

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting
June 21, 2011

Attendance:

Paul Chestnut, Laura Chiu, George Chippendale, Ruth Chippendale, Terry Atkinson

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

Ruth led us in a prayer by Mother Theresa. Then we recited the prayer of St. Francis.

2. Approval of May minutes

The May minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Refugee Resettlement plans

We had a meeting on June 10 at the Pastoral Center. A summary:

Nine of us (Paul, Kamal, Virginia, Rosie, Susan, Laura, Joanne, and Jim) met with Claire Collins, Theresa Samuel, the caseworker for the Congolese family, and Amber McChesney-Young, the former caseworker.

Theresa and Claire reviewed the needs of the group, which are many. There are two families, with 5 adults and 6 children. Another adult is expected to join them when his immigration process is complete. We have committed to help these two families, but there is another related family with two adults and two children.

A high priority short-term goal is to find another place for the group to live. George has volunteered to work on this. He will need some help. A house that would accommodate 12(?) individuals would be ideal. Two three-bedroom apartments that are close to each other would be good. Finding the deposit for a new place will be a problem.

Two of the children are in school: Chantel (13) in seventh grade at Moreland Middle School, and Daniel (5) at Kinder-Country Lane Elementary. One of the needs is to help with communications between the school and the families. At present, school is over for the summer, but the children need to work on English. Perhaps there is an ESL summer course. The adults are not very good at English. Dianne (4) should be in kindergarten in the fall.

A long list of needs was written. We will match volunteers to these needs, but first we will send a small group (three or four) to make a more detailed assessment of needs. Theresa and Claire will find out on Monday about an appropriate time for a visit. Paul, Kamal, Rosie, and Nancy volunteered to go. Virginia will be an alternate. Theresa and Claire will accompany us to make introductions. The visit will be June 25. The assessment will look at a variety of needs: kitchen ware and home furniture, cleaning methods, toys, budgeting, child care, nutrition, child safety, tutoring, medical and dental appointments, hygiene, hazardous materials, children's books, educational materials, etc. After this assessment, volunteers will be associated with specific tasks. We will arrange visits by volunteers for specific objectives. Some have suggested that we go in pairs, and that notion was accepted. The refugees have telephones.

Claire suggested that we set up a Yahoo group to facilitate communication. Susan suggested that we need two groups: one for the entire group of volunteers, and one for the Congolese group. Claire will work on it.

There have been problems with getting the utility and rent bills paid. On Monday, July 17, George wrote to Theresa Samuel that he thinks that these can be paid by the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Queen of Apostles parish. The bills will be sent to George.

6. Death Penalty issues

NEW BUSINESS

5. Life and Dignity Sunday

We discussed plans for Life and Dignity Sunday, which will be held on June 25 and 26. The Bishop of San Jose has

started a network crafted to inform and engage parishioners in creating a more just and caring public policy in our state. Called the California Legislative Network (CLN), the purpose is to inform Catholics about critical social and moral issues, and to vote responsibly. Jean Ramaciotti is coordinating the parish effort. On Sunday June 18, a presentation was made from the pulpit to explain the Network and to urge the parishioners to register. Paul, Jean and others [?] made the presentation at all the Masses. These same people will lead the congregations this coming Sunday to sign and hand in the registration postcards.

6. St. Vincent DePaul

George is still looking for drivers for transporting children to the summer camp at Hidden Villa.

7. What's On Your Mind?

Ruth said that our parish will hold Hotel deZink during August. She will sign people up during the month of July.

George discussed how PIA is progressing. Recently the local organization (LOC) has had a change of direction. The LOC will work in programs that provide public benefits. They will seek leverage from government organizations.

8. Volunteer for Faith-sharing/Question of the Week

Next meeting - July 19, 2011