Poverty Steering Committee Meeting
Minutes of May 4, 2010

Present: Belinda Benassi, Phyllis Briaotta, John Elfers, Cathy Enns, Pati Garcia, Dona Hare-Price, Jenny Hart, Vickie Jarvis, Abby Lassen, Jan Maitzen, Julia Miller, Christopher Monza, Adrienne Nicholson, Shauna Paulson, Jane Pomeroy, Shanta Rao, Elise Roberts, Evelyn Ruscki, Nancy Shakeri, Teresa Tardiff, Natalie Walter, Shannon White-Bond, Connie Willard

Absent: Casandra Blangsted, Tracy Buckingham, Dawn Latimer, Tom Clough, Lee Collins, Pam Dudley, Robert Ellis, Richard Enfield, Joyce Fields, Susan Fuller, Mark Haas, Barbara Hoffman, Diana Horn, Leslie McKinley, Debbie Peterson, Liz Repp, Susan Warren

Guests: Chris Haggie, DSS

Introductions and Welcome

- Evelyn Ruscki called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Welcome and introductions followed. Evelyn introduced Barbara Lemcool, consultant from Communication Across Barriers. Evelyn announced that there will be a break at 11:30 for a working lunch and questions and answers.

Subcommittee/Opportunity Conference Training and Information

- Barbara works with Donna Beegle, founder of Communication Across Barriers. They work across the country to help communities address issues of poverty. Barbara reported that she is from Michigan, and the population of her community is a blend of working class poor and very wealthy. She started with Donna Beegle about four years ago on program development. Their organization has two primary goals: 1) to help people move to self sufficiency, and 2) to cause some systemic change in the community. She reported that money is not the key to improving poverty; relationships are the key. The Opportunity Conference uses a strength based approach.

  Some good indicators of poverty in the community are: numbers of child abuse and neglect, and accusations of neglect, living conditions like eviction notices, food bank and humane society numbers.

  Registration: give some thought to how we want to do registration (each agency commits to a number of invitees) - plan on 25% more than original registrants to include walk-ins. Barbara strongly recommended not turning anyone away at the door - put a cap on child care. Register every adult that is coming (name, address, and phone), the number of children and their ages, special needs of any child; transportation needs; bus tickets, gas cards for those with cars. For on-site registration, need name tags (first names only) - consider putting name tags and markers at each table; pre-registration is good and plan for walk-ins. We may use an 800 number or mail-in registration. We need to make a decision about the number of attendees. We may need to provide interpreters at each table for those with language barriers. Identify people who will come and use no criteria - steering committee to decide. Barbara also suggested we thing about “what is success” - it is not the same for everyone.

Belinda would like to include the “Spark” program in this conference, either on the same day or the day before. Barbara mentioned that she has some training materials for kids books, videos, etc.

Other Business

- Barbara Lemcool gave a brief description of what each subcommittee might look like and what responsibilities might fall under each.

- Logistics and Organization: Responsible for everything! Once other subcommittees make decisions, logistics begins to plan for the logistics of the decisions. Questions were raised about the day and time frame for the conference. Concerns about holding the conference on a Saturday were that the working poor population works on weekends. Suggestions included starting the conference earlier and ending earlier so parents could pick up their kids after school. Barb suggested using gift bags, balloons, table cloths so participants feel very special. The Fundraising and Finance committee will work on an incentive for the drawing, which will encourage participants to stay through the entire conference and would encourage getting all conference evaluation forms back. Gift bag contents should include useful products (laundry detergent, shampoo, toothbrushes/toothpaste, etc.). Attendees may also receive an Opportunity Conference Address book which will contain names and phone numbers of Navigators and other helpful resources. Barbara highly recommended wrapping the address books with paper and ribbon. Gift certificates were also a suggestion, and Barb suggested holding 10-15 drawings before lunch and 10-15 drawings after lunch (use a car as a drawing prize?). She also suggested the idea of family/individual photos being taken of the participants when they arrive and put the pictures in an inexpensive frame. Also suggested was to serve a continental breakfast as many of the attendees will not have eaten.

