

## Flying a Plane While Building It Pilot Phase: February to June 2009

### Background

As the severity of the economic crisis became clear in November 2008, Uma Ahluwalia, Director of Health and Human Services for Montgomery County, announced that she planned to open up new neighborhood based service centers in an attempt to provide emergency services to the growing numbers of people in need. She asked the audience at a large faith community gathering that fall for help in reaching out to and encouraging low income residents, the vast majority of whom are immigrants, to access these new centers.

Representatives from IMPACT Silver Spring, a local nonprofit devoted to building community networks across lines of difference, were in the audience that day and immediately proposed a partnership with HHS. Just prior to the economic recession and after ten years of working in diverse Silver Spring, IMPACT concluded that it was ready to spread its new kind of community organizing to other areas within Montgomery County. They saw an opportunity to partner with a government leader who appeared serious about short term reform and the chance to plant seeds for longer term change, well beyond the parameters of an economic crisis.

In a matter of weeks after this pivotal moment, the Neighbors Campaign was born and planning for a pilot phase was underway among an unlikely team of government social workers and long time community organizers. Representatives from the County's Office of Community Partnerships (OCP) and the Montgomery County Community Foundation played a role in creating initial trust and credibility between HHS and IMPACT.

### Pilot Overview

**A. Shared Goals:** HHS's initial plan was to open up new neighborhood safety net centers by February 2009 in two zip codes where there were high levels of requests for services, to be followed by four more the next year. The primary goal was to increase access to services for isolated low income residents who have difficulty finding the three large County-wide service centers and making it through their service application processes. IMPACT proposed expanding the vision to include the goal of building new networks of mutual support within these targeted neighborhoods, especially since the demand for help exceeds the available supply of services, and to use the network building to spark greater economic empowerment.



**B. Pilot Partners:** HHS focused on securing the commitment of two large established nonprofits (Family Services, Inc and Catholic Charities) to serve as the anchor sites for these new neighborhood centers, providing both physical space as well as staff support in setting up and running the new centers. IMPACT recruited twelve resident leaders from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds, primarily from its existing leadership network, to serve as culturally competent staff for the new centers. The Office of Community Partnerships served as a relationship broker for both internal and external stakeholders who needed to understand and embrace the changes. The Montgomery County

Community Foundation (MCCF) raised over \$ 300,000 in private funds to increase the amount of emergency assistance and to support the capacity of key nonprofit partners.

**C. Pilot Strategies:** As the pilot implementation of the Neighbors Campaign unfolded, seven strategies emerged as core to the process and connected to each other.

1. **Physical Proximity:** HHS' original objective was to be physically present in targeted neighborhoods to reduce transportation difficulties and make it easier to apply for certain emergency services. As residents were engaged, this strategy did prove useful in overcoming both logistical and psychological barriers to seeking services.

2. **Community Connectors:** The original plan was to staff the new centers with community volunteers, similar to the types of people who run faith-based clothing closets and food pantries. Instead, IMPACT recruited people from their diverse leadership network, many of whom have been or are current clients of HHS and who represent a wide range of cultures and speak different languages. Eventually, the decision was made to create paid entry-level positions within HHS.

3. **Joint Training and Supervision:** HHS and IMPACT shared responsibilities for supporting, training and supervising the Community Connectors. A team of social workers and community organizers jointly designed and delivered a two-day training for each of the two new sites. As the project unfolded, project representatives consulted with each other on a fairly regular basis regarding the performance of specific Community Connectors. IMPACT held a five-hour retreat to help build greater trust among one of the teams, as they experienced inevitable conflicts across lines of difference.

4. **Door Knocking:** IMPACT proposed and took on the goal of 5,000 "door knocks" between February and May. A door knock was defined as an attempt to engage low income residents in a 10 to 15 minute one-on-one conversation. The goal was to determine if the household was in crisis so that they could be referred to the Center and/or to engage the resident in taking one step to connect with others within their neighborhood. Most "door knocks" took place in apartment buildings, but some occurred outside churches, retail centers, schools and other service centers.



5. **Community Partners:** This strategy can be divided into three categories. (1) **Institutional Stakeholders:** A team from HHS, IMPACT and OCP hit the streets to help a broad group of community stakeholders understand the Neighbors Campaign, as best as could be described. (2) **Culturally Competent Door Knockers:** IMPACT and OCP embarked on an aggressive effort to recruit volunteers of diverse backgrounds and language abilities to attend door knocking trainings and to begin the door knocking sessions. (3) **Ethnic-Based Nonprofits:** MCCF and IMPACT began convening a group of small, ethnic-based nonprofits to plan and execute a few pilot initiatives to complete "door knocks" in connection with their pre-existing services and programs in the targeted neighborhoods.

6. **Neighbors Exchange:** Based on earlier work in Silver Spring, IMPACT designed and implemented a series of one-time neighborhood gatherings designed to serve as a hook for bringing low income residents together. These gatherings were held in a very convenient, comfortable neighborhood location and scheduled to coincide with door knocking sessions in nearby large apartment complexes. The objective is to have every resident leave these sessions having met at least one or two neighbors, learning more about the Neighborhood Centers and securing one practical answer or next step to an issue they face: access to health care, bad credit, reduced wages, job search or threats to housing.

7. **Neighbor Circles:** Early door knocking efforts confirmed that the diverse residents in these targeted neighborhoods live completely isolated from one another, despite very close physical proximity to each other. IMPACT's primary strategy during the pilot phase was to find residents with the interest and ability to host a series of three informal dinners in their home for 8 to 10 neighbors. Using a format birthed by a partner in Lawrence, Massachusetts, IMPACT staff guided the host and these sessions to help build relationships and mutual support steps among the neighbors, as well as plant seeds and action steps for continuing to build neighborhood networks beyond the three sessions.

