee Collins stated that PG&E is reporting electricity shut-offs are up 28% this year over last, and Southern CA Edison is reporting shut-offs are up 21% over the same time period.
- Lee reported that CA State Senator Carol Liu has introduced Senate Bill 1084, which if passed will require legislators, agency heads, and others to convene and develop a plan to reduce childhood poverty by 50% in ten years.
- Lee said one of the reasons this Poverty Steering Committee is so important is because change begins at the local level. He stressed that DSS wants to be partners, not run this committee.
- Debbie Peterson reported the Grover Beach City Council is working on a homeless shelter for the South County with a 1.5 million dollar grant.
- Dee Torres reported that they finally received approval from the airport to build the homeless service center next to DSS on Higuera. They are looking for an architect. They need to raise about four million dollars. She stressed the need to continue the dialogue on sustainability. Instead of building a big facility that cannot be sustained financially.
- Wendy Lewis reported the Food Bank is partnering with DSS at their distribution sites to have food stamp sign-ups at those sites.
- Cathy Enns from the Food Bank stated they are partnering with the schools to get food not only to the children, but to the families as well (Healthy Food for Local Families). The program is going very well in Paso Robles, and they have 6 new schools starting in the County as of this Friday. They are hoping for one distribution site per week in each district.
- John Elfers reported that the County Office of Education will be bringing Donna Beegle back in mid-August to speak to the educators.
- John reported that in January there were 1500 homeless youth ages K-12 in SLO County.
- Jaci will get the subcommittee lists out with the notes from this meeting. We will include those on the Poverty Steering Committee Interest List and see if some of them would be willing to get involved with the subcommittees. Committee members may also recruit others and get them involved.
- Evelyn Ruscki suggested laminated cards that include the vision of the Poverty Steering Committee – “If not me, then who?”
- Natalie Walter talked about an idea that would provide all middle school youth in SLO County with a day-runner or address book that will include information about community resources. At a time when youth start finding their own resources, a resource like this will enable them to make connections. John Elfers stated there are about 3,000 seventh graders in SLO County. He has a box of the planners Los Angeles County has come up with for their middle-school children.
- Elise Roberts suggested we partner with the Sparks Conference, which focuses on hope, self-awareness, and what talents the youths have.
- Dee Torres said she would like to educate the middle and elementary schools on poverty and homelessness. She suggested consulting with the schools as agencies to see how we can help them fill the gaps left by deep budget cuts.

### **Comments and Concerns**

- Lee stated that the Tribune was very interested in following up with poverty issues, and will be publishing a positive piece about the Poverty Summit and Food Bank presentation. The release of the article has been delayed, and it was suggested that we could add a tag line in the article about the Poverty Steering Committee.
- Dee Torres expressed some concern over the giveaway of a car to one of the participants at the conference. She was worried that a car giveaway would overshadow the education and connections the conference would provide. Since we really don't have a lot of information about the Opportunity Conference yet, this is a discussion we can have with Donna.

### **Next Meeting**

- April 6th from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon  
Location: DSS, 3433 S. Higuera, Room 115, San Luis Obispo