

Senate Community Relations Committee meeting

12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Room 272, Hillman Library

March 19, 2013

Attendees: Andrea Kriska, GSPH; Kim Barlow, University Times; Laurie Cohen, ULS, CRC Co-Chair; Maggie Folan, Nursing; Linda Hartman, HSL; Georgia Petropolos Muir, OBID; Kannu Sahni, Director for Community Relations; Gail Schwartz, CHS; Tara Sherry-Torres, OPDC; Martha Ann Terry, GSPH, CRC Co-Chair; Trevor Smith, CHS; John Wilds, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Community Relations, Mary Davidson Williams, OBID, Yiwei Zhang, OPDC

The minutes from the February 19 meeting were reviewed and approved, with a correction from Tara Sherry-Torres about the wording on the OPDC façade grant program. The sentence in the ninth paragraph should have read, "For homeowner-occupied homes, they will match up to one-half of the price of the construction, up to \$5000."

University Update: Dr. Wilds presented the construction updates. All of the projects are proceeding on schedule. The Plant Utilization and Planning Committee is taking a tour of the new Book Center in May. There are no new budget issues, since the governor has called for flat funding for education in the new budget. There will be a meeting this week on responsible partying with representatives from the University and Councilman Kraus. The mayor has given the group another grant to continue this work.

Upcoming Community Service Events: Pitt's Partnership for Food kicks off their campaign on April 1st, and there will be a meeting on April 3rd to discuss ways of increasing volunteer efforts on campus. Kannu and Trevor updated us on the upcoming Oakland Forever event. The event takes place on April 12th in Schenley Plaza and will present music, art, vendors, and child-friendly activities, in addition to the annual Taste of Oakland celebration. Focus will be on the Schenley Plaza-Forbes Avenue commercial district, the Frick Fine Arts building, Phipps Conservatory, and the Carnegie Museum complex. There will be four to six live bands, a Ferris wheel, and extra police protection.

Donations have been made by UPMC, and the proceeds from ticket sales and t-shirts will be used to support Oakland projects such as greening the community and making repairs to the bridge that was recently defaced by graffiti. Publicity is in the works and post cards and posters will be mailed within the next two weeks. The main purpose of the event is to unify the community and raise funds for next year's celebration of Oakland's 175th anniversary.

Conference with Jodi Kraisinger, Pitt Greensburg: The rest of the meeting was devoted to our telephone conference with Jodi Kraisinger, the Director of University Relations and Institutional Advancement at the Greensburg campus.

We asked Jodi what types of agencies/projects the Greensburg folks work with, and she listed nursing homes, libraries, churches, the food bank, United Way events, and the Community College of Westmoreland County. She tracks the activities of staff and faculty at the University, and the Office of Student Services tracks student volunteer efforts.

Pitt Greensburg volunteers provide outdoor cleanup services for the local churches and serve hot meals there, too. Both staff and students work with residents in nursing homes and cook food for Easter dinners. In libraries, they clean off shelves, create brochures, and clean computer surfaces. At the

community college, they work with robots. In answer to a question from Kannu, Jodi said that their student activities group works with the Westmoreland Association of Volunteer Administrators. Students are also involved with the junior division of the Kiwanas Club, and Habitat for Humanity.

Another activity the students are involved with is called *Spring into the Streets*. To quote from their website, "each semester the Office of Student Services also hosts a multiple-day service event called Into the Streets that allows members of the Pitt-Greensburg Community to give back to the greater Westmoreland area. Past events have included making blankets for Children's Hospital, volunteering at local food banks, delivering dog treats to local shelters, volunteering at the Delmont Public Library, hanging flyers for Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and many others."

Volunteering at the food bank is a popular activity, and volunteers are also asked to bring food in to donate. They even have a challenge program with the food bank among the other local colleges. In addition, they host lunches for the Chamber of Commerce, and provide space for town hall meetings on campus.

Dr. Wilds spoke to Jodi next, explaining the focus of Oakland's community service activities. This includes developing partnerships with local community groups, and student groups to deal with a variety of issues, like blood drives, food drives, pet food drives, and the food pantry, which serves about 600 people a month. They also work with elected officials on legislative issues and organize the Day of Caring, which utilized 3300 volunteers working in 60 communities across Pittsburgh this year. Every year, 80 Pitt football players go to the South Hills to clean up local areas, and Christmas Day at Pitt provided 1600 meals this year, in conjunction with the Salvation Army and Sodexo. There was also a gift drive for children at this event.

Jodi mentioned that Greensburg does something similar with the local head Start program and provides lunch for children at Christmas time. They also have a "neighbors' newsletter" that circulates within a four-mile radius of the campus. This is sent out at the beginning of each semester with news about upcoming activities, but it was cut due to budget problems. There is also a newsletter to parents of Pitt Greensburg students.

Martha Ann Terry mentioned the efforts that Kannu is making with his quarterly newsletter, and the monthly listing of volunteer opportunities. Georgia suggested a possible field trip to Greensburg to learn more about their activities and exchange ideas, and Maggie Folan suggested that the CRC may want to get more involved with the fraternity and sorority volunteer events. Each year they collectively choose a charity and raise money for that charity.

Next meeting: April 16, 2013, Field Trip to Larimer
Submitted by Laurie Cohen, May 15, 2013