#### **D. Pilot Chronology: February to June 2009**

##### **February:**

- Meetings with Community Partners – Gaithersburg and Wheaton
- Recruiting Community Connectors – Gaithersburg, Wheaton and Long Branch
- Recruiting Door Knocking Volunteers – Gaithersburg
- Pilot Door Knocking in Long Branch

##### **March:**

- Two-day Training – Gaithersburg Community Connectors and Team
- Gaithersburg Neighborhood Center Opens at Family Services, Inc. Site
- Pilot Neighbors Exchange in Long Branch – New Hampshire E.S.
- Door Knocking Training in Gaithersburg – Faith United Methodist Church
- Door Knocking in Washington Grove area of Gaithersburg
- Neighbors Exchange in Gaithersburg – Mercy Seat Chapel Church
- Weekly Team Meetings in Gaithersburg
- Pilot Neighbors Circle in Silver Spring Towers – Silver Spring

##### **April:**

- Meetings with Small, Ethnic Based Nonprofits
- Training for Neighbors Circles in Gaithersburg
- Relationship Building Retreat – Gaithersburg Center Team
- Door Knocking Training in Gaithersburg – Mercy Seat Chapel Church
- Door Knocking in N.Summit Avenue area of Gaithersburg
- Recruiting Door Knocking Volunteers - Wheaton
- Two-day Training – Wheaton Community Connectors and Team
- Door Knocking Training – IMPACT Sligo Avenue Offices
- Wheaton Neighborhood Center Opens at Catholic Charities Site
- Weekly Team Meetings in Gaithersburg
- Pilot Neighbors Circle in Long Branch

##### **May:**

- Door Knocking in N Summit Avenue area of Gaithersburg
- Neighbors Exchange in Gaithersburg – Gaithersburg Elementary School
- Meetings with Small, Ethnic Based Nonprofits
- Pilot Neighbors Circle in Gaithersburg
- Door Knocking in Wheaton area around new Neighborhood Site (Corner of Georgia Avenue and Randolph)
- Door Knocking at Bethel World Outreach Church in Silver Spring/Wheaton
- Neighbors Exchange at Wheaton Neighborhood Center/Catholic Charities
- Neighbors Exchange at Bethel World Outreach Church
- Weekly Team Meetings in Gaithersburg and Wheaton

**June:**

- Door Knocking with Caribbean Help Center in Silver Spring/Wheaton
- Formal Recruitment, Interviewing and Selection – Community Connectors for Gaithersburg and Wheaton
- Neighbors Circle Training in Lawrence, Massachusetts
- Neighbors Circle Follow Up/Planning in Gaithersburg
- Meetings with Community Partners in Gaithersburg
- HHS and IMPACT Pilot Review Sessions/Planning for FY10

**E. How is the Plane Flying? Summary of Early Results**

**Pilot Outputs:**

- 12 Community Connectors trained, representing 9 countries and speaking 7 languages (see list attached)
- 50 diverse door-knockers trained, representing 17 countries and speaking 7 languages
- 2001 door knocks in 15 lower income apartment communities (see list attached)
- 628 one-on-one conversations with lower income residents
- 4 Neighbors Exchanges with 150 participants
- 3 Neighbors Circles with 40 participants
- 20 resource partners participated and trained in methodology of Neighbors Exchange (see list attached)
- 8 lower income residents trained to help host/facilitate Neighbors Circles
- 7 ethnic based nonprofits committed to and fully engaged in campaign
- 5 large faith communities of diverse backgrounds committed to and fully engaged in campaign
- 4 school communities committed to and fully engaged in campaign
- 9 property managers working collaboratively with campaign



**Early Outcomes:**

- 550 low income households visited and met with a Community Connector at new Gaithersburg Neighborhood Center. (open from March to June)
- 500 low income households visited and met with a Community Connector at new Wheaton Neighborhood Center. (open May and June)
- Approximately 500 low income households applied for some form of emergency services at one of the two new Neighborhood Centers
- At least 120 of 150 low income people who attended a Neighbors Exchange received answer and/or next step for a critical area of need (health, finances, housing, emergency services)
- 50 low income residents built one or more new relationships of mutual support
- 60 low income residents offered to volunteer in Campaign as door knocker or Neighbor Circle host

**Note:** We are not able to provide quantifiable data which supports the connection between door knocks and visits to the new Neighborhood Centers. The in-take process did not include this information until June. However, anecdotal evidence via reports from Community Connectors indicate that door knocking has been particularly effective in the Wheaton community.

## F. Illustrative Stories: People in the Neighbors Campaign



Ntshiuwa sharing information with Jean Paul

### Story of Jean Paul

A recent immigrant from Togo, Jean Paul lives at Parklane Apartments in Gaithersburg with his wife and kids. When a team of door knockers met him at his door, he had just become unemployed as a result of an injury and was struggling to make his rent payments. Since then, Jean Paul has attended a Neighbors Exchange session, a door knocking training and is now a part of the Gaithersburg campaign team, knocking on doors, engaging his neighbors and connecting them to services. He feels it is important to participate in the campaign because he knows how important it is to find available services; he himself has been connected to Montgomery Works and applied for county

services. Jean Paul is now gearing up to host Neighbor Circles in his apartment community to meet his neighbors and create a circle of mutual support. Previous to this effort, he knew none of his neighbors.

