



IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING LEADERS



ORGANIZING NEIGHBORHOODS

BUILDING CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



ORGANIZING UPDATE

FALL 2012



LEADERSHIP TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

In the past three months, MVOC organizers ran 22 small group trainings with 357 leaders participating. These included sessions on campaign leadership, neighborhood organizing, civic engagement, public meetings, strategic planning, and movement building.

JOBS & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

On October 25, over 200 engaged community leaders and residents attended the MVOC Rally for Valley Jobs, a public meeting which lifted up the four planks of our Jobs and Economic Opportunity platform: hiring locally, the creation of good jobs, respecting workers, and protecting our communities. Public officials in attendance committed to the campaign platform and agreed to be “Jobs Champions” for our Valley.



In November and December, leaders and organizers conducted follow-up meetings with in Youngstown with Mayor Chuck Sammarone, City Council President Jamael Tito Brown, and Mahoning County Commissioner and Mayoral Candidate John McNally, as well as meetings with Trumbull County Commissioners Frank Fuda and Dan Polivka. All committed to working with MVOC to expand fair hiring policies, to develop Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) for new industry, and to craft more equitable tax abatement policies that will expand opportunities for employment and improve quality of life for all Mahoning Valley residents.



Through our Jobs and Economic Opportunity campaign, MVOC has deepened our relationships with local agencies, organizations, and labor unions as we build a coalition to focus on the creation of CBAs and changes to tax incentive policies. We are currently collaborating with FracTracker in the development of a handbook for municipal oil and gas leasing and are partnering with the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition and the Mahoning Columbiana Training Association on issues of workforce development.

VACANT PROPERTY, BLIGHT & DISINVESTMENT

This fall, leaders and organizers began pushing for legislation aimed at making financial institutions more accountable for foreclosed properties and bank walkaways in Youngstown and Warren. The key provision of both ordinances is the requirement of a bond to secure the maintenance of properties while vacant that will cover the city’s expense to inspect and secure the property (up to and including demolition).



In Youngstown, leaders are working with city and county officials to collect and map foreclosure data; they also met with Mayor Sammarone, who has made a commitment to move this legislation forward in January 2013.

Additionally, MVOC leaders and organizers spent much time advocating for SB 109 this year; this legislation would permit neighborhood groups to secure vacant properties without facing trespassing charges, and is expected to pass the House in January 2013. State Senator Joe Schiavone has requested that our leaders be present as the Governor signs this bill into law, as a recognition of their hard work.

NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP COUNCILS

In October, the Youngstown Neighborhood Leadership Council (YNLC) held a public meeting to thank the City Council and administration for their efforts to work with MVOC on vacant property issues in the city. Additionally, leaders pushed them to support foreclosure legislation that would help secure our neighborhoods from blight and disinvestment. YNLC has also been investigating the possibility of a charter amendment for the May 2013 ballot that will address key issues that were ignored by City Council following 2012's charter review process. Leaders have requested language from the City of Youngstown and are preparing to gather the necessary signatures in early 2013.

In Warren, the Neighborhood Leadership Council (WNLC) has been working with Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership and City Council on Nuisance Abatement Legislation similar to that which has been proposed in Youngstown. Additionally, MVOC helped to establish the Central City Neighborhood Association (CCNA) which covers downtown and the immediate surrounding neighborhoods. CCNA and the Kenmore Neighborhood Association were accepted into the WNLC this fall.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Northeast Ohio Coalition for Rescue and Restore (NEOCORR) continues their work to raise awareness, support victims, and change the social structures that fuel the trafficking trade. In October, 85 people attended a joint NEOCORR/Warren YWCA event featuring human trafficking survivor Theresa Flores, and co-director Jean Waris served as keynote speaker for the Presbyterian Women's Fall Gathering in Kent, where she emphasized out the importance of the faith community's involvement in the fight against human trafficking.

Christina Conrad of Central Ohio Rescue and Restore presented a Train the Trainers program for eight key campaign leaders in October; in November, MVOC organizers ran a Team Building Through Community Organizing training for 12 leaders; and in December, six NEOCORR members attended The Cost of Human Trafficking conference in Cleveland. Co-director Isabel Seavey also presented at The Hope Center's open house regarding NEOCORR's work in the Mahoning Valley.

HEALTH EQUITY

For 18 months, MVOC and the Mahoning Valley Food Policy Council have been closely involved with the rezoning process in Youngstown. Members and partners advocated strongly for recommended progressive language to include small livestock (chickens, honey bees) in the new zoning code, which would result in clear guidelines for expanding urban agriculture. MVOC gathered 2,348 signatures via petition and presented it to the City Planning Commission in December.

MVOC's Health Equity core team has continued its work to improve neighborhood stores, and testified in December at the Ohio Department of Liquor Control regarding an unsafe store on Youngstown's north side.





RETIREMENT SECURITY

In November, MVOOC leaders rallied at Representative Bill Johnson's office in Salem to demand that he keep his promise not to support drastic cuts Social Security and Medicare as part of Fiscal Cliff negotiations. MVOOC and OOC also hosted a tele-town hall with Senator Sherrod Brown and 8,000 Ohioans regarding retirement security issues.

In December, MVOOC leaders travelled to Washington DC with the Center for Community Change, where they conducted legislative visits with US Representatives Renacci and Chabot. Additionally, leaders and organizers had a personal meeting regarding Social Security, Medicare, and job creation with Senator Rob Portman. Kirk Noden also co-authored an editorial with State Senator Joe Schiavone for the Youngstown Vindicator stating the importance of Medicare to Ohio's economy.



OHIO PROPHETIC VOICES & FAITH ENGAGEMENT

This fall, Ohio Prophetic Voices led the faith effort of the MVOOC/OOC electoral program - centered around the relationships and congregational engagement of democracy fellows. In the Mahoning Valley, we held three electoral trainings with 164 people of faith and led the effort to bring Souls to the Polls during early voting events that involved ten churches and 80 individuals in Mahoning and Trumbull counties.

For the next few years, the OPV core team has chosen to focus its work on mass incarceration and criminal justice reform. This campaign will be directed through regional clergy tables to grow prophetic voices and ministry strategy in their congregations, linking that with grassroots organizing campaigns.



ELECTORAL

This year, MVOOC partnered with OOC in a successful large-scale civic engagement program that aligned long-term organizing strategies with mass mobilization through electoral work. The program focused on seniors, grassroots individuals, and the faith community in the Valley. Staff worked in Trumbull and Mahoning counties to collect 2,560 voter registration cards, knocked on 5,547 doors and made 2,161 contacts.



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