

Long Branch Partners Meeting Minutes (4/14)

Meeting Scheduled Start (3:30 PM)

- Bruce reviews agenda questions
 - o With the current situation we are in (regarding the COVID-19 pandemic), what needs and/or concerns have you observed in the Long Branch community as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - o What has your organization done in response to COVID-19, are you providing services and how so?
 - o What can we do together, how can we collaborate to address the problems we are seeing locally in the community?

Introductions/Check-in (3:34 PM) – 21 attendees

- Bruce B. – CHEER
- Reemberto R. – Director of Silver Spring Regional Center
- Maureen L. – Test Center, Community Action Agency
- Pat W. – Community Health Nurse
- Lisa B. – Neighbor in Long Branch, CHEER volunteer
- Anthea L. – CHEER
- Claudine S. – Emergency Preparedness Committee of Takoma Park
- John B. – CHEER
- Sharon S. – Community Action Agency
- Shaun M. – Wheaton/Silver Spring Regional Services Center
- Alejandra O. – Silver Spring Judy Center @ Rolling Terrace
- Diana M. –
- Annie T. – CHEER volunteer
- Eddie M. – Community Action Agency
- Emily L. – Community Health Advocates
- Luisa M. – Mid-County Regional Center
- Fatima C. – Montgomery Housing Partnership
- Vanessa P. – CHEER
- Christopher H. – CHEER
- Sara – impact Silver Spring
- Angela W. – Public School Teacher

First Question on Agenda (3:45 PM)

- With the current situation we are in (regarding the COVID-19 pandemic), what needs and/or concerns have you observed in the Long Branch community as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - o **Annie (3:46)**
 - Works at YMCA as group fitness instructor
 - Concerns about support for people who need to apply for unemployment; unsure of the process
 - Food insecurity

- Delegate Charkoudian put together list of resources where people can go get food
 - Has placed list of resources outside of her home in multiple languages (English, Spanish, Amharic) for neighbors
 - Has turned free library outside of home into a pantry which has had a lot of traffic
- **Diana (3:48)**
 - Has been attempting to assist families apply for SNAP benefits
 - Difficult for Spanish-only speakers
 - Multiple instances of being transferred to voicemail
 - For those who have applied in the past, they are required to remember account information from years ago and cannot get around this unless a physical application is sent to the home which takes time
 - Has been attempting to access Manna Food Center but some families were unable to be provided food
 - Attempts at calling Manna Food Center have been transferred to voicemail
- **Emily (3:50)**
 - CASA providing assistance for unemployment
 - Received an email about SNAP; call American Hunger Solutions and an advocate should return your call within 2 days
 - Included information about SNAP in the Zoom chat feature
- **Vanessa (3:51)**
 - From surveys via telephone with Long Branch/Takoma community members, biggest concern is how are families going to pay rent
 - Families express gratitude for schools providing meals
 - Families have been using YMCA websites to get information about food
 - Families are concerned about having food for next month
 - Families would like to apply for SNAP but are concerned about the Public Charge rule which would prevent them from being granted visas due to disability or lack of economic resources
- **Claudine (3:53)**
 - Families need to have a plan in place
 - Have a contact person, one local and one out of area
 - Let family and friends know who your contact people are
 - Make a list of medications
 - Provide your doctors contact information and pharmacy where you get your medications
 - Give this list to your two-contact people and have it available in-home
 - Her office has been getting questions about scammers
 - Has provided a list of what to look for and can send via email
 - PEPCO scamming is a big issue

- Would like assistance translating documents to other languages
- Check TakomaParkMD.gov for information/updates about COVID-19, particularly in regard to testing
- Washington Adventist will be reopening for NON-COVID-19 related health issues
- **Pat (3:59)**
 - “File of Life” forms can be beneficial to quickly provide medical information (including allergies, medications, emergency contact information etc.)
 - These forms can be posted on the refrigerator or any other place of convenience
- **Maureen (3:59)**
 - Test Center is teleworking
 - Can screen clients, make referrals, assist with applications for unemployment, SNAP etc.
 - Systems are overloaded
 - Some people experience 2 hour waits on the phone
 - Can assist in any language
 - Concerned about misinformation being spread, in part due to the huge demand and lack of staffing

Bruce Introduces Second Agenda Question (4:01)

- What has your organization done in response to COVID-19, are you providing services and how so?
 - **Sharon (4:03)**
 - When people call Community Action Agency (CAA) mainline, they will be directed to a multilingual worker
 - Calls will be directly transferred to workers cellphone to decrease likelihood of being transferred to voicemail or having no answer at all
 - Please encourage community members to leave messages
 - Mentioned Food Security Task Force
 - A goal of CAA is to make sure people are receiving information from and about Food Security Task Force
 - Expecting new funding through Community Services Block Grant that was appropriated by congress to address needs in Long Branch community
 - CAA is anticipating greater needs in the future than there are available resources for
 - Additional funding will be put toward energy assistance
 - Utility companies have been working with CAA but down the road there is anticipation of the need for payment plans to pay for overdue energy bills
 - DHHS is working to determine where there are unmet needs
 - **Bruce (4:08)**
 - Reiterated the concern about paying rent and other expenses

