COMMUNITY ACTION
Helping people. Changing lives.

Location: The River House at Rood Bridge Park

Facilitator: Holly Pruett

Present: Cathy Stanton, Craig Kinnie, Cynthia Hanna, Dan Aberg, Dick Stenson, Don Bohn, Kevin Aguirre, Leroy Bentley, Leslea Smith, Mark Christensen, Mary Alice Ford, Ralph Brown, Ron Sarazin, and Vickie Rocker.

Absent: Alfredo Solares-Vega, Kimberly Hernandez, and Tom Hughes.

Staff: Jeri Alcock, Jerralynn Ness, John Russell, Marilyn Harrison, Natalie Horne, Renee Bruce, and Winnie Althizer.

The planning session commenced at 8:45 a.m.

Agenda Review & Introductions

What is your greatest interest or passion right now as it relates to involvement with Community Action.
Everyone Contributed.

How will we know we have been successful at the end of the day?
Jerralynn's "Measures of Success" for the retreat

- All engaged, energized
- Staff contributions minimal, but useful
- We leave with a sense of our various perspectives
- We achieve a common understanding of poverty
- Awareness is raised about our work, providing groundwork for planning
- Clarity is achieved about our promise and who we are
- Board is better positioned to serve as advocates and ambassadors

Understanding Poverty

Exercises and discussion to explore Community Action's role within the context of larger societal teachings about poverty.

What did we learn about poverty growing up?
Childhood Learnings

- Compassionate connection
- See the humanity in each person
- Man seeking to help self (work)
- Poverty = overseas, race, immigrant, "pagan babies"
- Community took care of each other; poverty not visible
- Community is what you make it
- I never thought of myself as poor — but its all we knew
- Education = key to success
- There's always someone worse off
- Poverty hidden from middle class
- "Wrong side of the tracks"
- Desire to distance/blame

What words or images come to mind when you hear the word "poverty"? "Low income"?

- not clean
- different lunch ticket
- low intelligence
- don't spend $ wisely
- lazy – "doesn't want to work"
- immoral
- want something for nothing
- food stamps –criticize food choices/purchases
- subject to ridicule
- generous, intelligent
- resourceful
- motivation

- survivors
- hopeless
- at fault, to blame
- elderly
- deserving vs undeserving poor
    - choice to be poor
    - drugs
    - teen moms
- pride
- relationship-oriented
- angry
- transit users
- limited expectations, hopelessness

Implications for Community Action: discussion of why CA does what it does within the context of larger societal teachings about poverty.

- self-determination – what now? what next?
- enabling vs assisting
- take people where they are
- mission statement doesn't distinguish between motivations
- resources are limited, service levels dropping > prioritize vs 1st come 1st served
- "hurdles" /eligibility requirements
- Washington County priority = families
- requires understanding of survival skills / compassion
- .services & hope
- skills, mentorship, relationships \ hope
- understand impact of judgements
- high expectations
- support for self-esteem

The Promise of Community Action Nationwide; our Local Community Action Mission

In what ways does our local Community Action fulfill the promise? In what ways do we fall short?

□ Changes peoples lives
  One on one through education and advocacy
- + Head Start
- + options when people have none
- + people can make a difference
- + conveys respect
- + business start up
- + mobilizes resources
- + committed to struggling vendors
- + services connected to education (but not always)

- − limitations of 1 time services
- − limitations on service #s
- − how to maximize resources, "return on investment"

□ Embodies spirit of Hope
- + donations will make a difference
- + "can-do" spirit, show up for work
- + role models
- + relationships, respect
- + staff exudes optimism, mission driven

□ Improves Community
- + Head Start
- + responsive to county needs
- + county-wide participation
- + King City center
- + multiple partnerships – they show up
- + created stand alone CDCs, Food Bank

□ Entire Community

- − question re: gender of clients, feminization of poverty?
- − additional community education
- − never enough
- − services for singles
- − not as present geographically as desired
- − continued attention needed to cultural competency, bilingual abilities – in addition to Spanish
- − policy advocacy-capacity
- − services to undocumented residents limited

❏ Individuals help themselves and others

+ Modeling, one on one support, among groups

+ Systems-based approach, address root cause

+ Empowering approach connects people e.g. policy council, shelter

+ "to have something better in mind"

+ knowledge, skills, ability to overcome obstacles

– Untapped potential of community to give/help both from people of means and from low income people

– Increase self-help networks, peer support

– Increase volunteer opportunities – don't leave as much on the table

– Increase low-income representation

Envisioning the Ideal Community Action / the Niche

- ❑ What would our core competencies be?
  - Assistance tied to education
  - "Case management"
    - adequate time and staff
    - holistic, follow through, broker resources
  - ability to administer and coordinate county-wide
  - accessible in the community
    - visible, can get there, open
    - language
  - understands face of poverty
    - viewed as experts
    - programs responsive
    - respond to changing needs
  - hub for volunteerism
  - knowledgeable, compassionate staff
  - ability to leverage and expand resources
    - information & referral
  - knowing mission – how to apply it
  - providing great place to work
  - passion to serve others
  - fiscally responsible
  - capable & bold management team & board
  - holistic, empowering approach
  - not doing what others can do
  - low overhead, high impact, cost effective
  - being "at the table"
  - mission-based
  - resource to the whole community