### Story of Karen

Karen, originally from Honduras, lives next to the Neighborhood Center at Catholic Charities in the Glenmont Forest Apartments with her three children. She spent one Saturday afternoon door knocking before a Neighbors Exchange at Catholic Charities and then attended the session with three of her neighbors. After meeting Rosa, one of the community connectors, while door knocking, she visited the site the next week and applied for food stamps since she has been out of work for months. A month after applying, she returned to the site in crisis – the father of her children had left the apartment taking all of their savings with him. She was left with three hungry children and no hope of finding a job in the immediate future. After talking with Rosa, she had her food stamps application expedited and received benefits within a week. Catholic Charities was also able to give her food for the next few days, along with a grocery store gift card.

### Story of Rosa

Rosa, an immigrant from El Salvador, has lived in the greater Silver Spring area for more than 20 years and has been active in the IMPACT network as a parent leader for 5 years. A mother of four and grandmother of two, she was excited to be chosen as a community connector for the Wheaton site. She has experience accessing maternal health services for herself and her daughters and more recently applied for rental assistance and food stamps. Her knowledge of service delivery and the barriers many immigrants face in accessing emergency services has made her an excellent connector. Her many connections to local non-profits and schools allow her to not only help residents access County services, but other wrap-around services as well.

## G. Ten Lessons Learned

(For a more detailed description of each lesson learned, see attachment)

### 1. The gap between available services and the immigrant community is bigger than expected.

#### Response:

- Create a corps of culturally competent resident leaders who are connected to and can serve as human bridges to the neighborhood centers and other access points in direct service system. (See proposal for a Neighbor Corps in each targeted area, attached)
- Expand, support and fully honor the critical role of community connectors who staff the neighborhood centers.

## **2. Isolation of diverse neighbors is as widespread as expected.**

### **Response:**

- Invest significant training and relationship building among emerging resident leaders discovered via door knocking in targeted apartments (see Neighbor Corps proposal)
- Focus more attention on using Neighbor Circle tool effectively, perhaps in fewer apartment complexes, in order to increase chance of sparking a sustainable neighborhood network.

## **3. Job search supports are a mismatch for many.**

### **Response:**

- Intensify new plans to offer a Workforce Support Group and/or a Micro-Enterprise Program (or “Second Income Initiative”) Program; hoping to secure funding and pilot these initiatives in one of the targeted neighborhoods by October 2009.
- Re-design Neighbors Exchange and Neighbor Circle sessions to create more peer support and self-help initiative and reduce failed expectations and waste of effort in connection with the existing workforce support system.

## **4. Genuine and proactive commitment from the top is essential.**

### **Response:**

- Instead of easing up, Uma Ahluwalia, Director of HHS, committed to and has participated in a series of long team meetings to develop shared responses to the lessons learned during the pilot phase.

## **5. The established direct service system is in the early days of shifting to an empowerment model.**

### **Response:**

- Recruit staff from HHS, established nonprofits and smaller ethnic-based nonprofits to participate in the Neighbor Corps leadership and action program to build a web of mutually supportive relationships at the neighborhood level. (see description, attached)
- Develop and begin implementing a vision for Neighborhood Centers so they become places that feel welcoming, inclusive and facilitate all kinds of mutually supportive relationships and connections.

## **6. Door knocking is essential, but is much more effective when the door knocker can follow up with a phone call or second visit.**

### **Response:**

- Reduce number of expected door knocks for FY10 from 20,000 to 10,000, to increase ability to follow up and secure a higher number of follow up steps on the part of some residents. (Theory is that these newly engaged residents will be more effective at connecting their residents than complete strangers coming to their door).
- Insist on recruiting and training the kind of door knockers that can make the most of the ten or fifteen minute conversation.
- Institute volunteer jobs for others to support the door knocking process (transportation, child care, food, data entry etc), to increase effectiveness and absorb the high number of people with limited cultural competence who want to help out.

## **7. Property managers are important players in closing gaps and overcoming isolation.**

### **Response:**

- Actively recruit several property managers in each targeted neighborhood to participate in the Neighbor Corps program (see description attached).

- Re-institute IMPACT's monthly property manager luncheons, using the new neighborhood centers as the location for these luncheons.
- Secure specific partnership agreements with owners/managers of some of the larger apartment complexes.

**8. Immigrant-centered faith communities are a huge untapped resource for closing service gaps and creating networks for mutual support.**

**Response:**

- Recruit representatives from both these emerging faith communities and the longstanding congregations to participate in the Neighbor Corps program for each targeted neighborhood.

**9. Innovative role of MCCF is sparking important conversations about role of philanthropy going forward.**

**Response:**

- HHS, IMPACT and MCCF are working on a more integrated communication and cultivation strategy to encourage the participation of other private investors.

**10. Lack of effective evaluation and documentation tools is a major threat to fully leveraging moment of opportunity for long term reform.**

**Response:**

- IMPACT secured grant (Meyer Foundation) to support immediate implementation of a new CRM database to collect/track data associated with door knocking and follow up strategies.
- HHS secured commitment from the Casey Foundation (Seattle, Washington) to shape a program evaluation framework that integrates both the social work and community organizing strategies.



