

OUTCOMES FROM JUNE 9, 2015 MENDING POVERTY CONFERENCE

The *Eighth Annual MENDING Poverty Conference* brought together 110 people on Tuesday, June 9, 2015 at the headquarters of MEND - Meet Each Need with Dignity in Pacoima. This year the conference focused on *income inequality* and the challenges and opportunities it presents for the nonprofit sector.

Parsons Foundation's President Wendy Garen opened the conference with a hopeful message about how nonprofits and funders, particularly foundations, can work together to identify ways to address income inequality - including changing policy at the local, state and Federal levels.

Next keynote speaker Dr. Robert Kleinhenz, Chief Economist of the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation, gave an overview of statistics about the economy, focused on both income and economic opportunities. He said that the economy continues to recover from the Great Recession, and its health is crucial to interpreting properly statistics on the widening gap between incomes of the top 1% of the population, and people living at or below the poverty level.

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

- (1) *LA:RISE - A Fresh, Integrated Approach to Workforce Development;*
- (2) *A Heavy Burden - Income Inequality and Health; and*
- (3) *Job Training Policy and Inequality Among the Working Poor.*

Workshop speakers included nonprofit and community leaders. They ranged from Nolan Rollins of Los Angeles Urban League; to Kabira Stokes of Isidore Electronics Recycling; to Stephanie Lee of Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County.

Kaiser Permanente LA Area Executive Director Barbara Zelinski, US Bank Vice-President Jeffrey Heisinger, and Wells Fargo Foundation CEO Jonathan Weedman helped introduce the conference speakers. The conference concluded with a keynote speech by Dr. Adam Gamoran, President of the WT

Grant Foundation, the nation's leading funder of studies on the impact of income inequality on youth. Dr. Gamoran made four major points in his talk: (1) levels of inequality are exceptionally high; (2) high inequality causes economic and social harm; (3) social policies can combat inequality; and (4) we need research to identify effective policies, programs, and practices

The conference's hosts were *MEND* and *Valley Nonprofit Resources*. Conference sponsors were Boston Private Bank & Trust Company, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, The Honorable Felipe Fuentes, Kaiser Permanente, The Honorable Sheila Kuehl, LA Care, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, Southern California Edison, Union Bank, US Bank, and Wells Fargo.

A Planning Committee co-chaired by Sean Foley of US Bank and Mark Loranger of Chrysalis guided development of the conference.

The conference evaluation showed that overall satisfaction with the conference was "high" or "very high" for 100% of participants, and 94% 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 98% of participants, and 94% 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 2015, or about how to shape a successful conference day for MENDING Poverty 2016, which will soon be in the planning stages.

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