



**El Cajon Collaborative
Newcomer Support Work Group
Meeting Notes 5-6-10**

I. Introductions

Lea made a plea for facilitation help during the meeting while Kara is out on maternity leave. Three agenda items were added – Catholic Charities first year project, County of San Diego needs list, child welfare concerns about newcomers bullying at school.

II. Camilia Sadik – Spell-City Business Owner

Ms. Sadik gave a short presentation on her work in the literacy and English language education fields. She specializes in working with people who show signs of dyslexia. She also helps adults from Iraq who have a college education and helps them with a English language and job preparation services. She needs volunteers for active board members, tutors and teachers.

III. Discuss Target Areas

○ Job Development

Lea noted that continued planning with the national organization, Refugee Works is going on and an “International Night of Networking” is potentially being scheduled for July 14th, location TBA. The planning is being held via phone call and Lea distributed the information for all interested in participating. The event will target employers and a select number of refugees who are professionals in targeted fields. The group asked questions about Special Visa refugees and if there would be a process for recommending the selected individuals, Lea said she would request that information on the next planning call.

○ Encouragement respect and understanding of other cultures

- The Fiesta Arco Iris Fair is happening at El Cajon Library (May 22nd)
- Lea discussed other opportunities, including encouraging neighbors of new refugees to outreach and welcome them – this is something the El Cajon Community Development Corporation staff has already started doing.

○ Parent Education

- ESL Class Update

Sheryl Ashley of Cuyamaca College noted that registration for summer classes will start on Monday, May 17th and she distributed a schedule of classes that will be available (although they will be reduced due to budget cuts). The information will be disseminated online through Lea, along with information from Grossmont Adult School summer registration. The difficulties of online registration was discussed and noted as an important area for improvement with ESL class registration in the future.

Lea shared that the Laubach Literacy Council has had great success with their recent tutor training and will be looking for sites to utilize the volunteers. Additionally they are hosting another training in June. The tutors are best utilized in small groups or for one-on-one tutoring. Interested individuals should contact Charles Ross – (619) 442-1481.

ESL classes continue to be full and very few options exist for those who are not being served as needed. A rough estimate is that nearly 1,000 refugees could be in need of additional ESL in order to meet their welfare requirements, but are not getting what they need. Further advocacy for more resources is needed.

IV. Announcements/ Program Updates

Discussion around three additional agenda items included

- Catholic Charities is looking to develop a list of first year milestones for refugees to become “self-sufficient”. The idea of an adolescent moving out of a home was recommended as an analogy. It was recommended that they hold a separate meeting to gather a preliminary list and then bring it back in June for further review by the larger Collaborative Council meeting on June 1st and to this group on June 3rd.
- County of San Diego Refugee Coordinator, Bryan Nazareth was not able to be present, but forwarded a list of concerns that were identified via a stakeholder meeting held this past January. We reviewed the list and noted that prioritizing the areas for gaining additional resources is critical as our programs continue to be overburdened. We decided that this will be the basis for a majority of our conversation at our next meeting.
- Neda Rivera of Child Welfare Services shared her concerns about newcomers bullying at school and disobeying laws. She is seeing an increased level of this activity and Izela Jacobo of Cajon Valley Union School District also shared that there have been a handful of serious incidents at some middle schools. Lea recommended that we discuss this with someone at El Cajon Valley High School and shared concerns that this could lead to a much larger problem of violence in the community.

Next Meeting: June 3rd

Workgroup Mission: Our mission is to encourage respect and understanding of diverse cultures through community education and newcomer service support coordination.