



Bridges Project Workgroup

Meeting Notes

April 10, 2014

Work Group Members

Jerry Coleman-Religious Community Services

Nathan Gula-Metropolitan Ministries

Michael Herrera-Shepherd Center

Christine Miller-United Food Bank of Plant City

Kara Moore-United Way Suncoast

Kathy Myers-Metropolitan Ministries

Pat Rogers-Community Volunteer

Carol Smith-SUAC (Sustainable Urban Agriculture Coalition)

Cliff Smith-City of St. Petersburg

Jane Walker-Daystar

1. Update on Goal #2: *Research best practices from around the country and work with agencies to develop plan for implementation.*

Kara Moore provided information on 3 innovative approaches to addressing hunger/food insecurity from around the country:

- Chester County Food Bank
 - Farm Partnerships Program: Chester County Food Bank has hired a full-time farmer to direct their agriculture programs. They grow more than 25,000 pounds of vegetables and 90,000 pounds of corn annually at local area farms. They also have a raised bed program, similar to the raised bed programs operated by Will Carey of Tampa Bay Harvest. Workgroup discussed the concept of seeking funding to purchase grow boxes to distribute to people interested in growing vegetables in their backyards, patios, etc. TBNTEH

would provide all items needed-the grow box, soil, irrigation system, seeds/seedlings. We would purchase in bulk to keep the cost low, and should also explore using plastic containers used for recycling as an inexpensive option. Classes on which plants and how to grow them would be provided to those interested. In exchange the participants would agree to donate half of their crop to a local food pantry (and keep the other half for themselves). Pat Rogers will invite Will Carey to our next Bridges meeting to see if he is interested in helping coordinate this project.

- In the Kitchen: A 7,500 sq foot commercial kitchen utilized for preparing, dehydrating, freezing, and storing foods throughout the season. Workgroup discussed implementing a similar program for our community to use to prepare and can (preserve) food for distribution to local food pantries. Carol Smith, with SUAC, is working with the City of St. Petersburg on setting-up an urban food park in St. Petersburg that would include a commercial kitchen for groups to use on a cooperative basis that could also be used for this purpose. She will keep the workgroup informed of SUAC's progress in this venture.

- **Hunger Free Vermont**
 - Early Childhood Nutrition Outreach Program: Provides meals and snacks for pre-school children living in areas with high rates of food insecurity. Workgroup members said there are similar programs in Tampa Bay that could/should be expanded.
 - Hunger Awareness Day: Hunger Free Vermont organizes and implements an annual hunger awareness day with their state legislature. Workgroup members suggested we incorporate this concept in our annual meeting, usually held in the early fall.

- **Hunger Solutions-Dallas**
 - They have a number of innovative programs to address hunger/food insecurity: Breakfast in the Classroom, Dallas Summer Meals Program, Community Gardens-a local college even converted their football field to a community garden (imagine that happening in Florida).

- **One Community Now**
 - Pat Rogers shared information about a group called One-Community Now, a Pasco County faith-based organization that adopts programs to help people in need. They recently hosted a hunger walk that raised donations of \$50,000 for their Pack-a-Sack program. Pat will invite their community organizer, Patty Templeton, to a future meeting to discuss how this concept can be expanded throughout Tampa Bay.

2. Update on Goal #1: *Conduct consumer surveys to determine types of services most needed by the people we serve. Surveys to be conducted at selected food pantries/food banks and soup kitchens.*
 - Feeding America is finishing up their food insecurity study. It should be published in May 2014. Pat will check with Sylvia Kapous to see if she knows when it will be available.
 - Lindsey Grove (USF Grad Student) is currently conducting a food insecurity study in south St. Petersburg. Need to check with her to see when these results will be available.

3. Items to be discussed at May 8, 2014 meeting:
 - Grow Boxes Project-Pat Rogers will invite Will Carey for his input
 - Urban Food Park-Carol Smith to give an overview of this initiative
 - Update on the Feeding America and Lindsey Grove food insecurity studies

4. Next meeting: May 8, 2014 @ 8:45 AM at United Way