



IDENTIFYING & DEVELOPING LEADERS



ORGANIZING NEIGHBORHOODS

BUILDING CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



ORGANIZING UPDATE FIRST QUARTER 2013



ADDRESSING DISINVESTMENT

Vacant Property and Blight

In January, Youngstown City Council unanimously passed an amendment to the property maintenance code that requires banks filing foreclosures on vacant homes (or homes that become vacant) to post a \$10,000 cash bond with the City for use in maintenance or demolition if the properties fall out of housing code compliance. Youngstown is only the third city in the nation to pass this type of legislation, and the second to enforce it.

Also in January, attorney and MVOC leader Patti Dougan introduced US Senator Sherrod Brown during a press event to discuss a \$8.5 billion settlement with banks regarding foreclosure abuse. In February, MVOC hosted the Thriving Communities Institute and the Trumbull and Mahoning County Land Banks to identify upcoming legislative opportunities and shared interests over the next six months.



As the City of Youngstown prepared to roll out enforcement of the new bond legislation in March, MVOC organizers and leaders met with representatives from Farmers, First Place, and Home Savings banks and City administration to identify productive ways in which local banking partners can streamline the foreclosure process for homeowners. In a joint press conference, Mayor Sammarone called MVOC “a powerful team member in the fight for bank accountability and vacant properties.”

Youngstown Neighborhood Capacity

MVOC’s Youngstown Neighborhood Leadership Council celebrated the groundbreaking legislative win regarding the \$10,000 foreclosure bond, and is now setting the agenda for We The People, a public meeting with all candidates running in the May primary for Youngstown mayor. The event will focus on fair hiring, vacant property revitalization, and local control, branding candidates as “leading”, “following”, or “getting out of the way” of the community agenda set by MVOC and our local partners.



Warren Neighborhood Capacity

MVOC’s Warren Neighborhood Leadership Council has picked up the bond legislation from Youngstown and is currently organizing around the adoption of similar legislation with City Council and administration. Organizers also partnered with TNP to turn out over 100 residents to five Community Challenge meetings between March 6th and April 3rd.



JOBS & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Tax and Corporate Accountability

While economic development projects like Austintown’s Racino are often heavily subsidized by taxpayer dollars, they produce mixed results for residents. MVOC leaders and organizers are meeting with public officials from township trustees to State Senator Joe Schiavoni, social service partners and local law enforcement to create a stakeholder group whose goal is to negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with Penn

National to bring measurable and permanent improvements to the lives of *all* residents. The CBA group will host its first public meeting in April.

MVOC is also researching the use of tax incentives in the Mahoning Valley. In 2010, Youngstown invested \$4.68 million in taxes to 43 firms to create 1,214 jobs. Of these jobs, only 28 percent were filled by city residents and 13 percent by minorities. Employment of city residents has decreased over the past decade – leading organizers and leaders to question how city taxpayers benefit from these policies, rather than just corporations.

Criminal Justice and Mass Incarceration

This spring, MVOC began hosting screenings and facilitated discussions of ‘The House I Live In’, a critically-acclaimed documentary examining the political and economic corruption that has driven the failed War on Drugs and devastated poor, urban, and minority communities. The first screening was held in March at the Warren YWCA with 35 residents, with two more screenings scheduled for YSU and Hope Lutheran Church in April.

MVOC is also building on successful advocacy for SB 337 with the Ohio Organizing Collaborative. Signed into law in July 2012, this legislation creates Certificates of Qualified Employment (CQEs) that ease the path for Ohio’s returning citizens – those with a felony or misdemeanor conviction – to reintegrate into society after completing their sentences. Approximately ten leaders have now been trained on the CQE process.

Even with the benefit of CQEs, hiring restrictions hinder the ability of many long-term unemployed individuals to find work. As a result, MVOC is campaigning to update fair hiring policies in Warren and Youngstown. In February, organizers and leaders met with Warren City administration regarding fair hiring policies, and are now working with the police and fire departments regarding minority hiring policies. MVOC leaders and organizers held meetings with the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition, and Compass Family and Community Service’s workforce development representatives to investigate the potential of linking CQEs, GEDs, and Civil Service training into a pipeline of “stackable credentials” for residents currently facing employment challenges.

Oil and Natural Gas Exploration

This winter, MVOC worked with FrackTracker to create and publish a municipal leasing handbook that outlines best practices for government agencies as they consider leasing public land for oil and natural gas exploration. MVOC has also partnered with Youngstown’s Committee for Local Control, who gathered the signatures to place a Community Bill of Rights on the ballot this May that seeks to retain local, rather than state, control over oil and natural gas exploration on city-owned property.

Anti-Human Trafficking

Northeastern Ohio Coalition on Rescue and Restore (NEOCORR) leaders hosted a screening of ‘Nefarious: Merchant of Souls’ for 50 people at the Hope Center in January. Leaders are also working to expand the campaign into Mahoning County and continue to train social service agencies to recognize and support trafficking victims in the Valley.





HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Health Equity

Good health is not simply the result of genetics or behavior, but is rooted in a set of interconnected conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and play. MVOC's Health Equity campaign hired Michele Lorubbio in February, and has begun meeting with partners including the Kirwan Institute and Human Impact Partners on the establishment of a Health Impact Assessment on the effects of mass incarceration on the health of urban and low-income neighborhoods and communities of color.

Retirement Security

This winter, the Caring Across Generations and Retirement Security campaign involved 236 people in trainings on Medicaid expansion, Social Security, Medicare, and prescription price reduction. Leaders testified at the statehouse before the Health and Human Services sub-committee, staged direct actions, and made over 100,000 phone calls on behalf of Medicaid expansion in Ohio.



GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT

Leadership Training and Development

In the past three months, MVOC organizers ran six small group trainings with 92 leaders participating. These included sessions on campaign leadership, neighborhood organizing, public meetings, strategic planning, and movement building.

In January, a dozen local leaders joined over 100 from across the state at the Ohio Organizing Collaborative Lobby Day. MVOC leaders met with State Senator Joe Schiavoni, and State Representatives Bob Hagan and Sean O'Brien regarding Right to Work legislation, Medicaid expansion, and SB 109 – which allows residents to address blighted properties without threat of prosecution for trespass.

Faith Engagement

Ohio Prophetic Voices held a retreat with renowned Old Testament scholar Walter Bruggeman in January. Over 90 clergy from across the state were in attendance (more than two dozen from the Valley). In February, the Northeastern Ohio OPV clergy table held its first meeting.

Staff Training and Development

All MVOC staff attended the three-day statewide staff retreat in January. Organizers were trained on campaign strategy, trust building, and values. In March, Gabe Gonzalez of the Center for Community Change provided a base building training for organizers and staff.



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