## **Attachments**

Detailed List of Lessons Learned

Proposal for Neighbor Corps

List of Community Connectors

List of Resource Partners

Summary of Door Knocking Efforts

Sample Event Flow – Neighbors Exchange

Sample Training Flow – Community Connectors

Sample Training Flow – Door Knocking

Door Knocking Tips and Information Gathering Sheet

## Ten Lessons Learned – Detailed Explanation

### 1. The gap between services and immigrant community is bigger than expected.

The amount of fear, misinformation, pride and lack of information among our community's large immigrant community is far greater than many of us understood, even as members of the immigrant community or long time workers within the immigrant community. Common myths that prevent access to services are that receipt of services will negatively affect your attempts to achieve legal status, your child will have to serve in the armed forces or that you will have to repay all the support. The dominate behavior among lower income immigrants facing new levels of crisis is to suffer in silence or among a small group of extended family members. As we work to respond to each new situation, it is very clear that the best way to bridge this gap is through a relationship with another person of similar background who has overcome similar challenges. We notice that once the gap for one person in a particular family/social circle is closed, others within this circle feel encouraged to seek help.

#### Response:

- Create a more established corps of culturally competent resident leaders who are connected to and can serve as human bridges to the neighborhood centers and other access points in direct service system. (See proposal for a Neighbor Corps in each targeted area, attached)
- Expand, support and fully honor the critical role of community connectors who staff the neighborhood centers.

### 2. Isolation of diverse neighbors is as widespread as expected.

In almost every one-on-one conversation we hold at a door or a community event, we ask residents if they know any of their neighbors. Virtually all of the responses are, "no, we do not". This is true even for the many residents who have lived in the same apartment complex for over five years and who live close by to families who immigrated from the same country. (While there is turnover in apartment communities, there are a surprisingly large number of people who stay for long periods of time). After a day of door knocking, it is not difficult to understand why there are so few relationships among residents within the many large apartment communities in Montgomery County. A typical walk up garden apartment of three floors with 12 units per section will be occupied with families from ten distinct countries or cultures, speaking at least six different languages. (One typical profile of twelve households: El Salvador, Nigeria, Honduras, India, Bolivia, African American, White American, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Dominican Republic).

#### Response:

- Invest significant training and relationship building among emerging resident leaders discovered via door knocking in targeted apartments (see Neighbor Corps proposal)
- Focus more attention on using Neighbor Circle tool effectively, perhaps in fewer apartment complexes, in order to increase chance of sparking a sustainable neighborhood network.

### 3. Job search supports are a mismatch for many.

During the many door knocks and small group sessions held at our Neighbors Exchanges, one of the most typical revelations is that the growing numbers who are unemployed were either unsuccessful in securing new jobs through government help centers or that their immigration status prevented them from receiving support. Many others are encountering reduced hours and wages, presenting the dilemma of how to supplement their income with a second or even third job or alternative income. Many of these people are women – domestic workers in private homes or employees of large service delivery institutions – and not viable candidates for the day laborer system. One interesting story was the day we encountered three unemployed residents living in the same hallway as a hospital cleaning supervisor who was recruiting new entry level staff and had never thought about posting job notice in his own hallway.

#### Response:

- Intensify new plans to offer a Workforce Support Group and/or a Micro-Enterprise Program (or "Second Income Initiative") Program; hoping to secure funding and pilot these initiatives in one of the targeted neighborhoods by October 2009.
- Re-design Neighbors Exchange and Neighbor Circle sessions to create more peer support and self-help initiative and reduce failed expectations and waste of effort in connection with the existing workforce support system.

### 4. Genuine and proactive commitment from the top is essential.

As an extremely busy Director of Health and Human Services, Uma Ahluwalia could have easily conceived of this project, delegated it to a team of senior staff and checked in on it periodically to ensure implementation. Instead, she accurately assessed that her vision was unfolding along side other connected visions outside the government frame and that she was sparking a relatively significant change in how her governmental system operates, both of which required a more involved level of leadership. She checks in with her lead people on what seems to be a daily basis, she works on building a relationship with a team of outside partners (even those a fair distance below her title and level of positional power), she shows up consistently in the spaces where a dose of her vision and passion are needed and she is not

afraid of managing conflict in the moment, rather than letting it fester or behaving passively aggressive. Everyone directly involved in the pilot project understands the critical role her proactive behavior and passion has played in keeping the plane flying.

**Response:**

- Instead of easing up, Uma committed to and has participated in a series of long team meetings to develop shared responses to the lessons learned during the pilot phase.

**5. The established direct service system is in the early days of shifting to an empowerment model.**

As partnerships with both large and smaller nonprofit service providers emerged in the pilot project, it became clear that these organizations do enjoy direct contact with a large number of residents in need who are not fully accessing government services. Each of these organizations present opportunities for “door knocking” with residents and engaging them in a more extensive conversation that might lead to closing the access gap for others and building greater networks of mutual support. However, for the most part, these conversations and relationships are not happening, partly because the direct service providers are overwhelmed trying to meet immediate needs and partly due to a program delivery orientation that does not lend itself to holding a different kind of conversation, beyond the transaction required to match needs to services. Of course, HHS – by their own acknowledgement - has tremendous untapped opportunities for leveraging the provision of direct services to spark client empowerment and network building.

**Response:**

- Recruit staff from HHS, established nonprofits and smaller ethnic-based nonprofits to participate in the Neighbor Corps leadership and action program to build a web of mutually supportive relationships at the neighborhood level. (see description, attached)
- Develop and begin implementing a vision for Neighborhood Centers so they become places that feel welcoming, inclusive and facilitate all kinds of mutually supportive relationships and connections.

**6. Door knocking is essential, but is much more effective when the door knocker can follow up with a phone call or second visit.**

During the pilot project, the door knocking strategy involved both the actual ten to fifteen minute one on one conversation with a resident in a targeted neighborhood and careful training of those who held these conversations to accomplish two very different objectives during these ten minutes: (1) determining if the resident has emergency needs and explaining how to seek help (2) sparking the resident’s awareness around their ability to contribute and help their neighbors and convincing them to attend an upcoming Neighbors Exchange. Many have questioned our ability to get low income residents to open their doors and our ability to hold a productive conversation.

