

Notes from July 9, 2009 - Homeless Action Forum

Mobilizing Community Support:

- Education tied with opportunities to participate and build relationships
 - Ethno - cultural communities
 - Youth

Ethno-cultural communities

- Go to people (places of worship, community centres)
- Use media (e.g. TV & billboards) (Translated & culturally specific)
- Connect education to opportunities for people to volunteer & build relationships
 - HAW as a starting point on the way to the Olympics
- Needs a community developer or coordinator & utilized leadership already existing in communities

Youth

- Educating youth as a vehicle to influence parents & families
- Involvement of schools is key - utilize resources that exist in your schools
- Connect all HAW events to curriculum & opportunities to participate

Strategy

- Goal: Plans during HAW to mobilize community
- Raise awareness about homelessness in each neighbourhood
- Massive education in different languages
 - e.g. Community radio
- focus education to different ethnic groups - different mindsets within different ethnicities
- "park" seniors, children for entire day in public spaces

- Put together educational programs on knowledge network
- Target community channels
- Billboard advertising
- Engage community members in completing a task together
- Translate information about homelessness
- Target areas in which members of ethnic groups gather - e.g. churches, languages schools
- Social contract which is established that new Canadians should make
- Use Twitter, facebook
 - Use the Obama campaign as an example
- Plans for more than just HAW

FOOD SERVICES/COMMUNITY MEALS

What does success look like?

- Social integration; inclusiveness
- People connecting over food
- The needs of the population being served are met
- A safe place is created
- Peer leadership develops
- People don't have to leave community to get what they need
 - Awareness
 - Resources
 - Services

Planning

- Public education about what works (forum)
- Identify assets and gaps
- Be clear about what people need & meet that need
- Look at what is already going on
- Coordinate activities
- Partners and volunteers are both necessary
- Identify people who want to do something
- Food safe regulations can be an obstacle
- Combine practical services with food

Implementation

- Meet with interfaith groups to discuss concerns and what they can do (2 or 3 x year)
- It would be good to have a volunteer coordinator for people who want to help with projects - someone with human resources skills and knowledge
- Need a "gather and give" for recruiting and assigning volunteers
- Youth groups - another source of volunteers
- Important to provide a high quality program
 - Volunteers feel good, so do guests
- What about a Connect Event at BC Place?

HOMELESS CONNECT

- Housing is biggest gap
- Portable subsidies could assist in attempts to offer more options - integration vs. segregation
- Homeless & at risk population “Day of Caring”
- Raises awareness in community about how they can get involved
- Get business involved - champions, donations, employment opportunities
- Empowerment piece for individuals - learning skills
- Connections continue to grow overtime, continue to develop and grow
- Sustainability - i.e., community kitchens, employment, revenue from economic development opportunities
- Outreach - needs to be done by peers (more effective)
- Food is essential to bringing people in
- Connect events taking place more frequently than during HAW
- Service providers become aware of services/resources, everyone is working together
- Collaboration model example in New West
- Growing “at risk” population - can use “Connect” as prevention program (i.e. family subsidy program should be advertised regularly under “housing” section of newspapers)
- Need to put more personal stories about the homeless
- volunteers could be coordinated better, perhaps using Volunteer Vancouver
- Positive media coverage - problems such as NIMBY could be prevented
- Community based
- Leverage public support to build housing - pressure to build
- People getting depleted
- Need to go beyond awareness
- All levels of government must work together
- Replicate what is working - best practices
- Political resources
 - public education
 - public entry/pressure points
 - HAW & Housing
 - Organizations have to lead
- Greater collaboration to build systemic advocacy for new affordable (low-income) government funded housing (with genuine community consultation)
- Create Charter (1,000 organizations)
 - New West - new collaborative model “one point of entry” food & services
 - Overlap in resources - do a better job with/what’s there
 - Agreement about working together (e.g. privacy)
 - Collaboration as a resource
 - Local collaboration

- Form umbrella organizations to co-ordinate
- Develop housing lists- larger scale & recruit landlords
- Public education
- CMHC Program (RARP)

Success

- Collaborative Planning and Environment
- Public education about what works (forum)
- People don't have to leave community to get what they need
 - Awareness
 - Resources
 - Services

Message

- Provide services needed locally
- Homelessness is a regional issue
- Reduce NIMBYism

RAISING AWARENESS

- Acknowledge problem
 - People only see what they want to see
 - Homelessness come from somewhere else
 - Homeless more than street homeless (i.e, need to acknowledge others who also are homeless)
- Get message out on TV & Radio
 - Putting human face on homelessness
 - Dispel myths
 - Talk about what homelessness looks like
- Target audience
- Citizens to pressure politicians
- Need to be clear on strategies - end goal
- How do we get info out in more wide spread way
- Adhere to principle of "do no harm"
- AHA media - positive stories poor told by the community
- Build resilience/knowledge in youth

Education Campaign

- Need to learn from other campaigns (e.g, New Brunswick)
- Use existing campaigns to get message out (e.g, "Operation Phoenix)
- Use existing campaigns to tell the story of what it's like to live in poverty (eg., VPD Project Haven - SRO's DTES)
- Do a follow up on "Grief to Action" (CBC)
- The level of awareness will depend on neighbourhood
 - Move from acknowledgement to acceptance
 - Awareness of issues such as housing costs and lack of choices when living life in poverty

Strategy

- Get mayor to contact main media to do campaign (get Rick Cluff to do Early Edition piece each morning during Homeless Action Week)
- Get Mayor to champion campaign with support from other organizations, municipalities, etc
- Ask Mayor to discuss/get buy in from all Lower Mainland mayors and provincial politicians.
- Others organizations that should be involved in the campaign include:
 - CMHA
 - CMHC
 - Other politicians (Libby Davis/Shane Simpson)
 - Jim Byrnes - to be champion

- Vancity - sock drive
- Develop a separate campaign aimed specifically at ethnic communities - in positive way - for example target campaign at churches because parishioners should already have open minds
 - Translate info on good work/successful outcomes being achieved
 - Goal is to reduce stigma and fear
 - Activists - become champions in churches
 - Advertising (translated material) on what's being done
 - Target broad community without further stigmatizing (i.e. focus on homeless in positive environment)

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