

Minutes from RocACTS Religious leaders caucus March 15, 2023

RocACTS Religious Leaders Caucus met on 3/15/23 with Roberta Davis giving land acknowledgement and Rev Keith Patterson leading prayer. Carlos Santana, (Action for a Better Community) and Angee Brown(TogetherNOW) engaged us re. Mental Health services (CHAPS) and Lentory Johnson re Children impacted by Gun violence (see below)

See attachments for essay (or poetry) contest for 4 to 12 year old children impacted by gun violence. Lentory Johnson blessed us with her story that led to her founding Generational Engagement Matters. Her son, JR, the father of two children was killed by people who did not know him with an AK47 in front of the Boys and Girls Club in August 2015. This magnificent young man had just gotten a better job and he also brightened our world with music. In the last seven and one half years Lentory has dealt with not only her own family's grief but with a national epidemic of gun violence, locally and nationally by listening to children impacted by gun violence in Rochester City Schools and in recreation centers.

She has found some families are so hurting they are not talking about their pain; children need to express their feelings. To facilitate that sharing, Lentory has held successful essay writing contests and plans to publish the essays. This is her third year inspiring and guiding essays while honoring the children whose pain is deep even as their suggested solutions are riveting. Please click the link for information about the Anti-Gun Violence Essay Contest and how to engage your community in collaboration. Your and your agency and congregation's donations to GEM 204 Inglewood Dr 14619 will be prizes to winners. Deadline for submitting essays (or poems Or artwork) is May 1. RCSD educators + Lentory Johnson will award prizes May 20. Please see:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VfjCESqWAGU3TEST_0mSSqLXoHm6sMHV?usp=share_link

Also at our March 15 meeting Ralph Carter, chair, RocACTS Justice System Task Force reported opportunities to advocate for Daniel's Law for mental health and Police Accountability.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QUpGXfo-qXwXBTUD00c7dWTNqjR_dxCC8jxfkzvaJMk/edit?usp=sharing

Carlos Santana (Action for a Better Community) and Angee Brown (TogetherNow) presented a fine proposal implementing a RASE commission recommendation to better address mental health care. See their well researched plan at the end of this email. They ask you to consider signing a letter of support since many families in our congregations and agencies have a family member or neighbor who has needed or currently needs appropriate and timely mental health services. Carlos and Angee ask you to send your letter of support to them and they will deliver the letters along with their proposal (see below) to County Executive Bello.

Letter you may wish to sign regarding CHAPS Community Health Advocacy Peer System. Send signed letters to

Angee Brown angee.brown@systemsintegration.org and or Carlos Santana CSantana@abcinfo.org

Dear County Executive Bello,

I am writing to express my support of Action for a Better Community's (ABC's) Community Health Advocacy Peer System (CHAPS). CHAPS is the result of a highly successful collaboration between ABC and TogetherNow (formerly, the Systems Integration Project). We believe this innovative approach creates a safe and appropriate framework for aiding individuals who are experiencing mental health and substance use disorder crises.

Since 1965, ABC has served in its mission of promoting and providing opportunities for low-income individuals and families to become self-sufficient. CHAPS is an extension of ABC's promise of Community Action. Our organization believes strongly that community action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. More recently, in 2020 TogetherNow began implementing a reimagined person-centered, integrated service delivery model which emphasizes the importance of peer advocates and system navigation services. CHAPS is an example of a game-changing solution that promotes a more equitable system of care. CHAPS also creates living wage jobs for people of color, people in recovery, members of the LGBTQ+ community, members of the deaf community, people with disabilities, and other individuals' whose lived experience may have previously presented a barrier to gainful employment.

ABC's proposed solution, CHAPS, is a system of peer advocates and support services that will aid people who are having mental issues in the City of Rochester and Monroe County. It was developed by ABC and TogetherNow in direct response to the RASE Commission recommendation which says to "Invest in and develop Community Behavioral Health Advocates (CBHA), a program employing local residents who are trained and certified to assist people with advocacy; offer help to connect with and navigate behavioral health services; identify distressed persons who need services before emergencies occur; and provide low-complexity therapeutic interventions, as appropriate". (RASE Summary Recommendations - rocrase.com)

I have seen the presentation of the concept of CHAPS by ABC and TogetherNow and feel it is a superior solution to meet the current, pressing needs of our community.

Optional paragraph if you sign letter on behalf of your organization: This work is highly aligned with our work at [insert org/program information here]. We are excited to further our partnership to transform systems and create long lasting benefits for individuals in Monroe County, especially as it relates to preventing mental health emergencies before they occur.

We are asking that you and your counterparts in the City support and fund this proposal since it will save and improve lives in Monroe County.

Sincerely,

[Insert name]

Optional [Title]

Optional [Organization]

Thank you for your kind attention to these urgent community issues.

The next RocACTS Religious Leaders Caucus is 11:30 to one pm Wednesday April 19 via zoom with Ruth Marchetti, Chair, RocACTS Climate Justice Task Force and with Kim Hunt-Uzelac, Exec. Director, Family Promise of Rochester working with housing deprived families with the support of many of our congregations these last 19 years. (formerly known as RAIHN)

blessings,

den mack, DMin

Chair, RocACTS Religious Leaders Caucus