As noted earlier, we knocked on 2000 doors and held 628 one on one conversations and held multiple debrief sessions. The results are clear: the vast majority of people open their doors (at least 95%) and a significant number of those who open their doors engage in conversations (75% to 80%), many of which are quite amazing and reveal all kinds of possibilities for improving connections and the neighborhood. (The more culturally competent and trained the door knockers are the better). We did discover that converting these conversations to an actual proactive step on the part of the resident usually takes at least one personal follow up call or visit. (We knew this in terms of our previous work, but thought the availability of services during a crisis might make this less of an issue). We also encountered the frustration of uncovering so many possibilities for resident leadership and knowing that we do not have the capacity to follow up on every lead.

**Response:**

- Reduce number of expected door knocks for FY10 from 20,000 to 10,000, to increase ability to follow up and secure a higher number of follow up steps on the part of some residents. (Theory is that these newly engaged residents will be more effective at connecting their residents than complete strangers coming to their door).
- Insist on recruiting and training the kind of door knockers that can make the most of the ten or fifteen minute conversation.
- Institute volunteer jobs for others to support the door knocking process (transportation, child care, food, data entry etc), to increase effectiveness and absorb the high number of people with limited cultural competence who want to help out.

**7. Property managers are important players in closing gaps and overcoming isolation.**

Prior to the Neighbors Campaign and this pilot phase, IMPACT had intentionally engaged property managers of apartment complexes in Silver Spring, seeking to build trust and make connections to emerging resident leaders in their communities. Our engagement strategy was working, despite the strong tendency in the social change world to assume that tenants are all good and property managers are all evil.

Our approach and our initial level of trust with some of the larger management companies, allowed us to solicit the support of property managers as we went door to door and inviting residents to the Neighbors Exchange. We discovered that many of these property managers are in distress, having to deal with the day to day results of the economic crisis. Despite popular belief, most do not enjoy evicting people and the large increase in evictions is not good for the long term economic health of their communities. The vast majority of the property managers we encountered were hungry for information regarding how to help their residents secure temporary and long term relief. Going forward, they can serve as key lynchpins in disseminating information and reducing fear around accessing government services.

**Response:**

- Actively recruit several property managers in each targeted neighborhood to participate in the Neighbor Corps program (see description attached).
- Re-institute IMPACT's monthly property manager luncheons, using the new neighborhood centers as the location for these luncheons.
- Secure specific partnership agreements with owners/managers of some of the larger apartment complexes.

**8. Immigrant-centered faith communities are a huge untapped resource for closing service gaps and creating networks for mutual support.**

IMPACT could not have completed the 1,200 door knocks in Gaithersburg if we (in partnership with Tim Warner from OCP) had not found and connected with a small African-based church in the Washington Grove area called Mercy Seat Chapel. Mostly through the efforts of one committed and skilled individual, fully supported by the pastor, a team of 8 church members attended door knocking training and faithfully followed through by participating in weekend door knocking. These volunteers were also instrumental in organizing and hosting a Neighbors Exchange. We had a similar experience working in partnership with Bethel World Outreach Church, a larger congregation located in downtown Silver Spring, but serving Africans and African Americans throughout Montgomery County and Prince George's County. Both of these congregations are not connected in any way to the network of faith communities traditionally thought of as the backbone of social and emergency services in our community.

**Response:**

- Recruit representatives from both these emerging faith communities and the longstanding congregations to participate in the Neighbor Corps program for each targeted neighborhood.

**9. Innovative role of MCCF is sparking important conversations about role of philanthropy going forward.**

Prior to this pilot, the Montgomery County Community Foundation envisioned and began raising significant gifts for their Neighbors in Need fund in a way that is unprecedented in our community. It is well known that for a community which is home to high wealth (as well as pockets of deep poverty), we do not enjoy the same level of philanthropic activity as other, similarly situated communities across the country. MCCF is serving as a local role model for how to begin shifting the balance of leadership, participation and investment in social change efforts, as our County begins to more fully embrace the impact of serious demographic change over the last 20 years. Staff and board representatives of MCCF are actively involved in shaping the campaign and various strategies as they evolve. They are also serving as the primary voice and catalyst for revealing issues around nonprofit capacity and the need for greater collaboration between large, well established service providers and the smaller, ethnic based nonprofits.

However, having acknowledged this important moment of progress, it is important to note that the amount of private dollars raised and available for this effort, in light of philanthropic capacity and level of high need, is extremely low and cannot begin to fully leverage the moment of opportunity. Immediate and large increases in private support are essential to sparking the kind of long term change this unique moment has revealed.

**Response:**

- HHS, IMPACT and MCCF are working on a more integrated communication and cultivation strategy to encourage the participation of other private investors.

**10. Lack of effective evaluation and documentation tools is a major threat to fully leveraging moment of opportunity for long term reform.**

The pilot has revealed that we have a strong vision that is shared across many lines of sector difference – differences that often defeat systemic reform. It also evident that the vision is well-grounded in a foundation of clear goals and measurable objectives, and that the partners are committed to rigorous review and mid-course change, as strategies are implemented. The challenge we face is an inability to fully understand the results, as they emerge, and limited capacity to convince others of the potential at stake and the urgency of this potential. Neither HHS nor IMPACT is as equipped as need be with underlying survey and assessment tools and the kind of integrated database to collect and track information across the different strategies.

