

Neighbors United Meeting Summary - February 26, 2009

Attending

1. Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede, United Methodist Ministries
2. Jodi Cooper, Mosaic Community Development
3. Pastor Tom Emmett, Metropolitan Community Church
4. Gay Endicott, First Baptist Church
5. Sue Endicott, First Baptist Church
6. Nicole Engels, Park Avenue Neighbor
7. Shawna Foster, First Unitarian Church
8. Dana Givens, Mosaic Community Development
9. Cindy Gladwell, First Baptist Church
10. Christian Gray, Mosaic Community Development
11. Brittany Hanson, Mosaic Community Development
12. Zach Harmon, Omaha Innovation
13. Lois Knutzen, First Lutheran Church
14. Bruce Kuening, First Church of the Nazarene
15. Kevin Marik, Metropolitan Community Church
16. Pastor Kip Mickelson, First Baptist Church
17. Pastor Judith Rainforth, First Lutheran Church
18. Pastor Carlos Schneider, Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church
19. Wanda Selzer, First Lutheran Church
20. Tanya Shaul, Rebuilding Together Omaha
21. Pastor Stephen Sinclair, Second Unitarian Church
22. Rev. Jonathan Sloan, First Presbyterian Church

Overview

- Members of the Park Avenue Faith Community met on February 26, 2009 at First Baptist Church, lunch was generously provided by First Baptist Church.
- The primary focus of the meeting was to continue exploring the six themes that emerged throughout January's brainstorming session, identify priorities, and begin working forward.
- Meeting agendas were distributed, brief introductions were made, and the meeting was facilitated by Brittany Hanson.
- Information regarding two local grants ([AIM Compassion Grant](#) and [Mayor's Neighborhood Improvement Grant](#)) due in March was made available. Click on the linked text or contact Brittany Hanson (brittany@mosaiccd.org; 402-933-6672) for more information.

Group Discussion: What Next?

Identifying Individual Interests & Priorities

- Meeting participants were asked to reflect on which of the theme areas (brainstormed in January) they were (a) individually interested in working on and (b) thought should be a priority for Neighbors United (NU) in 2009.

- Participants then placed stickers accordingly on a flip chart outlining each of the six themes; each participant had two votes in each category (individual interest & NU priority).
- The results of the reflection exercise were:
 - Build on Community Meals: NU Priority (14) Individual Interest (8)
 - Neighborhood Based Service: NU Priority (2) Individual Interest (10)
 - Neighbors United Documenting: NU Priority (0) Individual Interest(0)
 - Community Center: NU Priority (8) Individual Interest (3)
 - Neighbors United Promotion: NU Priority (9) Individual Interest (6)
 - Organizational Development: NU Priority (0) Individual Interest (5)

Discussing How to Proceed

- After participants took a few minutes reviewing the results of the reflection exercise, Brittany Hanson posed a few questions: Seeing where individual interests lie and the identified priorities, how should we proceed? What next?
- These questions lead to a rich discussion regarding where the group should focus in 2009 and beyond, as well as how to practically move toward implementing ideas. Several of the main ideas and points the group discussed are listed below:
 - *Fundraising.* Several participants brought up the subject of fundraising and 501(c)3 incorporation. One participant noted that in her experience funders give preference to non-profit organizations; it was also noted that precision, clarity, detail, and a proven track record are all very important in applying for funds. One participant shared his experience of raising funds directly from the community as opposed to becoming dependent on grants and government funding; others suggested that perhaps each church could commit to fundraising within their respective congregations.
 - *Community Center.* The concept of a local community center was also discussed at length. Many participants noted that if support and participation of Neighbors United initiatives continues to grow, an expanded space may be needed. Others suggested developing a scattered-site center for services instead of one location.
 - *Transportation.* Transportation needs in the neighborhood were also highlighted. Many of the neighbors involved in the Community Meals continually note lack of reliable transportation a barrier to their quality of life. Several participants noted transportation as an issue that intersected with many of the six themes brainstormed at the January meeting.
 - *Community.* Developing a greater sense of community between participating faith communities was also noted as important. Many communicated their desire to see even greater relationship building between local parishioners. One idea was to integrate the groups cooking and serving the meals as a way of building relationships.
 - *Relationship.* Relationship was a key phrase in the meeting. One participant noted that people get burnt out on charity. Giving and reciprocity comes out of relationship. Others noted the importance of service and action being rooted in relationship--where both giving and receiving are possible.

- As the conversation drew to a close participants volunteered to be involved in a working group focused on one of the six themes brainstormed in January (see below); the six themes are also listed on the back of the agenda. A couple of groups are planning to meet before the next NU meeting in March.

A. *Build On Community Meals (Fun Activities, Personal Individual Services, Mentoring/Connecting, Social/Health Services)*

- Rev. Stephen Sinclair, Second Unitarian Church
- Jodi Cooper, Mosaic Community Development
- Bruce Wallace, First Presbyterian Church
- Shawna Foster, First Unitarian Church
- Sue Endicott, First Baptist Church
- Cindy Gladwell, First Baptist Church
- Wanda Selzer, First Lutheran Church

B. *Neighborhood Based Services (meeting local needs; e.g. Affordable Childcare, Community Gardening)*

- Nicole Engels, neighbor
- Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede, United Methodist ministries

C. *Neighbors United Documentation (Activities & Numbers, Outcomes/Outputs)*

D. *Community Center (Long term goals)*

- Christian Gray, Mosaic Community Development
- Bruce Wallace, First Presbyterian Church
- Rev. Jonathan Sloan, First Presbyterian Church
- Pr. Carlos Schneider, Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church
- Wanda Selzer, First Lutheran Church

E. *Neighbors United Promotion*

(Spread Common Message, Community Events, Expand Involvement)

- Kevin Marik, Metropolitan Community Church
- Bruce Wallace, First Presbyterian Church
- Cindy Gladwell, First Baptist Church
- Pastor Judith Rainforth, First Lutheran Church
- Lois Knutzen, First Lutheran Church
- Wanda Selzer, First Lutheran Church
- Pastor Tom Emmett, Metropolitan Community Church

F. *Organizational Development*

(Be explicit regarding organization & mission, Logo/branding, Brochure slide show & advocacy materials)

- Zach Harmon, Omaha Innovation
- Wanda Selzer, First Lutheran Church
- Pastor Tom Emmett, Metropolitan Community Church

Rebuilding Together Omaha

- A representative from Rebuilding Together Omaha, Tanya Shaul, shared a short presentation about the organization's work rebuilding homes in the East Omaha area. The group's main focus is to help keep people in their homes by keeping homes livable and safe.
 - RTO is organizing a volunteer Rebuilding Day on April 25, 2009, and is in search of volunteer teams. 25 to 20 homes will receive emergency repairs on that day.
 - Those interested in volunteering or donating can contact a RTO representative at www.rebuildingtogetheromaha.org or 402-965-9169.

Wrap up

- The next meeting will be on March 26, 2009, 11:00-1:00, First Presbyterian Church.
- Community Meal - Every Saturday, 11:30am-1:00pm, First Baptist Church.