



# Ensuring Opportunity Campaign: Cutting Poverty in Contra Costa County

August 5, 2014

Newsletter issue #1

## Dear advocates and allies,

We promised to keep you updated – and a lot has been going on! Here is a brief summary of the progress we've collectively made on several exciting initiatives. Stay tuned for more...and send us your own updates and ideas!

Several priority policy issues were identified by participants at the Ensuring Opportunity convening on May 16, and work is already taking off in a number of the areas. Information on how you can get involved is also included.

## Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to Cut Poverty in Contra Costa County



Mike Herald, Legislative Advocate, Western Center on Law and Poverty addresses the convening's participants on May 16, 2014

In order to create a broad-based movement to address poverty in the county, a Campaign Goals and Structure document has been created describing campaign goals and objectives, communication and advocacy strategies, desired campaign structure including staffing roles and responsibilities, and a budget. This concept paper has

been given preliminary approval by the new Campaign Leadership Team, which includes representatives from the Family Economic Security Partnership (FESP), Safety Net Task Force, (SNTF), Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition (MFAC), Human Services Alliance (HSA) and the Employment & Human Services Department (EHSD). We are currently seeking funding to hire a **campaign director** to help lead, support and **coordinate our multitude of efforts** to reduce poverty. The document will be posted on a campaign website in the near future, and we invite your feedback and questions. For more information contact Jim Becker, SNTF, 510-234-1200 x303, [jbecker@richmondccf.org](mailto:jbecker@richmondccf.org); Fran Biderman, FESP/First 5 Contra Costa, 925-771-7331, [fbiderman@firstfivecc.org](mailto:fbiderman@firstfivecc.org); or Mariana Moore, HSA, 925-989-3388, [moore\\_mariana@yahoo.com](mailto:moore_mariana@yahoo.com).

## Policy/Revising Community committee

On July 17, FESP sponsored a **training on movement building** by the Movement Strategy Center. FESP has also sent a survey to FESP members, Human Service Alliance members, and those who attended the movement building training, and will be sending the same survey to **Ensuring Opportunity convening participants** that will inform the development of a Policy Toolkit. The purpose of the survey is to solicit input

from public and private providers in order to “dig deeper” to understand what providers view as the main structural issues contributing to poverty and the best ways for communicating policy actions to providers and to their constituents. A separate survey may be developed to secure additional constituent input. For more information, contact Fran Biderman, 925-771-7331 or [fbiderman@firstfivecc.org](mailto:fbiderman@firstfivecc.org).

*“Poverty is not a natural catastrophe or a tragedy but a predictable consequence of what we chose to do or not do. Poverty is an unnecessary reality and a scandal.”*

Sasha Abramsky, Author  
*The American Way of Poverty: How the Other Half Still Lives*

## Report Card Committee

The Ensuring Opportunity Campaign Report Card committee is focusing on developing issue-specific “report cards” for each of the five priority Safety Net areas: homelessness/housing, food security, health, safety and economic security. The goal of the committee is not to generate new data, but rather to compile, curate,

package and present existing data in a compelling way. The committee first focused on homelessness and will next focus on the issue of food security. For more information or to get involved, contact Erwin Reeves, SNTF/Richmond Community Foundation, 510-234-1200 ext. 305, [ereeves@richmondcf.org](mailto:ereeves@richmondcf.org).

## Addressing Homelessness

The Report Card committee first focused on homelessness, and has identified compelling data and affirmed the policy need for **housing that is affordable for people who are homeless** (vs. “affordable housing”). The committee is now in the process of collecting provocative stories and exploring the promotion of a Housing First approach; a webinar was held with a representative from the national 100,000 Homes Campaign to learn about this promising model. The Multi-Faith

ACTION Coalition, Shelter Inc., and the County’s Homeless Director and others are also involved in exploring this or similar models. On July 14, a presentation was made to the Contra Costa Funders Forum about homeless issues and potential solutions. For more information or to get involved, contact Erwin Reeves, 510-234-1200 ext. 305, [ereeves@richmondcf.org](mailto:ereeves@richmondcf.org) or Doug Leich, MFAC, [leichd@gmail.com](mailto:leichd@gmail.com).



