

OUTCOMES FROM JUNE 13, 2012 MENDING POVERTY CONFERENCE

The ***Fifth Annual MENDING Poverty Conference*** brought together 180 people on Wednesday, June 13, 2012 at the headquarters of MEND - Meet Each Need with Dignity in Pacoima. This year's theme was *Where Are the Jobs?*

The focus of the daylong conference was on the vital roles both actual employment and employment development services play in getting people out of poverty. Especially in the continuing hard economic times, with many supports for poor people tapped out or stretched very thin, efforts to help people find, get and keep jobs - especially "the good jobs" that have decent wages and benefits - are more important than ever.

Morning keynote speaker Alicia Villarreal of the US Department of Labor opened the conference with an overview of Federal programs for employment and training services. As Regional Representative, she spoke for U.S. Secretary Hilda Solis in emphasizing the importance of concentrating national and local efforts on "finding good jobs" in a tough economy. Many of the current Federal programs are offered here in the Los Angeles region.

Offering a local commentary on some of the same themes, Dr. Christine Cooper of the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation spoke next. She described the current economic scene in LA, including what industries have job openings and what ones will have opportunities in the near future.

After a networking break so conference participants could connect with each other, three Action Workshops were presented: (1) *Doing More with Less - Workforce Policy and Current Economic Realities*; (2) *Getting More - Innovative Employment Programs in Southern California*; and (3) *Nonprofit Financial Management - Volunteerism: Paths to Employment and Nonprofit Sustainability*. Speakers ranged from Ann Burroughs of Taproot Foundation to Larry Frank from the Los Angeles Mayors Office, to Esther Kim of REDF in San Francisco.

The conference concluded with a keynote speech by United Farm Workers co-founder

Dolores Huerta. Fresh from receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama, Dolores Huerta inspired the audience with her call for action and advocacy, both by individuals and nonprofits. She talked both about the history of the farm labor movement in California and the current challenges faced by poor people in Los Angeles.

The conference's hosts were *MEND* and *Valley Nonprofit Resources*, with support provided by a set of sponsors – Kaiser Permanente, The California Wellness Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, Office of Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Office of Councilmember Richard Alarcon, Pacific Federal, The California Endowment and Wells Fargo Foundation. A Planning Committee co-chaired by James Garrison of Pacific Federal and Jocelyn Guihama of UCLA Center for Civil Society guided development of the conference.

The conference evaluation showed that overall satisfaction with the conference was "high" or "very high" for 96% of participants, and 90% said that the likelihood of their attending the conference again next year also was "high" or "very high." Overall satisfaction with the keynote speakers was "high" or "very high" for 91% of participants, and 89% for the workshops. The MENDING Poverty conference also builds in two significant periods of time for networking among the participants - 94% were "highly satisfied" or "very highly satisfied" with this conference component.

We would like to hear from you if you have ideas about taking action from MENDING Poverty 2012, or about how to shape a successful conference day for MENDING Poverty 2013, which is already in the planning stages - with the likely theme of "health and poverty."

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