

ICCS January Newsletter Community Connections



Dear Community Partners,

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declared a "War on Poverty." Now almost 50 years later, the current economic crisis has pushed poverty to its highest point in decades. Nearly 1 in 3 Illinoisans are considered poor or "low income". For more information see the 2011 Report on Illinois Poverty website: www.ilpovertyreport.org

Our ICCS "marching orders" in 2012 will be to address the continued challenges created by rising poverty rates. For the past 26 years, our priority has been on issues relating to children and youth. We believe the best solutions are those developed by organized committees of trained citizens who desire a better life in the community they live.

In an attempt to reverse long term atrocious trends, we are convinced that poverty does not have to be an accepted way of life. Please read the stories in this issue that reveal our efforts to combat these trends

Sincerely,
Al Riddley
ICCS Executive Director

Southern Illinois Regional Food System Project



Food Works, an RCDCI recipient organization for the Southern Illinois Regional Food System Project, has received \$1000 in grant funds to assist with the cost of conducting a regional assessment. The assessment will be conducted by Crossroads Research Center, a nonprofit organization providing food system related consulting services to communities throughout the Midwest.

The goal of the project is to increase access to local fresh foods in the lower 22 counties of Southern Illinois, particularly in low income communities and food deserts, as well as boosting the local economy. The project was recently launched with ICCS assistance organizing a steering committee comprised of community and agency leaders, including representatives from area health departments, hospitals, workforce development, and education, as well as farmers and business owners. During their initial meeting, the

Congratulations to Carrier Mills Youth Board



CMYB received a \$500 donation from Peabody Energy. The donation will be used for a park revitalization project spearheaded by CMYB. A 5k run/walk fundraising event is planned for March 24th to raise additional funds for the project.

Southern Illinois Latino Roundtable

The Southern Illinois Latino Roundtable was formed to meet the needs of the Latino population in the southern region, particularly migrant workers moving to the area to find farm work. The group meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month in Anna, IL. The purpose of the roundtable is to unite people from various service agencies in Southern Illinois that are in touch with the needs of local Latinos in the area. As a group, we can improve the living and working standards of Latinos.

One of the first initiatives of the roundtable is to begin laying the groundwork for an information

steering committee discussed common concerns and generated several ideas for improving the local food system.

In January, the steering committee will meet again to discuss fundraising and plan a meeting for stakeholders in the Spring of 2012, when the group will host a presentation of the assessment findings by Ken Meter, President of the Crossroads Research Center. The meeting will be organized to invite more stakeholders in to hear a presentation of the findings, discuss the implications, and implement strategies to address the needs locally.

ICCS helps strengthen MYRC's programming



The Murphysboro Youth and Recreation Center's (MYRC) afterschool program began on September 6, 2011. The program ran Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm. The volunteer-run program served around ten children throughout the fall months. The

director of the MYRC, Barbara Anderson, serves as a full time volunteer to both the after-school program and the youth center. The MYRC continues to rely upon local donations to support the program, including snacks, drinks, and school supplies. All donations for the program are always welcome and needed.

The sororities on SIU's campus partnered with the Murphysboro Girl Scouts for a cooperative learning program at MYRC. A four week workshop was held for the after-school participants on a variety of topics including: bullying, self-esteem, and teamwork. This program expanded learning opportunities to the children and gave them a diverse education on different topics not often touched upon in schools.

We are currently in the planning process for the spring semester and additional volunteers are always needed to expand the program to more local elementary students. A summer camp is also in the preliminary planning stages.

All activities at the Murphysboro Youth and Recreation Center are completely supported by volunteers and donations. For more information regarding the program or how to create a similar one, please contact community organizer Linley Thompson at (847) 421-5087 or at linley@organizing-communities.org.

center for Latinos new to the area. This center will act as a one-stop hub that will provide the necessary information on housing, public assistance, obtaining a General Education Diploma (GED), area hospitals, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and job opportunities. If you or someone you know would like more information about this organization, please contact Linley Thompson at (847) 421-5087 or linley@organizing-communities.org.

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