

OUTCOMES FROM JUNE 18, 2014 MENDING POVERTY CONFERENCE

The *Seventh Annual MENDING Poverty Conference* brought together more than 200 people on Wednesday, June 18, 2014 at the headquarters of MEND - Meet Each Need with Dignity in Pacoima. This year the conference focused on hunger and nutrition challenges of low income individuals, highlighting the role of food banks, community gardening programs, nutrition management efforts, and advocacy programs.

Weingart Foundation's President & CEO Fred Ali opened the conference by briefly highlighting how nonprofits and the funders supporting them can address the capacity-related challenges of providing hunger and nutrition-related services. Next keynote speaker Joel Berg, Executive Director of New York City's Coalition Against Hunger, presented a vivid historical analysis of how public health problems in the past (such as infectious diseases) have been addressed successfully by massive government action, arguing that the "problem of hunger" can be solved in a similar way, if only we have the public and political will to do so.

After a networking break so conference participants could connect with each other, three Action Workshops were presented:

- (1) *Food and Community: Gardening as a Catalyst for Social Change;*
- (2) *Making It Easier to Eat Healthy;* and
- (3) *Enhancing Good Nutrition and Reducing Hunger Through Advocacy.*

Speakers for these sessions included both nonprofit and community leaders, and both youth and adults. They ranged from Peter Clarke and Susan Evans of USC, to Matt Sharp of California Food Policy Advocates, to Tim Alderson of Seeds of Hope.

Retiring Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, a long-time supporter of the MENDING Poverty Conference, was honored with a special award and gave a short presentation. Los Angeles City Councilmember Felipe Fuentes also offered some remarks.

The conference concluded with a keynote speech by Evan Kleiman, restaurateur and host of KCRW's *Good Food*. She highlighted recent research indicating that consumption of fat may not be as much responsible for obesity as had been previously believed, but that the health risks of sugar are considerable.

The conference's hosts were *MEND* and *Valley Nonprofit Resources*, in partnership with the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. Support for the conference was provided by a set of sponsors – The Angell Foundation, The Honorable Felipe Fuentes, Kaiser Permanente, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, Valley Presbyterian Hospital, Weingart Foundation, Wells Fargo, Whole Foods and The Honorable Zev Yaroslavsky.

A Planning Committee co-chaired by Michael Flood of Los Angeles Regional Food Bank and Barbara Zelinski of Kaiser Permanente guided development of the conference.

The conference evaluation showed that overall satisfaction with the conference was "high" or "very high" for 97% of participants, and 86% 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 100% of participants, and 86% of participants rated satisfaction with conference networking opportunities as "high" or "very high."

We would like to hear from you if you have ideas about taking action from MENDING Poverty 2014, or about how to shape a successful conference day for MENDING Poverty 2015, which is already in the planning stages - with the likely theme of "income inequality."

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