

San Diego Refugee Forum

General Meeting Minutes – September 15, 2009

I. Call to order at 10:40 am

Hamse Warfa

Present: Ralph Achenbach, Paige Newman, Fadumo Jama, Lynne Feldman, Jason Feldman, Jibriel Blejani, Danielle Rosche, Ester Herrera, Jamie Regalbuto, Barbara Hansen, Gerald Monk, Dung Le, Brent Freeman, Besma Coda, Barbara Tucker, Prisci Orozovich, Mike McKay, Mariana Vasconcelos, Sheryl Ashley, Jill McGougan, Juan Estrada, Laura Andrews, Jondra Lolin, Diane Petach, Elizabeth Lou, Paulino Paida, Diana Ross, Lejla Voloder, Kathi Anderson, Ashley Spong Reitzin Emilie Harrel, Hamse Warfa, Juana Duenas, Lisa Bright, Angie Durdiev, Taide Villa

II. Introductions

- Laura Andres of Mental Health America San Diego introduced herself and the organization, which provides free mental health education to clients and staff development trainings to service providers.
- Mariana Vasconcelos of the American Red Cross San Diego introduced herself and noted that her organization provides tracing services for refugee relatives still abroad.
- Lynne and Jason Feldman of Feldman, Feldman & Associates introduces themselves and noted that their law firm, which specializes in immigration law, is interested in providing pro bono services to asylum seekers.
- Prisci Orozovich of the State of California Refugee Health Section introduced herself and commented on a study on newly arriving Iraqi refugees currently being undertaken.

III. Minutes and Announcements

- Hamse Warfa moved to approve the minutes from the April meeting. Motion was seconded by Paige Newman. All present approved, no nays, no abstentions.
- Besma Coda of Chaldean Middle Eastern Social Services announced that service providers should soon be informed about a summit on education and employment for refugees.
- Barbara Hansen of Alliance for African Assistance announced on behalf of Jen Cordaro that the organization has compiled a Burmese phrase sheet which is available to all service providers and other agencies free of charge.
- Barbara Hansen of Alliance for African Assistance announced the organization's eighth World Refugee Day breakfast to be held on June 20th.
- Paige Newman of Somali Family Service announced a forum for Somali families held on Saturday, October 10, from 1:30 – 4:40 p.m. at 5348 University Avenue, providing information on the local education and health care systems.
- Kathi Andersen of Survivors of Torture announced that ticket sales from Heather Raffo's '9 Parts of Desire,' a play about nine Iraqi women living in Baghdad, New York and London, will benefit her organization. The special performance will take place on Sunday, October 18, beginning with a light reception at 1:00 p.m., at the 10th Avenue Theater, 930 10th Avenue.

IV. Presentation: Gerald Monk, PhD., of the SDSU Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic in City Heights

- Professor Monk provided details on the services provided at the City Heights Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic, its sliding scale policy, and his intention to recruit students fluent in refugee languages, such as Somali and Arabic.

V. Financial Report

- Lejla Voloder reported the current account balance as \$9,965.79. 20 organizations and eight individuals have paid their membership dues for the current calendar year.

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VI. Committee Updates

- Ralph Achenbach reported on behalf of the advocacy committee that Sean Riordan and himself have met with the 'Healthy San Diego' cultural and linguistic work group and the Joint Health Literacy Task Force of the Community Health Improvement Partners and the San Diego Council on Literacy as part of the Refugee Forum's advocacy project on refugees' language barriers to accessing health care. He further noted that the International Rescue Committee is holding a meeting on Tuesday, October 13, at 10:30 a.m. at 5348 University Avenue, to gather input on a comprehensive program addressing health care access barriers which the organization is developing with a view to facilitating the continuation of the Refugee Forum's advocacy efforts beyond the life of the current project.
- Paulino Paidá reported on behalf of the nomination committee that the committee has received for nominations for officers to date, and that nominations can continue to be submitted until the October general meeting. The four nominees are Sara Vaz, Sean Riordan, and current officers Ralph Achenbach and Hamse Warfa.

VII. Provider and State Advisory Reports

- Brent Freeman reported that the State Advisory Committee will meet next week and that Bob Montgomery will provide an update at the next Forum general meeting.
- Mike McKay reported that the four percent reduction in refugee cash assistance will become effective on October 1. Dung Le commented that this will result in a reduction to \$345 from \$359 for individual cases.
- Dung Le further noted that as of October 1, refugees will be transferred into the County system within one month, and that only individual cases will remain within the Wilson-Fish program.
- Barbara Tucker reported that there is a continuing shortage of ESL classes in East County and that she is trying to identify suitable venues for more classes.
- Kathi Anderson reported that the case load of asylum seekers continues to increase and that she will provide final numbers for the fiscal year at the next Forum general meeting.
- Juana Duenas noted that the County is currently finalizing arrangements for the disbursement of stimulus funds. She further announced that the State of California Department of Health and Human Services has issued an RFP to build capacity of smaller organizations. Proposals are due in February 2010.

VII. Adjournment at 11:50 am

IX. Next Meeting: October 20th, 10:30 am