

Suffolk Community Council's 2009 Annual Report

The Suffolk Community Council had a very active year in 2009. Here is but a brief thumbnail sketch of our projects activities and advocacy.

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS:

- Held a public forum on the Federal Stimulus Funding streams with about **100** attendees. Panelists addressed several major areas: health, employment , labor, housing, employment, hunger, energy and technology
- Our Annual Meeting was held with over a **100** attendees on the issue of the National Health Plan

UNITY:

- Held weekly Job English classes for 9 months at St Luke's church in Brentwood
- Since its inception in March '09 we have held **42** class series with **3** graduations. At each graduation we have been pleased to have participation from **2** different heads of the Suffolk Police 3rd Precinct. The Spanish speaking Police/Community Liaison has also attended classes as a guest speaker
- On average there were approximately **15** people per class, both men and women
- The students have come a long way in their studies and now can read, write and speak in English; some are using e-mail, one is enrolled in a GED program
- Working with the Unkechaug Native American tribe we have been doing some advocacy to help them with an Assembly Bill seeking to do away with their NY State recognition
 - We facilitated **12** meetings with elected officials to seek their support and put an end to that proposed legislation
 - We also met with *Newsday's* Editorial Board and wrote an Op Ed piece however it never ran
 - At the end of the year we facilitated a dialogue to determine if there was interest in working with a local artist to teach tribal members how to work with clay in order to depict aspects of their cultural heritage in a positive light. That project is moving forward in 2010

NETWORK OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES:

- The Network of Women with Disabilities held **11** Advisory Board meetings with an average of 9 people in attendance. Many issues were on the table for 2009, and the group has continued to grow
- We conducted a survey by visiting all **12** of the hospitals in Suffolk County to observe firsthand the accessibility of their medical testing sites. A report on these findings will be circulated sometime in the spring of 2010
- Having completed the hospital survey it became immediately apparent that we needed to work more closely with hospital social workers and hospital staff in order to ensure that they are fully prepared to provide proper care and truly safe discharges to people with disabilities. This project will begin in February 2010
- After Election Day it became quite clear that although Suffolk County had passed a law mandating that all polling places have accessible voting machines, much more improvement was needed since there were high numbers of complaints from people unable to access these machines or even gain access to some of the sites themselves without difficulty. The Council has met and will to continue to meet with County elected officials and Board of Elections representatives to improve voting sites and procedures for people with disabilities - which will also benefit the entire general population

ACCESSIBLE LONG ISLAND:

- Accessible Long Island held **8** advisory Board meetings with an average of **7** members in attendance
- We attended **11** community outreach meetings on this issue, met with elected officials, and spoke at Town Board meetings urging the passage of incentive-based Universal Design local legislation
- In 2009 **2** more Towns adopted such legislation, so now half the towns in Suffolk County (5 of the 10) have passed incentive-based legislation
- Also in 2009 the Suffolk County Legislature enacted a Law mandating that all affordable homes built with County funds must use our 5 Universal Design principles
- As 2009 ended, the Suffolk County Planning Commission proposed guidelines so that all applications that come before them must also consider our 5 Universal Design principles
- We were invited to present at **2** major meetings sponsored by AARP to highlight the leadership we are providing on the issue of Universal Design

MENTAL HEALTH:

Our Consumer Mediation Project

- Assisted **58** consumers with housing-related problems, received or made **775** calls on their behalf,
- Conducted **22** mediation sessions
- Gave **8** presentations about the Mediation Project to agencies and organizations
- Attended 99 advocacy meetings
- Throughout the year we assisted staff at the Single Point of Access to review the applications of individuals with mental illness seeking housing to meet their needs, and attended **40** meetings related to this program and Long Island's universal application process, which SCC was instrumental in helping to develop during 2002 and 2003

Our Clearinghouse Project:

- The project conducted **8** site searches requested by **3** non-profit agencies providing housing for persons with disabilities, and **2** for the Town of Brookhaven, in preparation for public hearings

NEW PROJECT:

- The Suffolk Community Council applied for and was successful in securing funding to publicize the 2010 Census in undercounted communities. We began this project at the end of 2009 by doing initial outreach to our target areas of Brentwood and Central Islip, communicating with our Brentwood members and partnering with the Long Island Hispanic Pastoral Association. This work will continue until July 2010

COMMUNICATIONS:

One of the many benefits of membership is the opportunity to share news of an upcoming event, a job posting or request assistance on issues pertaining to your organization.

- In 2009 we received over **2,500** calls from our members and the general public on issues pertaining to information and referrals, direct services, our projects, events etc
- We sent over **130** E-blasts to our members on issues of interest to them keeping our members informed on critical issues reaching over 120,000 people in these cumulative emails
- We continued to update and expand our website. For information on the Council's work please visit www.suffolkcommunitycouncil.org