



## **SOUTH BAY FAITH ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

**(3-3-10)**

### **ATTENDEES**

Kay Stuckhardt, Cheryl Moder (COI), Erica Salcuni (COI), Elizabeth Pastrana (SDSU/Cambios con Fe), Mariaelena Aguilar, Tanya Rovira-Osterwalder, Javier Garcia, Reverend Dr. Richard Freeman (Community Congregational Church), Donatella Lopes, Lucia Olivas (Cambios con Fe), Irma Rodriguez Lorenzo Rodriguez, Juan Ramirez, Leah Ostenberg, Julio Gonzalez (Our Lady of Guadalupe), Blanca Gonzalez (Our Lady of Guadalupe), Gabriela Meza (Our Lady of Guadalupe), Susana Carbajal (Most Precious Blood), Juanita Mora (Most Precious Blood), Aramita Garcia, Olga Sanchez (CVPC), Jolene Espinosa (CVPC), Emily Espinosa (CVPC), Deacon Margarito B. Lozoya (Our Lady of Guadalupe), Isabel Madrigal (Our Lady of Guadalupe), José LaMont Jones (CVPC), Deacon Gerardo Marquez (St. Rose of Lima), Gloria Barba, Beatriz Vella, Nelson Guzman (St. Rose of Lima), Alma Bibiano, Sarah Fredrickson, Stephanie Escobar, Flavia Marquez

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

### **OVERVIEW**

(Kay Stuckhardt)

- The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative (Initiative) is a public/private partnership whose mission is to reduce and prevent childhood obesity in San Diego County by creating healthy environments for all children and families through advocacy, education, policy development, and environmental change. Utilizing the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Action Plan, a comprehensive plan to end childhood obesity in SD County, as its guide; the Initiative engages stakeholders from the seven domain areas with the most influence on developing environments that support healthy choices and behavior change (i.e. County & City Government; Healthcare Systems & Providers; Schools & Before- / After-school Providers; Childcare & Preschool Providers; Community-based, Faith-based and Youth Organizations; Media and Marketing Industry and Businesses) to implement the Action Plan's strategies for childhood obesity prevention and reduction and work together to improve nutrition and physical activity opportunities for all kids.
- Kay explained that two faith advisory groups have been convened, one in North County and this group, representative of the South Bay area. She discussed the last meeting of the South Bay group held in November. Dr. Nick Yphantides, the Executive Medical Consultant for the county, came to present to the group about not only his own struggle with obesity, but also the community's struggle. He cited data indicating that 40% of children in Chula Vista are overweight or obese. This is a local, state, and national issue, but Dr. Nick's coverage of the Chula Vista intended to show the churches in attendance that making a difference starts in your own community.
- Kay referenced the promotoras that have been working within the faith community as representatives of childhood obesity prevention. She reported that they attended a Chula Vista

city council meeting last week to advocate for the city's proposed community garden policy. This is a great example to follow in terms of team work advocacy. When community leaders band together to advocate for the community, changes can happen, and this meeting is designed to build a team that is trying to make the healthier choices the easier ones.