- Anecdotally, maybe half of people have lost income in a short amount of time (**Bruce, are you referring to people in the Long Branch community?**)
 - 2/3rds of people have experienced an adverse economic impact from the outbreak
 - Some concerns about managing families at home
 - Distance learning has begun but not everyone is being reached optimally
 - Likelihood that many children are unable to keep up with instruction; anticipation of growth in achievement gap

- **Sara joined & responded to 1st & 2nd questions on agenda (4:11)**
 - **Response to #1**
 - Community members concerned about losing jobs
 - Concerns about how to pay rent, utilities, and buy food
 - Pressure coming from renters, particularly those who sublease
 - Concerns about helping children with school assignments
 - **Response to #2**
 - Impact has been making phone calls to community members, particularly those who are undocumented and are concerned about not receiving support (e.g. financial, food assistance etc.)
 - Impact has been raising funds to buy and distribute grocery gift cards
 - Has raised \$20,000
 - Hoping to receive funding so Impact can help with more than just groceries
 - Has been assisting community members file for unemployment, the 2020 census, and any other various forms
 - Generally checking-in on community members periodically, providing information on COVID-19 testing sites
 - Impact is hosting English classes, will start doing them online
 - Has received positive feedback about these classes so far

- **Bruce (4:19)**
 - CHEER has a healthcare access program and a healthy food access program which are still operational
 - Although people have been hesitant in the past due to the Public Charge Rule, of late people have been changing their mind because of the new circumstances which is great
 - Mentioned special enrollment period in the state of Maryland for people to enroll in health insurance
 - People can call CHEER and leave a message which will be forwarded to application counselors
 - These applications CAN be completed online, however those who may have difficulty navigating the internet or who do not have online access can receive help through CHEER

- CHEER’s counselors can speak English, Spanish, and Amharic
- **Angela (4:22)**
 - Direct Support for Immigrants (DSI) is a non-profit based in Takoma Park that works with school enrollment, finding pro-bono lawyers, and assisting with transportation to Baltimore for Intensive Supervision of Appearance Program (ISAP) appointments
 - DSI is trying to figure out how they can best help the community given the current situation
 - People have expressed concerns to DSI about people needing rent money, even knowing they cannot be evicted
 - People have expressed assistance with their children’s schoolwork, obtaining Chromebooks that are being offered by schools and general access to technology
 - Food is a big concern
 - Concerns about not having access to cellphones or other forms of communication in order to speak with families who are not in the same apartment
 - DSI has and will continue to raise money in order to assist community members
 - Not sure how funds will be directed as of now
- **Lisa (4:25)**
 - DSI has conducted trainings for its volunteers and case managers where they reviewed documents covering main priority areas of Long Branch community including:
 - Health information
 - Paying rent
 - Food resources
 - Staying connected
 - School concerns
 - Accessing devices
 - Financial assistance
 - Two more trainings are scheduled
 - Has included Facebook page for DSI in chat feature and can forward access information for trainings
 - 1st training was scheduled for Wednesday (April 15, 2020) PAST
 - 2nd training scheduled for Saturday (April 18, 2020) @ 4PM
- **Eddie (4:29)**
 - Stimulus checks have begun to be released by IRS
 - Eddie has included the link that the IRS is using to check status of your stimulus relief check as well as a link for those who have not yet filed their taxes
 - “Freefall” is a program from the IRS
 - For people single individuals with an I-10 (ITIN), you will not receive a stimulus check

- For married couples with a child who has an ITIN, they are eligible to receive a stimulus check but will not be receiving the \$500 for the child with an ITIN
 - Eddie mentions that the IRS will never call, or send a link asking for information and offering assistance regarding the stimulus check, this is a common scam implemented on the Latino-population
 - Montgomery County VITA program is operational year round
 - Majority of other VITA sites will be closed
- **John (4:31)**
 - Mentions that we as a group should consider what we want to advocate for
 - Suggests there should be a moratorium (discontinuation of activity) for rent and utilities as well as financial forgiveness so that people will not be strapped with debts in 3-6 months from now
 - Possibly combined with support for utility companies if needed

Bruce introduces Third Agenda Question (4:32)

- What can we do together, how can we collaborate to address the problems we are seeing locally in the community?
 - Hour allocated for meeting has been spent
 - Bruce suggests we have a regular, ongoing LBP Meeting
 - How frequently should we meet?
 - Bruce suggests we meet next week on Tuesday April 21st @ 3:30
 - Sara likes the idea of a bi-weekly meeting, however because we did not complete the conversation from today's meeting, she suggests we meet next week and then transition to bi-weekly meetings
 - Reemberto mentions that there is a hunger in the community, particularly the affluent community, to gift locally
 - Requests a list of who the members of the LBP are, as well as websites, so that he can advocate for LBP and advertise to community members who are looking for nonprofits to donate to locally
 - Overwhelming support from LBP members to create this list
 - Can have list put together by next week
 - **Angela (4:38)**
 - Asks if there are any questions we should ponder between now and next week, is there an action we plan on talking about, and any questions the members should take back to their agencies/organizations
 - John suggests we create a Google Doc to list ideas in order to frame discussion for next Tuesday
 - Google Doc can be viewed and edited by all members
 - Vanessa suggests next week we all share a positive thing we are seeing in the community

Follow-up

- The Long Branch Partners will meet next Tuesday, April 21st @ 3:30 via Zoom

Meeting concluded (4:42)