- ❑ What would be the experience of the people we serve?
  - Self respect, self worth
  - Self-sufficiency
  - Encouraged to hope
  - Easy access
  - Full knowledge of what to expect, what's expected of them
  - Vision of their potential, hear a "yes"
  - Leave with something, information or needs met -measurable and meaningful results
  - treated with respect
  - appreciation of, and rapport with, staff
  - credit & recognition of abilities & efforts
  - agency perceived as competent
  - guidance provided
  - self-esteem improved

- ❑ What is client's belief of who we are when they walk in & walk out?
  - trusted partner with the community
  - trusted steward
  - *working together we can* provide opportunities for people to improve their lives
  - *services are cohesive, cover spectrum*
  - *every person matters*
  - take them where they are today
  - helping people help themselves - people are capable
  - education
  - sustainability
  - we believe in you, high expectations
  - elicit self growth
  - take care of emergency, then "what now"
  - take care of staff

- ❑ What would our relationship with the larger community look like?
  - relationships with Hispanic community, bold Latino leadership
  - opportunities for people to channel compassion
  - ties to all sectors
  - opportunities for volunteers, donors
  - continuous publicity > educate community
  - knows who we are, what we do & trusts us to do it well
  - visible
  - provide excellent & trusted information on poverty issues
  - recognized leader & active participant in issues of poverty
  - throughout Washington county
  - thoughtful, strategic alliances based upon mutually identified needs
  - fully integrated in entire community's needs & goals, e/g economic development
  - image projected externally beyond WA Cnty
    - Portland, Multnomah Cnty
    - Oregon
    - Wash D.C.
  - "the" place to direct resources to help low-income
  - easy to connect with
  - outreach to elderly
  - synergy w/other providers to amplify, not duplicate

- ❑ Improving Community Action's relationship w/community
  - outreach to HR/employment assistance for businesses
  - build Latino leadership
  - who doesn't know us?
  - can be perceived as large, dominant; "institutional" vs. grassroots (e g East County)
  - resolve I&R provision questions
  - technology = bottomless pit
  - position Community Action so businesses understand return on investment; leverage
  - shift view from charity > partner
  - improve business understanding of human capacity of their staff
  - how to get community to take responsibility for those in need?
    - feel the passion
    - provide outlet
  - increase volunteer & donation opportunities

- ❑ Based on this discussion, how do we <u>define Community Action's niche</u>?
  - geography (location), mission, programs, promise
  - serves families
  - provide service to (many) who are least able to help themselves
    - exceptions: mental health, etc.
  - not a government organization
  - robust, breadth, longevity – time proven
  - leader/resource in anti-poverty programs & advocacy
  - diversity of services, holistic approach
  - effective fiscal management and management
  - "split personality" defined by services and as community leader/partner
  - a bridge between people who do/don't have power
  - diverse source of funds
  - effective, trusted private manager of government funds
  - broad reach within narrow focus of poverty
  - a key partner, doesn't "own" the issue
  - services – focussed
    - how do they "roll up"?
    - what do they add up to?
  - partnerships – broad with varying roles
    - catalyst
    - leader
    - partner
  - struggle with brand equity in market, e.g. visibility in Intel employee base
  - organic evolution

- ❑ Challenges:
  - internal clarity about niche but need to increase connection to resources to amplify/leverage
  - "brand management"
  - "well run organization that helps people to get on their feet"
  - easy way to explain suite of services
  - an umbrella organization that balances resources & needs (define 1 step above specific services)
  - "holding company" risks losing localized, specific ID
  - who are we beyond what we do?

- ❑ Based on this discussion, is there a need to redefine Community Action's Mission?
  - "our community" > the community
  - Community Action in partnership
  - focus on <u>entire</u> community (– red flag)
  - service delivery PLUS umbrella – both reflected
  - "self-determination" – controversial
    - evolved from "self-sufficiency"
  - education component not in there
  - strive > achieve
  - focus also on helping entire community
  - articulate & project the pride of association with Community Action

Next Steps & Retreat Evaluation

❑ Retreat evaluation
  + achieved goals
  + dialogue with Board
  + connections
  + reaffirmation of direction
  + ✓comparison of views
  + ✓✓✓✓ grappling with niche
  + ✓ impressed with new-comers alignment, buy-in
  + high expertise level, ability to dialog, passion & commitment
  + ✓process, interaction
  + ✓✓staff supported by Board
  + common understanding
  + stayed above program level
  + timely as new member
  + focus on poverty
  + facilitation
  + no huge issues!

  − No action steps defined
  − (room) temperature

Next steps

  • Staff will utilize information developed today for annual and strategic planning.
  • Specific information will go to Board committees to work with
  • Actions developed will be reported back to Board