### **PRESENTATION: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CAMBIOS CON FE**

- Elizabeth Pastrana, the Coordinator for Cambios con Fe (Change with Faith) presented on the program's progress through the work of promotoras. Cambios con Fe is a program brought to our community by the Center for Behavioral and Community Health Studies at SDSU.
- Aramita Garcia was the first promotora to get up and speak about the changes she has seen in her church/community through her efforts with Cambios con Fe. She reported that she has worked with her church's youth group for 7 months now to improve its overall health. The children receive healthy snacks, and a salt-free snack is one of the strict guidelines. Additionally, one of the local Spanish television networks has interviewed Aramita about Cambios con Fe, and WALKSanDiego has committed to helping her church community to make improvements to the local park.
- Irma Rodriguez, a promotora and pastor to her church, began her presentation by saying that she wants to promote a healthy environment for children and adults. She read a passage from the Bible about a group of people that decided to eat just produce for 10 days and the positive changes they felt in their health as a result. Irma said that her church teaches this story to its families, and the families are beginning to become familiar with what they are buying at grocery stores in order to make healthy choices.
- Elizabeth introduced SDSU's newest promotora on the Cambios con Fe project, Nelson Guzman. Despite the short length of time he's been involved, Nelson reported that he is already having a positive impact through his work of combining faith with nutrition/healthy living.
- Jolene Espinosa reported that the biggest change she's noticed in her church is during Family Night, which is held once a week and includes a communal dinner. She reported a change in the variety of foods served—the community is encouraged to share their recipes with one another, and now more families are beginning to experiment with healthier recipes such as vegetarian tacos. The volunteer chef recently began increasing the amount fruits and vegetables provided. Jolene reported that this has had a very positive effect with the youth, who are displaying enthusiasm for learning new health and nutrition information.
- Lucy Olivas, another promotora, reported that in December, her church held a community walk on the grounds of the church. They have never held this event before, but it enjoyed a huge turnout and has effected subsequent parish decisions in a big way. She said that they are selling healthy foods at the church, and they typically sell out completely. Additionally, some nutrition and healthy living education is being incorporated into catechism class, this has actually resulted in higher attendance. Lucy also reported that one of the members of the parish contacted her to say that some of the education has compelled her to cook healthier meals. She closed by saying, "If we don't take care of our health or environment, we are not taking care of our spirit."
- Kay congratulated the promotoras for the impact their work has had within the targeted communities. She added that COI has also been appealing to community members to make changes through the development of the recently published Youth Engagement and Action for Health (YEAH!) manual, which was designed to train community leaders to conduct neighborhood improvement projects and advocacy with the community's volunteer youth and adults. **Anyone interested in learning more about this project should contact Erica Salcuni, the Administrative Assistant for COI; [esalcuni@hasdic.org](mailto:esalcuni@hasdic.org) or (858) 614-1549.**



## **PRESENTATION: HOW THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT & PARK AUDITS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

- Juan Ramirez of WALKSanDiego presented to the group the benefits of doing audits of the built environment. A full assessment of a public place's features can help a community identify what needs to be changed so that they are able to create a plan for addressing the issue(s).
- His presentation explained that health is affected by the built environment in a number of ways. Individuals have their physical, mental, and social health to consider. Components of the built environment are things that are built and "not natural," such as parks, buildings, sidewalks, etc. The built environment can affect a person's health either positively or negatively, depending on the circumstances.
- Juan used parks as an example of part of the built environment that a community group could assess and change. He listed several parks in the local area that have been audited by the WALKSanDiego team. The audits, or assessments, observe how the park is used and measures people's perceptions of the park and how it might be improved. Elements of evaluation for the parks are:
  - I. Activities and uses
  - II. Access
  - III. Safety
  - IV. Sociability
- Juan reported that assessments have already been done on Lauderbach Park, Otay Park, and Friendship Park. **Assessments for Memorial Park and Hilltop Park are scheduled for March 4 and March 8, respectively.**
- Juan went on to explain some specifics about the findings in Lauderbach Park and Otay Park. At Lauderbach, which received several improvements in 2006, still has some work to do. Juan reported that their assessment found that the use of this facility is still limited because of the high volume of homeless persons that are engaging in illegal behaviors.
- In Otay Park, the youth group for Our Lady of Guadeloupe Church conducted a photo-voice project, where they took pictures of the park as a part of the assessment in order to document the problems found in the audit. Juan pointed out that this assessment received very high community input, making it a great example. Use of this facility is limited because there is inadequate seating and shade as well as gang activity.
- Juan concluded by saying that every park has different issues, but the main objective is to make it functional for people to be active and both physically and mentally healthy. He added that working to increase a park's safety also increases the community's overall health.
- Mariaelena Aguilar asked Juan if there is a plan in place to improve the 5 listed parks. **Juan said that currently, they are at the assessment stage with each park, identifying the priorities. Once all parks have been assessed, local churches and other community stakeholders will be asked to weigh in on the development of an action plan.**
- Aramita commented that safety issues in a park can be a liability for a church, depending on whether or not the youth is a church member or if the park and church are next to each other. Juan explained that this is something that would be addressed as part of a church or community action plan.
- Elizabeth added that it is important for each church to have an advocacy group similar to Cambios con Fe. Juan added that sustainability is another important part of each improvement

project. Groups planning for action should consider that issues re-emerge when there are not adequate funding/resources available to the community to use as advocacy tools.

