

From: Eileen Coogan Boyle
Sent: Monday, June 29, 2015 11:03 AM
Subject: Lincoln Park Community Dialogue a huge success!!
Importance: High

Hi everyone,

On Saturday, we hosted the first Common Good Initiative Community Dialogue. The meeting in Lincoln Park was the culmination of more than a year of listening and working with community members and stakeholders.

Our primary goal was to have the community identify which of the nine priorities we've heard from them are the most important for us to work on together. We also hoped to get ideas for what might be done, and to get community members energized to work with us. Finally, we wanted the dialogue to serve as a demonstration to the community of our commitment and presence.

The dialogue achieved all that and more!

At the peak, I counted more than 150 people in the room, and I believe there were about 20 or so more who flowed in and out. Almost all stayed for a full three hours on a Saturday! Participants were mostly residents of Lincoln park. We had a few tables of young people – one group was from the Boys and Girls Club, and Upendo told me that another table was populated by members of a local gang. These young people were just as engaged and focused on the dialogue as the adults. There were several politicians (the Mayor, a county commissioner, a state representative) and county department leaders, and several police officers. But mostly, there were regular people, people who care about their community. We also had a reporter and photographer from the local newspaper who stayed for more than two hours (Please see the two TC Palm articles attached – one was an article announcing the event and the other was written about the event).

The participants were deeply engaged in the conversation – with each other and with us. The priority statements that Upendo had developed based on her year in Lincoln Park, and the associated concerns, clearly resonated. The two priority areas that rose to the top – well above the others, are **“Quality Jobs with Livable Wage”** and **“Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods”**. The next two highest priorities were **“Healthier Residents with Lower Rates of Disease such as Diabetes”** and **“Mutual Respect Between Local Residents and Local Law Enforcement.”** The community also shared many great ideas with us!

Upendo did an amazing job in preparing for this event (right down to the radio interview on Thursday). And she demonstrated great presence throughout the day, starting with her conversation with an older gentleman who drove up at 8:30 am, flyer in hand, who was just making sure he knew where to come later! I'm also really pleased with our choice of consultants – Marcuis Littles was a natural and handled the day beautifully.

Thanks also to our staff, board member and commissioners who attended. Miguel, Cheri and I were there to provide administrative and moral support to Upendo – and to better prepare for the dialogues to take place in Overtown and Wimauma. Carl Lavender drove over to participate, and served as our “doorman and welcome wagon”. Commissioners Margie Walden, James Butler and Arlease Hall all joined the group. Arlease deserves a special shout-out as she has been Upendo's right-hand woman all year!

We do have some photos from the event – I'll share those later once we get them off my camera 😊.

Peace and All Good,

Eileen

Eileen Coogan Boyle
Allegany Franciscan Ministries
Palm Harbor, FL
727-507-9668
www.afmfl.org