

**Senate Community Relations Committee Meeting
Minutes
October 21, 2014**

Attendees: Marissa Arlet, IACUC; Ken Batista, Studio Arts; Meg Campbell, Community Relations; Laurie Cohen, ULS; Heidi Donovan, Nursing; Linda Hartman, HSLS; Misti McKeehen, PittServes; Bryan Perry, OPDC; Andrea Tempalski, Peoples Oakland; John Wilds, Community Relations; Wanda Wilson, OPDC.

Laurie Cohen welcomed everyone to the meeting in place of Maggie Folan and Tracy Soska, who were unable to attend.

The minutes from the September 16th meeting were approved with three minor corrections.

Forever Oakland

Meg Campbell reported on the success of the Forever Oakland event, which took place on October 11th and 12th. There were many sponsors, and at the opening ceremony on October 11th, City Councilman Bruce Kraus read a proclamation declaring October 10th and 11th Oakland Forever Days.

There were food trucks and musical acts, for all ages and ethnicities, along with a mobile dental clinic and a medical clinic. Squonk Opera offered a thirty minute children's workshop on STEM technology. A survey was sent out after the event, and 96% of the respondents said that they would participate again if the event were offered next year.

OPDC

Wanda Wilson followed up on the discussion generated at last month's meeting concerning ways for the committee to get involved in OPDC's efforts.

She talked about the turnaround in housing strategies and the organization's ventures to make sure there is good housing available for families and individuals who want to own or rent, as opposed to landlords. There is a project using data and the expertise of UCSUR to measure the results of this strategy. There will be focus groups and benchmarking on housing strategies.

Another area where we can get involved is in joining Oakland residents in citizen patrols, working with the Pitt police on code enforcement issues to pinpoint where the most disruptive properties are. Wanda pointed out that this could be very eye-opening for CRC members.

OPDC works hard to change the perception of Oakland as a lawless area, with lack of affordable housing. They are making headway in this area, but need to move forward. Sixty percent of Oakland residents live below the poverty level. Towards that goal of affordable housing, they are working with a developer who has proposed a 24-unit building in West Oakland.

When asked about the Employee Assisted Housing program, Wanda reported that there is currently a two-year pilot program, which will offer local employees a \$15,000 incentive to move to Oakland and purchase a home. Marketing strategies will be integrated with the human resources departments of the large Oakland institutions and an interlocking set of parts will be employed to make this program a success. The CRC could be a critical piece of the housing strategy. Tracy likes to refer to the settlement house model and living/learning communities when talking about this type of program.

Oakland Career Center

Bryan Perry, the director of School to Career and Workforce Development came to talk about opportunities to explore careers of choice. He works with JobLinks, and 15% of the participants are from Oakland. They are given assistance in overcoming barriers, and receive help with résumés, mock interviews, improving online skills, and dressing appropriately for job interviews. These people are generally young and have not been to college, so they are on the short end of the digital divide.

A new program initiative is working to blend existing programs with 2 new services: income supports (helping people apply for any public benefit for which they might be eligible as a way to supplement existing income); and financial capability training, which includes education, counseling and coaching towards the goals of debt reduction, credit repair, and setting and sticking to budgets. They are hoping to receive funding support from Neighborhood Allies.

Graduates of this program have higher job placement rates and higher retention rates once they are hired. In January they expect to have a financial coach in place, and another person to provide income support. Bryan mentioned that the University of Wisconsin is a premier site for financial coaching. He asked if anyone in the School of Social Work or the Economics Department at Pitt was focused on financial coaching.

Pitt Make a Difference Day

Misti McKeehen talked about the event, and explained that it will last for a month rather than just a day. The idea is to try to have students realize how they can make a difference always. This year it will last from Oct 19-Nov 19. On October 18th, 3274 students participated in various neighborhoods, including Wexford, Shadyside, and Beltzhoover. They helped out 115 community partners.

Another change is that beginning this year, the students got an introduction to each agency and learned how important the work they did was to the agency. Their group and individual hours will be tallied and added to the Noble Hour system for volunteer work.

There was a sustainability contest and one idea the students came up with was to establish a thrift store on or near campus. They are going to hold a contest, and between mid-November and January, they are attempting to break the Guinness world record for collections of used clothing. The goal is to collect 150,000 items. Once the contest is over, the clothing will go into the new thrift shop and be available for the community. If items are new and people want to donate them,

clothing tags should be removed. Volunteers will be needed to count and sort the clothing in January.

Dr. Wilds asked if there is a list available of what clothing items they preferred for donation. Ties and socks won't count for the record, but they will still be accepted to give to the community partners. We also discussed donating white scrubs and career clothing for interviews to OPDC for their School 2 Career and Dress for Success programs.

Misti told us that there will be a new hire in her office soon, and that they are currently interviewing for a new sustainability coordinator. That person will work with students to identify sustainable programs they want to work on with faculty members, and coordinate activities between the University and the Office of Student Affairs. The year of 2014-15 is the year of sustainability as proclaimed by Provost Beeson. Bryan and Wanda thanked Misti for her efforts organizing and coordinating the PMADD event.

OPDC received a large donation of daffodil bulbs and the PMADD volunteers planted many of them. They are also working with other community partners to distribute the bulbs for planting in public sites, with the goal to beautify the neighborhood in the spring. The hope is that daffodils will be a unifying theme flower for Oakland.

Day of Caring, other Community Relations Office business

Dr. Wilds reported that this year's program was very successful. Three hundred and fifty faculty and staff participated in twenty-seven projects. John and Heidi Donovan were also at PMADD, working on a project in Hazelwood. Pitt's People for Pets launches soon, and is a pet food/supplies drive. Food collected here will be distributed to Animal Friends and the Chow Wagon.

In November the Winter Apparel Drive will begin, collecting scarves, gloves, and hats to be given out at Christmas Day at Pitt. There will also be a Tenants' Rights Workshop for students in November, covering topics such as what to know before signing a lease. Landlords' rights will also be covered in the workshop. The School of Social Work has started asking people attending free workshops for articles of clothing to donate to homeless shelters and other places.

Heidi Donovan inquired about contributions to pay for flu vaccinations for Oakland residents, and John stated that shots for Pitt affiliates are covered by UPMC.

Heidi reported that the Honors College plans to sponsor a symposium for faculty service learning in January. Local expert Lina Dostillio will speak at a networking event for faculty and community partners.

This is the start of an initiative John and Tracy started 10-15 years ago. Then Provost Maher and Jack Daniels were looking at other institutions and their service learning programs, so that a model of service learning could be incorporated into the curriculum. The Honors College would house the program.

The committee decided that our field trip this year should be at the Workforce Development Center. There was a lot of enthusiasm for this idea.

In terms of further opportunities for the CRC to get involved, we can donate to and sort through the collection of business casual clothes for the School 2 Career program, work at the Student Food Pantry; stock shelves at the pantry, and donate to and organize household supplies for the pantry. The pantry will be open three days per week, one for community members and two days for students.

Minutes submitted by Laurie Cohen

11/5/14