

# San Diego Refugee Forum

General Meeting Minutes – October 21, 2008

## *I. Call to order at 10:40 am*

*Diana Ross*

Present: Ralph Achenbach, Diana Ross, Lejla Voloder, John Marari, Layla Flores, Kushbindar Lally, Gale Barlow, Lisa Julianne Bright, Ettera Bejbe, Kathi Anderson, Tammy Lin, Mikaela Wallinder, Sahra Abdi, Michael McKay, Sean Riordan, Barbara Jiminez, Debbie Rull, Ayaan Khalif, Brent Freeman, Dilkhwaz Ahmed, Jennifer Tracy

## *II. Introductions*

- Jennifer Tracy, Heather Bennet and Lisa Julianne Bright were welcomed as new members.
- Sean Riordan introduced himself. Sean is an attorney with the ACLU working on a civil rights project focusing on the refugee communities in San Diego. The project is funded for a two year period.

## *III. Minutes and Announcements*

- Ralph Achenbach referred members to the Forum website for minutes from previous meetings: [www.SDRefugeeForum.org](http://www.SDRefugeeForum.org)
- Motion to approve September meeting minutes: Kushbindar Lally  
Second: Jennifer Tracey  
All in favor, no nays, no abstentions
- Tammy Lin announced that the free legal services program for asylum seekers at Jewish Family Services is in full operation. Additionally, fee-based immigration services are available at the agency.

## *IV. The California Endowment Training Modules*

- Kushbindar Lally explained that the California Endowment will offer a basic advocacy training module free of charge to all Forum Members. Possible dates were listed as Monday, November 10, from 8:30 to 11:30 am or Monday, November 24, any time of day. Forum members were asked to indicate their preference directly to Ms. Lally via email at [klally@calendow.org](mailto:klally@calendow.org).

## *V. Focus: San Diego Job Corps*

- John Marari and Layla Flores introduced the services provided b Job Corps. Job Corps is a federally funded vocational skills training program for 16 – 24 year olds, offering training in 18 different trades as well as high school diploma and GED programs. Youth typically take between 6 – 9 months to complete the training, depending on the trade, and receive 12 months of follow up. Eligibility is based on income. Recipients of public assistance automatically qualify. The turnaround time of the application process is between one week and two months.

## *VI. Financial Report*

- Lejla Voloder reported the new account balance as \$1,593.51, including two new individual members and three renewed organizational memberships since September.
- Lejla Voloder noted that there does not need to be any concern about the Forum's funds, despite the takeover of Washington Mutual, where the accounts are held.

## *VII. County Reports*

- Barbara Jiminez announced that the Department of Social Security is seeking information regarding English as a Second Language, requesting comments by Friday, October 24. Additionally, a public hearing on the Community Action Plan was announced for Tuesday, November 4, in the East Region. Fliers for the hearing were made available to all members.

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## *VIII. Provider Reports*

- Mike McKay reported that Catholic Charities have seen the highest numbers of new arrivals in a single quarter since the early 1990s. Year-to-date, the agency has resettled more than 700 primary arrivals and 184 secondary arrivals. In addition, the agency provided services to more than 150 new asylees.
- Brent Freeman echoed the sentiment of a busy last quarter, commenting that IRC's resettlement number was just shy of 800 for the last fiscal year, with a majority of new arrivals from Iraq. He also announced the groundbreaking of the IRC's urban farm on 54<sup>th</sup> street in the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- A discussion ensued concerning the increased strains on social services in East San Diego on account of the fact that most Iraqi refugees settle in that region.

## *VII. Adjournment at 11:55 am*

*IX. Next Meeting: November 18<sup>th</sup>, 10:30 am*