

## **Gulf Coast Relief Fund Panel Conference Call Report**

April 4, 2006

**Call Begins:** 2pm EST, 1pm CEN.

**Present:** Becky Cureau, Joe Sullivan, Eunice Benton, Martha Thompson, Meg Riley, Jacqueline Luck, Steve Crump.

### **1. Check-ins**

#### **a. Joe Sullivan:**

Report on Work Camp

- Work was done through East Biloxi Center for Coordination and Reconstruction (one of first partners of the community working group). Volunteers did fulfilling work on three houses.
- Earned media and Letters to the Editor published.
- **Need Identified:** More information needed on website for volunteers on how to help on-site.

#### **b. Becky Cureau:**

Report on New Orleans Working Group

- Need for full attendance in working group meetings.
- In general, meeting was good. Congregational future plans are centered around sustainability.
- Next meeting will be in-person next Friday.

#### **c. Meg Riley:**

- UUA/UUSC staff call with organizers at Baton Rouge congregation, Marilee Baccich and Cheré Coen clarified communications assumptions about who is informed about what.
- Call for slides for GA slide show.

#### **d. Eunice Benton**

From the Gulf Coast UU Fellowship in Gulfport, MS.

- The congregation voted to put the property they own on the market.
- The congregation signed a lease for a year in a better meeting space.
- The GCUUF Board made a solid connection with the UU Congregation of Greater Lynn, MA.

UU Community Ministry for Mississippi

- Movement in various ways toward providing community ministry, volunteer coordination, and some pastoral and preaching support in Mississippi is happening.

Mississippi Planning Team Meeting this Saturday

- Those working on the 'disaster preparedness and response' project hope to have a draft plan to present at this Saturday's meeting

### **2. Grant Proposals from Community Working Group:** Martha Thompson presents grant descriptions

#### **a. C3/Hands Off Iberville; \$20,275**

The project would facilitate organization among displaced public housing residents. The focus is on displaced residents in Houston and Baton Rouge, as well as those in the New Orleans metropolitan area. This group will be focused on Cooper and St Bernard residents, but it will be welcome to all public housing residents. The grant will also be used to pay for transportation of residents from Houston and Baton Rouge, to New Orleans.

→VOTE: Proposal is approved unanimously.

#### **b. Zion Travelers Cooperative Center; \$41,450**

This is the first grant for a community group outside New Orleans. The Zion Travelers Cooperative is an ecumenical community based relief center catering to the needs of the residents on the East Bank of Plaquemines Parish, LA. This grant would expand the services of the Zion Travelers Cooperative center by constructing, outfitting and equipping a tool center that can be used by community members and volunteers to assist in the recovery and rebuilding of homes.

Oxfam America will share grant with us. The working group was concerned about the fund contributing excessively to salaries. Oxfam has consented to have more of their funds go towards staff UUA/UUSC money will go towards resources and construction of the tool center.

This is a project that provides opportunities for volunteers to work in the area.

- Discussion about concerns over paying for salaries.
  - The panel agrees that services cannot be provided on basis of profession of faith (this does, by necessity of culture and region, exclude prayers at mealtimes, etc.)
  - It is agreed that the GCRF does not pay ministers' salaries for their role as pastor, but for their role in relief work. Members of the panel have spoken extensively with partners about the need for inclusive service of all people.

→VOTE: Grant is approved as received (with regards to salaries) unanimously.

**c. ACORN: Community organizing/Right to Return \$65,000**

Now is a better and more politic time to support ACORN than in the past year. They are working on Neighborhood Viability in the Ninth Ward, Voter Rights, Environmental Protection, and with survivor groups in various cities.

Also noted: ACORN has been funded by the Veach Fund.

→VOTE: proposal is unanimously approved.

**d. The People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Coalition (PHRF/OC):  
Reconstruction Work Group; \$56,540**

PHRF/OC is led by working class people of color. Their mission statement is clearest of all groups in regards to inclusion of all people. The rebuilding committee is in charge of Right to Return advocacy *and* rebuilding houses. The goal of the proposal is a mobilization and advocacy tool in a list of common points that can be used by all groups at grassroots level.

- Clarification of objectives
- Panel is in favor of funding groups outside of the mainstream (with a small portion of total funds) and of the importance of evaluation given the ambitious nature of the proposal.

→VOTE: Proposal is unanimously approved.

**3. Meeting of New Orleans group second week in May (May 8<sup>th</sup>)**

Martha Thompson, Marilee Baccich, and a number of grant recipients will be present. This will provide an evaluation of grantee progress for the panel and to take to General Assembly.

**4. Referrals of Community Grantees**

From now on, Martha Thompson will refer grantees to Marilee Baccich and Cheré Coen to facilitate connections and the New Orleans and Mississippi groups should also receive notification.

**5. Website Needs Work:** Panel members will email suggestions to administrator, Megan Joiner who will work on updates and clarification.

Call ended 3:35pm EST, 2:35pm CEN.