*Demand Exceeds Supply  
Family shelter sets up extra cribs and beds temporarily in dining room during cold winter months*

## Convening & Events Committee

The Ensuring Opportunity Campaign Convening & Events committee is exploring potential follow-up events to the successful Ensuring Opportunity convening held on May 16. Recognizing the importance of communicating to convening participants and other anti-poverty stakeholders, we are exploring a variety of campaign **communication strategies** including

conference calls, webinars, newsletters, additional convenings, etc. (This update is one of our first communication vehicles!) We welcome additional committee members with interest or expertise in communications or event planning. If you’re interested, contact Fran Biderman, 925-771-7331 or [fbiderman@firstfivecc.org](mailto:fbiderman@firstfivecc.org).



*Ensuring Opportunity Convening, May 16, 2014*

## Tri-Valley Area Poverty Focus

A multi-year awareness and poverty reduction initiative has been formed to bring more attention and resources to address the hidden poverty found in the Tri-Valley area of Alameda and Contra Costa counties. Representatives from Kaiser Permanente, East Bay Leadership Council, Hacienda Business Owners Association, the East Bay Community Foundation and United Way of the Bay Area are sponsoring this effort. To learn more, contact Marianne Balin, Kaiser Permanente, 925-372-1268, [marianne.balin@kp.org](mailto:marianne.balin@kp.org).

## The Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition

The Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition  
Advocates and Communities Taking Initiative for Our Neighbors

The Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition, a key partner of Ensuring Opportunity, is building a **strong coalition of committed activists** and volunteers from congregations throughout the county. The Coalition has established five **active work groups** to focus respectively on jobs, food security, housing, health and education. The Coalition’s efforts have been instrumental in shaping and defining policy initiatives that will be developed out of partnerships with various constituencies who share a common mission. They have been working to increase faith-based participation from across all regions of the county, and have presented their efforts and findings to the county Board of Supervisors and have urged them to support increased funding for programs that address poverty as additional revenue becomes available. For more information, contact Jasmine Tarkoff at 925-765-0832 or [jtarkoff@aol.com](mailto:jtarkoff@aol.com).

## CalFresh

A **CalFresh Partner committee** has been meeting for the past year to strategize how to **increase local CalFresh enrollment, with a goal of enrolling at least 75% of all residents who are eligible for CalFresh.** The committee includes representatives from the Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD), the Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano, FESP, the Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition, and the Contra Costa Crisis Center/211. EHSD has committed to hiring more eligibility workers to get new CalFresh applicants quickly enrolled. A pilot partnership

between the Food Bank and EHSD will help streamline and improve the enrollment process for community residents and connect them to needed food resources. The Multi-Faith

ACTION Coalition and the Report Card committee are also supporting this effort. For more information, contact Paul Buddenhagen, 925-313-1615 or [pbuddenh@ehsd.cccounty.us](mailto:pbuddenh@ehsd.cccounty.us).



Church of the Nazarene (May 7, 2014)



## Living Wage

As a follow-up to the Ensuring Opportunity convening, several campaign representatives met with county Supervisor John Gioia on July 9 to explore the idea developing a campaign to increase the minimum wage in Contra Costa. Gioia was very supportive. He suggested that the effort be cross-sector and countywide, bringing communities together. A small exploratory working group has been formed to identify relevant stakeholders and craft a strategy. To learn more contact Fran Biderman, 925-771-7331, [fbiderman@firstfivecc.org](mailto:fbiderman@firstfivecc.org) or Mariana Moore, 925-989-3388, [moore\\_mariana@yahoo.com](mailto:moore_mariana@yahoo.com).

## LINC – Local Integrated Networks of Care

Local Integrated Networks of Care (LINC) is a committee of community leaders from the non-profit and public sectors partnering to improve services to the consumer through collaboration and transparency. The objective is to improve communication between public agencies and non-profits to determine if there are overlaps in services and to share

resources (volunteers, funding, etc.) as needed. Initially, a model program in Concord is being developed that will support the needs of the local community via a tiered support system that can later be expanded from city to city. For more information contact Pamela Singh, 925-389-9866, [momshouseinc@ymail.com](mailto:momshouseinc@ymail.com)