

San Diego Refugee Forum

General Meeting Minutes – September 16, 2008

I. Call to order at 10:42 am

Hamse Warfa

Present: Ralph Achenbach, Shaunte Dittmar, Kacie Mutscheller, Ana Quinonez, Chrissy Cmorik, Brent Freeman, Jacob Gatknath, Juana Duenas, Michael McKay, Bonnie Copland, Lourdes Toussaint, Virginia West, Khushbindar Lally, Kathi Anderson, Dilkhwaz Ahmed, Lejla Voloder, Jennifer Tracy, Elias Bekele, Dan Breuninger, Benny Garcia.

II. Introductions

- Bonnie Copland introduced Elias Bekele and Hamse Warfa welcomed him to his first Refugee Forum meeting. Mr. Bekele recently finished his Masters degree in psychological counseling and currently acts as an MFT intern.

III. Minutes and Announcements

- Ralph Achenbach referred members to the Forum website for minutes from previous meetings: www.SDRefugeeForum.org
- Kathi Anderson announced several screening of the motion picture "The Visitor" which are free to the public and noted that Forum chair Hamse Warfa will be on a panel for the Q&A session following the screening at USD on Tuesday, September 30th.

IV. Convening/Committee Updates

- Jennifer Tracy reported on behalf of the advocacy committee that committee members have been attending trainings with a view to launching an advocacy campaign focused on language access.
- Mike McKay reported on behalf of the outreach and education committee that there has been no committee meeting since the last Forum general meeting, but that he has individually met with representatives from the Saint Luke Refugee Network and Saint Rose in Chula Vista, inviting them to attend future Forum meetings.

V. Focus: San Diego Hunger Coalition

- Jennifer Tracy presented on the food stamp program in San Diego. Her presentation slides are available on www.SDRefugeeForum.org.

VI. Financial Report

- Lejla Voloder noted that the membership appeal will be sent out via email shortly.
- The current financial balance is \$1,407.00, not including three recently received membership dues totaling \$125.

VII. County Reports

- Virginia West announced that the County recently completed draft workplans for 16 new mental health programs focusing on early intervention and prevention which will be available for public review for a 30 day period starting September 19th. The draft workplans will be accessible via www.sdnetworkofcare.org.
- Virginia West also announced that the County has established a Mental Health Center serving Arabic speakers in East San Diego.
- Juana Duenas noted that Barbara Jimenez was unable to attend and will provide an update at a future Forum meeting.

VIII. Provider and State Advisory Reports

- Mike McKay reported that discussions at the State Refugee Summit revolved around resource allocations in anticipation of increased numbers of Iraqi arrivals and that no resolution has been reached in the discussions between ORR and the County regarding Wilson Fish vs TANF treatment of clients.

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- Mike McKay separately noted that Catholic Charities is experiencing the highest numbers of arrivals in any one month since 1993 with approximately 200 individuals in September, mostly family reunions from the Middle East.
- A discussion about professionals from Middle Eastern countries and their challenges in finding suitable employment upon resettlement ensued.
- Bonnie Copland drew attention to the 'welcome back' program for nurses at Grossmont College.

IX. Adjournment at 12:00 noon

IX. Next Meeting: October 21th, 10:30 am