

Meeting Minutes
COPC Economic Development & Employment Focus Area
Sub-Committee Meeting
March 22, 2007
1901 Main Street, COPC office

In Attendance: Fran Boltz, Debbie Curtis, Michael Jeswald, Jill Shuey, Judith Tederous

Updates:

1. Tax Assistance & Financial Literacy:

- Tax assistance is finishing up in April. It has gone very well. We have been tracking by name and zip code.
- We have also received a good response back from the questionnaires. Many individuals have given us their contact information.
- Possible sites for next year: Center City Development building at the corner of Main and Ontario and St. Johns AME Church Federal Credit Union.
- The Niagara Falls Housing Authority has also been offering free tax assistance at the Doris W. Jones Family Resource Building. They do appointments only. Julianne Galie sits down with each person after words and does financial counseling. Perhaps this is something COPC can look to do next year, either have counselors available or run a drop in session during the tax assistance times.
- Next Steps:
 - Mail a post card to individuals who filled out questionnaires with information on dates and times when Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Buffalo is available at Center City (Jill Shuey follow up with John Drake) and dates for next home ownership series (Jill follow up with Claudia Miller).
 - Develop time for workshops and seminars based off of questionnaire results.
 - Follow up with Chris Patti regarding identifying a lead student for next year.
- Potential new partnerships (notes from Jill Shuey items not mentioned at 3/22/07 meeting):
 - Willie Dunn contacted Jill and is interested in the possibility of COPC training students to read credit reports. COPC could hold a credit counseling workshop with St. Johns AME Church Federal Credit Union.
 - Jill will reschedule a meeting with Stephanie Connors of Consumer Credit Consulting of Buffalo to discuss partnering and the WNY Self Sufficiency Coalition. The Coalition hosted a one day event in January at the Buffalo Convention Center titled "Family Financial Wellness Day". They provided free income tax preparation; employment and training opportunities; assistance with health insurance; food, clothing and housing resources as well as day care and child care information.
 - Resource for workshops: Cornell Cooperative Extension Family Life money management program.
 - Recruiting and referral partners: Rhonda Bivins - Erie Niagara Area Health Education Center Inc., Carol Poole – Niagara Falls Housing Authority HOPE VI Community and Supportive Services Coordinator

2. Update Small Business Assistance:

- NU MBA students are currently working with 2 businesses. We are looking for the MBA program to make a commitment after this semester to have students work with new businesses each fall and spring semester.
- Judy Tederous mentioned that if a flier is put together about the program she will distribute it at their business breakfast and at other programs.
- Debbie Curtis mentioned that if we can not recruit enough students and we have more businesses interested then we can assist we could refer the businesses to SCORE.
- Debbie asked Michael Jeswald to look in to whether the NU MBA program has a consultant course.
- Fran Boltz mentioned that the MBA students might assist COPC put together a brochure.
- Next Steps and Potential new partnerships (notes from Jill Shuey items not mentioned at 3/22/07 meeting):
 - Need to recruit other classes, faculty and student groups. Jill will work with COPC partners on a list of faculty to approach (Examples: NU Communication Studies Dept., Entrepreneurial Club, NU Marketing and PR)
 - Niagara County IDA offers free workshops (Jill will follow up)

3. Posters / Employment referral:

- COPC needs to be able to track referrals. We have not been able to track referrals to WorkSource One or the Niagara Falls Housing Authority Attain Lab with just the posters and inserts. Jill and Mike will go around and talk to each of the poster sites when they distribute the April inserts to explain what we are trying to do. When a site refers someone, we would appreciate it if they could write the site name or their name as case worker on the card and ask the individual to show the card at either the Trott Center or the NFHA. At COPC, they will track using a sheet for name and zip code.
- The NU Hospitality Training and Research Center is partnering with Sr. Beth Niederpruem and Center for Joy. They will be doing one on one training. Zion Lutheran may also be providing training space. Debbie mentioned that they will be looking for donations of professional clothing. Judy stated that they have a men's clothing closet at WorkSource One and Everywoman Opportunity Center as a women's clothing closet. Fran mentioned sending an e-mail out to the NU community for items such as shoes.
- The Hospitality Training and Research Center is also applying for a county youth grant. Mike asked if COPC would put together a letter of support. They are also looking to tie in a financial literacy component.
- Next Steps and Potential new partnerships (notes from Jill Shuey items not mentioned at 3/22/07 meeting):
 - Contact other COPC partners (Weed and Seed, Center for Joy, Heart and Soul) and see if they would assist with tracking employment referrals using a tracking sheet with name and zip code.
 - Assist with promoting information provided by Willie Dunn on Environmental Restoration training provided by UB.