

# COMMUNITY ALLIANCE OF SARASOTA COUNTY

## Data Group

### January 2, 2008 Meeting Summary

**Present:** Wayne Applebee, Sarasota County Human Services  
Elizabeth Boyle, Gulf Coast Legal Aid/Legal Services  
Tim Dutton, SCOPE  
Phil Gorelick, Jewish Family and Children's Services  
Don Hadsell, Office of Housing and Community Development  
Wendy Hopkins, Community Foundation of Sarasota County  
Rik Jimison, Sarasota County Human Services  
Doug Kerr, H.D. Kerr, LLC  
Ruth Lando, Community Foundation of Sarasota County  
Christie Lewis, Nonprofit Resource Center  
Richard Martin, Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness  
Elliott Metcalfe, Public Defender  
Ray Newton, Wells Fargo  
Tom Pfaff, Goodwill/Sarasota Ministerial Association  
Bryan Pope, Salvation Army  
Steve Queior, Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce  
Sheryl Schrepf, Sarasota Partnership for Children's Mental Health  
Dennis Stover, Senior Friendship Centers  
Doug Sword, Sarasota Herald Tribune  
Pauline Tracy, Sarasota County Human Services  
Carl Weinrich, Sarasota Family YMCA  
Alex Young, United Way

**Staff:** Jamie Mahadeo, Sarasota County Human Services

Richard Martin requested that everyone think about a new name for the Data Group that is more indicative of their mission.

Discussion ensued regarding the Economic Self Sufficiency Strategic Planning Work Group which focused on the immediate needs and long term goals to provide financial stability to residents who are experiencing financial crisis. The Work Group discussed raising funds immediately to address the short term needs. A figure of \$5 million was suggested. The Work Group thought that the Prosperity Campaign, which is promoted by the United Way, would work well in this community and address the financial stability issues.

Rik Jimison discussed the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and how the EITC Work Group can best get the word out. They are now focusing on educating employers to the benefits of educating their employees about EITC .

The committee requested a copy of the EITC fact sheet that the County is sending out to each employee in their paycheck. They also requested information on the EITC program which can be shared with employers so that they can then share it with their employees. Additionally, the committee

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requested that a presentation on EITC be on the Community Alliance's Steering Committee agenda . The committee pointed out that the EITC Work Group needs to get the word out to the non-profits since many of their employees would qualify for EITC. AARP provides free tax filings in many different locations throughout the county, however, many people take the forms to a private tax preparer or to the cash advance companies which costs them additional money. One problem noted with promoting this program is that the AARP tax preparers, who are all volunteers, could be inundated with a large increase in customers that they may not be prepared to assist. The group questioned what other communities are doing regarding getting the word out about EITC. The marketing could focus on people who do their own taxes. Turbo Tax and others computer-based programs asks the tax payer an EITC question automatically But most people would assume they do not qualify.

The year-end HMIS report is available. There has been a 61% increase in homeless services requests over the last year (26% of those were children). .

Discussion ensued regarding how to raise \$5 million to address the short term needs during this economic time.

- Many people don't know that reverse mortgages are available for people over 62.
- Wells Fargo is the only lender that can do FHA refinances up to 98% of the value of the house.
- Royal Venice wants to participate as a housing provider in the southern part of the county.

Many questions will need to be answered such as:

- Where to start?
- What is the total amount of assistance that is needed?
- What constitutes emergency financial assistance (rent, job placement, child care, food)?
- What are other counties doing so that we don't have to reinvent the wheel?

It was suggested and approved that a sub-committee of this ad-hoc committee be developed to address these issues. Richard Martin was asked to take the lead on the sub-committee. The subcommittee will need to determine the status of the human services infrastructure first (need for more staff, etc.) and then develop a proposal outlining how the problem will be addressed and where the focus should be.

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This sub-committee should be a collaboration, not a competition, which includes all agencies. Non-governmental matching grants could be required. The groups requested the work group address the following:

- The case management component is vital to this process.
- Define financial assistance.
- What amount is needed and by whom?
- Discuss the fiscal agent role – who should hand out checks?

Discussion ensued regarding how the faith-based community can help when faced with a specific issue.