

San Mateo District Council (San Mateo, CA)
Annual Voice of the Poor Report
Submitted to the National Voice of the Poor Committee
April 2003

I am writing on behalf of the San Mateo County St. Vincent de Paul Society's Voice of the Poor Committee. We recognize that it is important to begin what will be an annual practice of reporting to the National Council Voice of the Poor committee regarding our past and current efforts.

Our Committee has four focuses:

1. Follow up on the national SVdP position papers;
2. Act on local issues, which impact the Poor;
3. Affiliate or collaborate with other organizations (when appropriate) which have similar values, have knowledge & contacts that will improve our efforts to assist the Poor;
4. Provide related education.

Activities Related to the Four Focus Areas

1. Follow up on the national SVdP position papers

Just Wage

Wrote letters to the Chairpersons of San Mateo County SVdP's Financial & Personnel committees requesting them to determine if they are in line with the Position Statement & whether any modifications are in order.

Wrote to the Archdiocese of San Francisco's Social Justice Office asking that they consider how to best utilize the position paper relative to their personnel policies.

Affordable Housing

Wrote to the Peninsula Interfaith Action (PIA) Housing Committee & advised that they could use this when appropriate. Had a verbal response, which indicates the paper will be helpful & will be used.

2. Act on local issues, which impact the poor

Conducted a survey of our SVdP Conferences to determine what our priority areas should be. A total of 25 of our 33 Conferences responded. Our three priority areas are: Affordable housing, health care for the poor, increased support for the children of the poor.

Sought increased funds for the county agencies that provided assistance to the people who needed help with their energy bills during the recent energy crises in California. Increased funds were obtained through the collaboration of these agencies led by SVdP.

Asked the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to support the establishment of a 'Year Around Shelter' for the homeless. A shelter titled 'Safe Harbor' was established in South San Francisco.

A current effort is to work with the SVdP Jail Ministry Committee to identify those issues which will improve the handling of prisoners &/ or their families during & after internment.

3. Affiliate or collaborate with other organizations (when appropriate) which have similar values, have knowledge & contacts that will improve our efforts to assist the Poor.

We affiliate with three organizations:

The Bay Area Organizing Committee (BAOC) which is Catholic dominated & has union involvement; The Children's Collaborative Action team(CATT); & the Peninsula Interfaith Action (PIA), which represents 25 churches including nine Catholic churches.

BAOC

Participated in an effort to assist the San Francisco Airport Baggage Screeners as their jobs were being threatened because in many cases they were immigrants & the Federal government considered them security risks. Had some 30+ SVdP Volunteers participate in a rally of support for the screeners. Had 6 volunteers participate in a meeting at San Francisco City Hall to get a Commission's support & the support of the Mayor. This support was obtained, but a new, private company as the Security Contractor. All the Screeners were dismissed & replaced by people tested & trained by the new company. The prior Screeners were not given preferential treatment & were placed behind other applicants. Some of the Screeners made it through the process & obtained new jobs. Efforts continue to assist the screeners.

Have an SVdP person serving on the BAOB's Strategy Team which selects the projects.

Had three VoP Committee members participate in BAOB Trainings.

BAOB is in the process of choosing other efforts 2003.

CCAT

Have a VoP member representing us on the team.

Keeps us current re: what the county's children's needs are & what the efforts of support are.

Will offer VoP' active support when appropriate.

PIA

Had 15+ SVdP Volunteers participate in an Affordable Housing Rally held in Redwood City. As a result of this rally & follow up efforts, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors agreed to allocate \$3,000,000.00 each year for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund. They, also, approved a 10-year plan to raise \$100,000,000.00 through the county's contributions, city contributions & corporate contributions.

Sent staff & volunteers to Sacramento to lobby for keeping the San Mateo County Health Plan because it used state money to subsidize doctors' fees so the will accept medi-cal patients(the Poor).Funds are available for 2003.

Had a Prayer vigil & press conference on 3/ 13/ 03 to inform the public that the funding for the San Mateo County Health Plan is in jeopardy. Five SVdP volunteers participated.

Have VoP Committee/SVdP volunteers serving on PIA's Policy Board, Church Properties Committee (working re: Affordable housing), Health Committee & Housing Committee.

4. Provide related education.

Sister Maureen Hally, RSM and I conducted two workshops on "Why Catholics should be involved in Social Justice Efforts.

The Executive Directors of BAOC & PIA will discuss what the advantage of collaboration are and will describe ways people can assist with collaboration efforts.

The VoP Committee members will meet 'one on one' with the SVdP Conference Presidents during spring 2003 to improve understanding & participation in our efforts.

Please contact me if you have questions.

We wish the National Council Voice of the Poor Committee much success.

Best regards,

I. Thomas Quinn, Chairperson
Voice of the Poor Committee
St. Vincent de Paul Society
San Mateo District Council