### **DISCUSSION: HOW FAITH COMMUNITIES CAN IMPACT CHILDHOOD OBESITY**

- Kay asked the group to break up into 3 smaller groups in order to discuss the following questions:
  - I. **How can churches get more people from their congregations—in addition to the promotoras—involved in the park and walk audits?**
  - II. **At the last Faith Advisory Council meeting in November, you identified the following concerns: a) graffiti; b) Lack of lighting on streets; c) Trash on streets; d) Trash around church; e) Need for alternative resources and shelters for the homeless; f) Lack of shade; old bench, and trash at bus stop on L Street and Hilltop; g) Safety problems at Lauderbach, Friendship, and Hilltop parks. Which of the above concerns would be easiest to do something about in the next three months?**
- Group 1 (facilitated by Elva Arredondo)
  - I. This group suggested the following solutions for the first question:
    - Invite all promotoras to talk to the parish council groups about promoting health
    - Have an interview with the church leaders to gain input
    - Bring a professional researcher or another knowledgeable staff member from San Diego State to provide evidence on community health and team to work together
    - Have each promotora have a one-on-one meeting with group/church leaders to promote health program to community
  - II. This group suggested the following solutions for the second question:
    - This group picked lack of lighting on the streets as the most important priority to fix in their community.
    - Contact the city and ask for a meeting with stakeholders such as councilmembers
    - Get involved in the community to gain their support to fix the problem
    - Make an announcement within church announcements/newsletter
    - Link to past incidents that have occurred as result of the problem
    - Collect signatures outside of the church
    - Have a farmer's market at Otay Park
- Group 2 (facilitated by Juan Ramirez)
  - I. This group suggested the following solutions for the first question:
    - Education that extends beyond flyers and handouts
    - Get community involved through church youth groups and family groups. Also Board of Christian Education and Catechism group.
    - Advocate at Chula Vista Safety Council. For example, the Directors of Parks & Rec is represented there
    - Raise funds from other community groups such as the Rotary Club or Lyons Club
  - II. This group suggested the following solutions for the second question:
    - This group did not pick one problem to focus on but rather listed strategies one could use to tackle multiple problems
    - Have activities in the park, such as a church walking group
    - Promote improvement efforts within different church groups
    - Mention the project at week and Sunday services



- Develop a positive relationship with the local police department, city graffiti task force, and/or parks & rec dept. to address safety issues
- Group 3 (facilitated by Tanya Rovira-Osterwalder)
  - I. This group suggested the following solutions for the first question:
    - Get involved with the churches leaders
    - Publicity through priests during services
    - One-on-one communication
    - Involvement of group leaders to practice different activities in the parks, e.g.. go to the parks and plan varied activities through the days, weeks, months, etc. There's a big need to show park belonging. Leaders may take turns
    - Open communication among residents to find out what is that keeps them off from coming to the park
    - Promote activities in the park through the maximum authority in the church (Priests, Pastors, etc.)
  - II. This group suggested the following for the second question:
    - Like the last group, the group did not pick one problem to focus on but rather listed strategies one could use to tackle multiple problems
    - Obtain resources and information
    - Try to solve existing problems among the churches and the parks, i.e. the case of Santa Rosa de Lima with illumination issues.
    - Organizing clean up campaigns among residents, students and people that attend the churches
    - Get in touch with City staff when detecting graffiti so they can help clean up. (Carla Blackmar is a contact from the City of Chula Vista, who may be able to help with this problem. Her phone number is (619) 476-5355
    - Advocating for shades at the bus stops

### **CLOSE AND EVALUATION**

- Erica will send all of the group ideas to Elizabeth Pastrana and her promotoras.
- Juan will work with groups after each park assessment to help them develop action plans.
- Juan added that it is important to include youth groups in leadership. Tanya suggested planning a "field trip" to the City Council's office so that youth could become familiar with the decision-makers in their community.
- Aramita reported that Councilmember Ramirez actually requested an invite to their next Cambios con Fe youth group meeting.

**Next Meeting: TBD**