**Response:**

- IMPACT secured grant (Meyer Foundation) to support immediate implementation of a new CRM database to collect/track data associated with door knocking and follow up strategies.
- HHS secured commitment from the Casey Foundation (Seattle, Washington) to shape a program evaluation framework that integrates both the social work and community organizing strategies.

**Proposal: Neighbors Corps in Long Branch, Wheaton and Gaithersburg****Background:**

- The pilot revealed a larger gap than expected between low income residents and government due to fear, misinformation and pride.
- One solution is recruiting, training and connecting more resident and neighborhood leaders who can bridge the gap.
- IMPACT has a long history of bringing people together to build bridges across lines of difference and supporting their individual and collective actions to improve community.
- During the pilot, IMPACT's leadership participants helped with door knocking and other engagement strategies and revealed strong sense of empowerment from participating in the campaign.
- The pilot also revealed that there are community-based partners with deep cultural connections which can play a critical role in creating better access to services and stronger circles of mutual support
- The goals of the campaign are significant and we need additional personal power to implement the campaign.

**Goal:**

Develop a neighborhood-based leadership development and collaborative action program that will increase the ability of 60-80 people from a range of backgrounds and cultures to develop relationships of trust and use their new network to better connect low income residents to available services and to spark circles of mutual support.

**Program Framework:**

- Three months long
- Approximately 45-50 hours
- 15 to 20 people per cohort
- Option 1: two cohorts in Wheaton, two in Long Branch and two in Gaithersburg (Fall and Winter cohorts)
- Option 2: one in Wheaton, one in Long Branch, and one in Gaithersburg (Fall only)

**Participant Selection Criteria:**

- Desire and commitment to build relationships across differences
- Live or work in the community/neighborhood
- Interested in developing new awareness and skills
- Commitment to attend all sessions and participate in campaign implementation
- Basic ability in conversational English

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Increased awareness of personal power and ability to create a stronger neighborhood
- New relationships of trust across racial, cultural and class differences within the neighborhood
- Increased awareness of available services, Neighborhood Centers, the Neighbors Campaign and community based organizations.
- Increased skill in sharing power and birthing new initiatives across lines of difference to carry out shared goals
- Creation of larger circles of informal mutual support in specific neighborhoods

**Possible Timeline:** *Program delivered once in all three neighborhoods*

July – August 2009: Recruitment and selection in Wheaton

September – November 2009: Deliver program in Wheaton; Recruitment and selection in Long Branch

Dec 2009 – February 2010: Deliver program in Long Branch; Recruitment and selection in Gaithersburg

March – April 2010: Deliver program in Gaithersburg

**Possible Group Sessions:**

- Personal empowerment: kernel of power, personal goal setting
- Relationship building: retreat, story-telling

- Asset Mapping: understanding my neighborhood and available resources
- Neighbors Campaign: understanding goals, operations and neighborhood based centers.
- Power-sharing across race and class: racial and cultural awareness
- Action planning: door knocking, recruiting, creating circles of mutual support, initiating new connections for neighborhood centers

**Possible Small Team Actions:**

- Organizing and leading door knocking teams
- Hosting or facilitating Neighbor Circles
- Organizing social events in neighborhoods (block party, immigration information night...)
- Organizing and leading events at the Neighborhood Service Centers
- Creating an Advisory Board that can influence and support the Neighborhood Service Centers
- Creating and disseminating a comprehensive community resource directory

**Possible Profile of Cohort (15-20 participants):**

- 10 residents from the low income communities surrounding the center: 4 Latinos, 2 African, 2 Asian, 1 Caribbean, 1 White, 1 youth
- 4 community connectors and 1 lead triage worker
- 2 HHS staff: 1 outreach worker and 1 service specialist
- 2 Nonprofit staff representing partner organizations and/or ethnic based nonprofits
- 1 MCPS staff: parent coordinator or ESOL teacher at a local school
- 1 Faith Community representative from a local church

**Potential Connection to IMPACT Network:**

- Participants in Neighbor Corps will have on-going access to a diverse network of over 2,000 people who regularly connect with each other through IMPACT's wide array of programs and network building efforts.
- Participants will receive continued leadership development through participation in planning teams and committees within the Network.
- Participants will have access to technical assistance and resource referral for self-identified community-based projects
- Participants will have access to information through network-wide electronic communication

**Why is IMPACT experienced at leading these types of efforts?**

- 10 years of experience in running diverse cohorts
- Specific lessons learned from 15 long-term (9 months, 100 hrs) leadership development and action programs involving over 250 people from very diverse backgrounds.
- Experience in bringing diverse groups together with significant outcomes
- Experience applying this strategy in multiple contexts: community-wide, school-based, rental communities, retail areas.

