

OUTCOMES FROM JUNE 15, 2011 MENDING POVERTY CONFERENCE

On Wednesday, June 15, 2011, 185 people attended the ***Fourth Annual MENDING Poverty Conference***, held at the headquarters of MEND - Meet Each Need with Dignity in Pacoima. This year's theme was *Two Checks or Two Grants Away from Poverty*.

The daylong conference examined the economic stresses that poor people and the nonprofits serving them have in common. For many working poor people, if they lose a job they can quickly face severe consequences, including homelessness. Similarly, if a nonprofit loses a funder, or if there are delays in receiving payments on government contracts or grants, the consequences can be devastating, including staff layoffs or even program closure.

But even in these very tough times, there are reasons for hope, and actions that can be taken. In his opening keynote address, Father Greg Boyle of Homeboy Industries reminded participants about the power of compassion, and about how the kinship people can come to feel with each other can help them build bridges of cooperation and community action. This laid the groundwork for a day devoted to finding solutions that add to the hard work people already are doing in the poverty services arena.

After a networking break so conference participants could connect with each other, three Action Workshops were presented: (1) *Doing More with Less - Creative Strategies for Cost-Saving Operations*; (2) *Getting More - Asset Building Strategies for Clients*; and (3) *Nonprofit Management Financial Tools for Changed Economic Times*. Speakers ranged from Karla Salazar of Nonprofit Finance Fund to Victor Ramirez of Citi Community Development to Grace Cheng Braun of Wise & Healthy Aging.

The conference concluded with a keynote speech by Jean Ross, Executive Director of the California Budget Project. With her cell phone in hand to report on the latest developments from Sacramento, she shared with the audience the hard realities of the state budget and its likely impact on nonprofits and poor people.

A brief report also was given on the *Los Angeles Alliance to End Poverty*, which serves as a platform to join together organizations and individuals engaged in fighting poverty, and grew out of the 2010 conference. And conference co-host Valley Nonprofit Resources was recognized on its fifth anniversary by a presentation from Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky.

The conference's hosts were *MEND* and *Valley Nonprofit Resources*, with support provided by a set of sponsors – Kaiser Permanente, The California Wellness Foundation, Bank of America, Habitat for Humanity, LA Care, Northeast Valley Health Corporation, Office of Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Southern California Edison, The California Endowment and Wells Fargo Bank. Academic co-sponsors were California State University Northridge's School of Social and Behavioral Sciences and UCLA's Center for Civil Society; New America Foundation was a community co-sponsor. A Planning Committee co-chaired by Florence Green of IdeaEncore and Michael Manigault of Bank of America guided development of the conference.

The conference evaluation showed that overall satisfaction with the conference was "high" or "very high" for 95% of participants, and 78% said that the likelihood of their attending the conference again next year also was "high" or "very high." Conference speaker materials are available for free downloads at www.valleynonprofitresources.org (Community Voice section).

We would like to hear from you if you have ideas about taking action from MENDING Poverty 2011, or about how to shape a successful conference day for MENDING Poverty 2012, which is already in the works!

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