- Fundraising and Finances: Set up a budget; track in-kind donations; offer sponsorships to small businesses/agencies; list sponsors on a table card and assign a “table leader” to each table (an attendee who has overcome poverty or living in poverty and willing to take the responsibility). Identify table leaders by colored ribbons on their name tag - identifies that they have gone through special training (a week or two before the conference - provide a $10 gas card as incentive). The group agreed to keep a “gift committee” with Fundraising.

- Child Events: Identify the child (Barb presented several ideas); have a form so parents can list their child’s special needs, allergies, etc.; separate kids by age to better focus activities; bring in crafts, nap mats, finger foods, diapers, wipes, folding cribs, etc.

- Volunteer: Use a volunteer agency to register volunteers through their agency - they will do background checks for those working with kids. Set up “help desks” for a place for visitors/volunteers to sit and answer questions.

- Navigator Program: This is critical to the success of the Opportunity Conference. Navigators are not coaches or mentors - they help people navigate systems, trades, pathways, applications; help people set goals and priorities. Navigators develop a trusting relationship with the participant and meet them where they are. Three types of navigators: 1) general navigator who works with families and/or individuals, 2) special navigators who have a specialty such as DSS, medical, legal, government, daycare, school system, 3) navigator advisors who are those very familiar with community services. Barb suggested using SCORE volunteers as navigators. Match one or two navigators to a table because not all participants

will want to work with a navigator. Navigators should call the participant faithfully and regularly to build trust. Barb suggested 6 people per round table. There will be a day-long navigator training. Start recruiting navigators and schedule navigator training a couple of weeks before the conference.

- Post Conference Ideas: Hold neighborhood meetings/monthly picnics with navigators and participants; provide child care resources; monthly or quarterly bowling with kids; have food bank speakers come and talk about nutrition and set up a farmer's market. Make a schedule of these post conference events and include in address books. Create something to keep people connected with the navigators.

Subcommittee Reports and Leadership

Logo Selection/Presentation by Media and PR Subcommittee

- Cathy Enns reported on behalf of Leslie McKinley, chair of the Media Relations and PR subcommittee. Cathy presented several visual variations of a logo and tag line created by the subcommittee. The steering committee agreed on a logo, colors, fonts, and tag line. The logo will read "SLO Communities, Bridging Poverty" with the tag line "2011 Opportunity Conference". The steering committee voted on their choice.

Fundraising and Finance

- Vicki Jarvis reported on behalf of Carl Hansen, chair of the subcommittee. Vickie reported that based on a current budget, their goal is to raise $50,000. They suggested fundraising with local merchants, encourage donations by creating table sponsorships, getting media sponsors (KSBY vs. KCOY – Cathy Enns has relationship with KCOY), start messaging to community soon to educate them about the conference (using logo, letterhead, etc.). Vicki also reported that she found a San Francisco based organization to donate and deliver 50 bags for the kids to include stuffed animals and blankets.

Logistics and Organization

- Belinda Benassi, chair, reported that they need to know the number of attendees before pursuing the conference location. Their goal is to have that number by June 1 (decision was made by the steering committee to cap the attendance at 175 participants while considering a 25% walk-in rate). Members agreed to keep it small to make it manageable and ensure success. They would like to know the number of captains attending the conference, and how many people allotted per agency. What is the time commitment for navigators? The subcommittee agreed to: create time line for organizational tasks; facilities and catering; conference schedule; gift bags, ordering supplies, transportation; negotiating contracts, and agreed to meet twice a month until the conference.

Navigator and Participant Recruitment

- Cathy Enns reported that their subcommittee will meet next on May 17 10:00 at DSS. At their last meeting, they discussed recruiting, navigator targets, what day of the week for the conference, a publicity plan and if and/or how to screen navigators.

Next Meeting

- June 1, 2010 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- Location: DSS, 3433 S. Higuera, Room 115, San Luis Obispo

Meeting adjourned: 1:00 p.m.