**Examples of Tangible Success in the Past:**

- Budget campaign led by a partnership between renters from three large apartment complexes and community workers representing two local crime prevention programs
- Park Police Officer birthing an after-school homework program for youth by bringing police officers and community residents together
- Silver Spring Loves Teachers campaign led by six minority parents advocating for more relationships of trust between diverse teachers, students and parents in their local school
- Small community improvement projects in 15 apartment complexes led by residents and their neighbors

## Community Connectors

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Training Dates</b>	<b>Neighborhood Safety Net Site</b>	<b>Profile (Country and Languages Spoken)</b>
1.	Amleset Abraham	Feb. 27-28	<i>Long Branch</i>	Eritrea Amharic, Tigrinya
2.	Ana Alvarado	Feb. 27-28	<i>Long Branch</i>	El Salvador Spanish
3.	Lily Assefa	Feb. 27-28	Wheaton	Ethiopia Amharic
4.	Maria Chevez Lopez	Apr. 16-17	Wheaton	El Salvador Spanish
5.	Man (Giselle) Fung	Feb. 27-28	Gaithersburg	China Mandarin
6.	Sharon Holquin	Feb. 27-28	Gaithersburg	African-American
7.	Navid Nasr	Apr. 16-17	<i>Long Branch</i>	Iran Farsi
8.	Vanessa Pinto	Feb. 27-28	<i>Long Branch</i>	Bolivia Spanish
9.	Sara Reyes	Feb. 27-28	Gaithersburg	El Salvador Spanish
10.	Patricia Rogers	Feb. 27-28	Gaithersburg	Liberia French
11.	Rosa Sanchez	Feb. 27-28	Wheaton	El Salvador Spanish
12.	Ann Tran	Apr. 16-17	Wheaton	Vietnam Vietnamese

## Resource Partners

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
1.	Magdalena Baez	Catholic Charities
2.	Hugh Bailey	Montgomery Works
3.	Ylda Beaty	Department of Health and Human Services
4.	Robert Eaton	Department of Health and Human Services - Germantown
5.	Nailah Govern	Primary Care Coalition
6.	Erick Gutierrez	Latino Economic Development Corporation
7.	Joan Harris	Department of Health and Human Services
8.	Maureen Herndon	City of Gaithersburg
9.	Manny Hidalgo	Latino Economic Development Corporation
10.	Vera Johnson	Department of Health and Human Services
11.	Luis Martinez	Department of Health and Human Services
12.	Keith McNeil	Marriott Hotels
13.	Paul Nicholson	Washington Adventist Hospital
14.	Cesar Palacios	Proyecto Salud
15.	Sumi Patel	Montgomery Works
16.	Alberto Patino	Provident Bank
17.	Ralph Perez	BB&T Bank
18.	Afredo Quiroga	Montgomery Works
19.	Barbara Rodriguez	Montgomery Works
20.	Rebecca Soubra	Department of Housing and Community Affairs



## Sample Event Flow – Neighbors Exchange

### Gaithersburg Elementary School

Monday, May 4, 2009

#### 1. Meet & Greet, Sign-in, Dinner

6:30-6:45pm

{Frankie, Navid, Winta, Megan, Myriam, Ray, Ntshiuwa, Rosa, George, Patricia}

The goal is to speak with every participant as they come in and:

- Explain the session flow.
- Prompt them to start thinking about their specific questions on the four topics.

At the sign in table participants sign in and make a nametag. They also need to put a colored circle that indicates where they live, so they can easily identify their neighbors.

#### 2. Welcome, Introductions, Pair Discussion

6:45-7:15pm

Loudly welcome everyone on behalf of the Neighbors Campaign (very briefly describe the campaign)

We have three specific goals for tonight and hope that you can:

- Meet and connect with at least one of your neighbors
- Have two of your pressing questions answered
- Offer one thing that you can do or information you can share to support others.

Frankie brings the group together (standing in a circle) and introduces the first activity: discussion in pairs:

- Why did you come tonight?
- What is one thing you like about where you live?

Frankie instructs them to find someone that lives close to them (by looking at nametags) and spend 10 minutes answering the question. Five people hold up the signs as possible answers (jobs, credit, health care, emergency services, meet neighbors).

In pairs, they will have 10 minutes to answer the question: why did you come tonight?

Frankie calls the full group back together and all participants then quickly introduce themselves and report out the reason they came (person holding relevant sign goes wild).

Winta quickly reviews the agenda/flow by introducing the four circles. Winta describes the topics to be discussed in each and invites participants to choose which one they are most interested in.

#### 3. Break out circles

7:15-7:45pm (first round)

7:45-8:15pm (second round)

- Looking for Jobs {Megan} – Luis Moreno Spanish Translator
- Access to Health Care {Frankie }
- Credit and Saving Money {Winta}
- New Neighborhood Service Center {Patricia} – Rosa Spanish Translator

Participants will choose which circle they would like to go to first. They will have a chance to move to a second one after 30 minutes, or they can stay where they are.

In the circle, the facilitator will have participants ask their questions and write them on flip chart paper (in categories if possible).

After all the questions are captured (everyone should have the opportunity to ask at least one question), the facilitator asks if the participants have a resource or story they would like to share with the group.

Then resource partners begin answering the questions already asked and any additional follow-up questions. Our goal is to have at least everyone's first question answered.

This will repeat once the group changes – assuming the majority of participants move to another circle. If only a few people change, the facilitator will ask the new members for their questions and continue the discussion.

#### **4. Wrap-up and closing**

8:15-8:30pm

Megan calls the group back together (standing in a circle) and ask for each circle to quickly report out the 2 or 3 key take aways from their group (facilitators should be ready to do this with group help).

Everyone will do a quick check-out (one thing you learned, one step you will take as a result of today's session).

Winta passes out evaluations and the numbers for the raffle.

#### **Resource partners:**

##### **Looking for Jobs**

- Keith McNeill – Marriott
- Sumi Patil – Montgomery Works

##### **Access to Health Care**

- Luis Martinez – HHS
- Nailah Gobern – Montgomery Cares/Primary Care Coalition

##### **Credit and Saving Money**

- Ray Moreno – resident financial whiz
- Myriam Torrico – best County employee ever

##### **New Neighborhood Safety Net Site**

- Maureen Herndon – City of Gaithersburg
- Patricia Rogers – Community Connector
- Robert Eaton – HHS

## Sample Training Flow – Community Connectors

### COMMUNITY CONNECTOR TRAINING

Health and Human Services & IMPACT Silver Spring

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Date: April 16 – April 17

Location: 8818 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Participants: 4 Connectors (9 on Thursday morning), 3 IMPACT staff, Catholic

Charities staff, HHS Rockville Service Center staff, Lead Triage workers, Tim Warner, Jayne Park

#### Thursday, April 16

**9:00-9:15 Who's in the room? Introductions** Megan  
(Name, where you live and what your role in the campaign is – use diagram)  
Review agenda

**9:15-9:30 Vision and Mission of the Neighbors Supporting Neighbors Campaign:** a unique partnership between government, nonprofit and community members  
Frankie & Tim

- Why are you being called upon?
- What's the fundamental problem?
- What are the divides we need to bridge?

**9:30-10:30 Relationship Building through Story-Telling:** (3min per person)  
Share storytelling tips Winta

- What are the gifts you bring to this role?
- Share a story about a time when others supported you in getting through hard times?

Bathroom Break

**10:30-11:15 Unique Role of the Community Connector**  
Brainstorm: What did people do/how did they behave in playing the 'bridge' role for you? What were the specific behaviors?  
Winta

Review 1 pager with 4 essential skills:  
Active Listening, Valuing People, Weaving & Connecting, Friendly Persistence  
Megan

Illustrate with role play:

Scenario: have participants shout out details, ask for volunteers to model

- Ask everyone to get into pairs and practice (5 min per person)
- Come back in the large group and share

**11:15-12:00 HHS Overview** Betty

**12:00-1:00 Lunch**  
Wheaton Team meeting – discuss mock week and work schedule

**1:00-5:00 Income Support Services**  
Sue Gordon, HHS, manager, Income Support  
Carol Wright, HHS trainer

**Friday, April 17**

**9:00-9:30 Quick introductions & Reconnect**

- What excited you yesterday about becoming a connector and what challenges do you perceive?  
Megan

**10:00-12:00 Housing Stabilization Program (Emergency Services)**

Vera Johnson, Manager, HHS Emergency Services

**12:00-1:00 Lunch**

**1:00-3:00 Emergency Services (continued)**

**3:00-4:00 Closing**

- Give out and read the community scrolls
- Full check out: one thing you learned, one thing you appreciated and one thing you would change

## Sample Training Flow – Door Knocking

Neighbors Campaign  
DOORKNOCKER TRAINING  
April 27, 2009 6-9pm  
Agenda

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6:00pm	Dinner	
6:30pm	Welcome Introductions & Check-In - "What is the most daring thing you've done recently"?	Megan
7:00pm	Vision and Goals of the Neighbors Campaign (diagram) The Campaign in Wheaton: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where do the door Knocks fit in this picture?</li><li>• Neighborhood Service Center at Catholic Charities</li><li>• Targeted Neighborhoods and Apartments</li><li>• Neighbor Circles and Neighbors Exchange sessions</li></ul> Goals of a Door Knock – hold up posters	Tim  Megan
7:20pm	What does the ideal door knock look like? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask in Pairs : "what do you think works well/not well based on your previous door knocking experiences "</li><li>• Full group: share door knocking tips – put on flipchart</li></ul>	Megan
7:40pm	Beyond making the connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the Record Sheet and Log</li><li>• Where do we refer people – Resource Sheet</li></ul>	Jayne
8:00pm	Role Play –Making the Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Model a good door knock</li><li>• Practice using scripted scenarios (10 mins per person)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Groups of two or three: 1 doorknocker, 1 resident, 1 observer</li><li>○ All three get a turn to play each of these roles</li></ul></li><li>• Full group debrief</li></ul>	Rosa & Tim
8:30pm	Logistics for Door Knocking <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where we are focusing</li><li>• Sign people up for different time slots</li></ul>	Megan
8:50pm	Check out: 1 thing you learned, appreciated or would change Group picture!	Frankie

## Door Knocking Tips and Information Gathering Sheet

Your goal is to have a genuine conversation – try to guide conversation but it has to be natural – only offer tools appropriate to conversation.

Remember you are not able to or offering to solve their problems, just trying to create networks of mutual support – we need them and they will also benefit.

If it seems that they need more information about services/ county resources, also refer to appropriate numbers/ places on handout and Community Connector/ HHS Site.

**Elements of conversation:** (You won't be able to do all of these in every conversation)

- ❖ Identifying yourself –  
with campaign and neighborhood, and as person – give personal info – connect
- ❖ Pulling out their story -  
through conversation, asking question, sharing and listening carefully
- ❖ Finding a strength  
how can they contribute to their community
- ❖ Offering relevant tools – Neighbors Exchange, Neighbor circles, Community Connectors at HHS site, resources sheet

### Tips:

- If they are not very talkative, prompt them with a story from your previous door knocking or a personal story
- But relax. Do not just talk – keep asking questions and giving space for them to talk.
- Try to slow down conversation – comment on their kid, the weather, the flag on their wall

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Door Knockers: \_\_\_\_\_

Apartment Complex: \_\_\_\_\_ Building: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What concerns did you discuss with resident?

Employment                      Cost of Rent/ Utilities      Healthcare                      Safety  
Cost of living in general (inc. transportation, childcare etc.)                      Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Level of employment changed in last 6 months? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Support resident could provide to neighbors? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Referred resident to?                      Neighbors Exchange Session  
Community Connectors at HHS Site                      Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. Should reengage?      Doorknocker                      Neighbor Circle Host