

## **AAA - Project Activities and Highlights for 2011-2012 – A month – month Breakdown of Activities**

### **January-February:**

We had several meetings of the Do the Math Working Group to kick start the project and to proceed with the identification of smaller groups to work on the Video Development, and the Advocacy – Outreach strategy which would facilitate training of community members and the development of our AAA Kit and Facilitator's guide to be used with the video.

We began in early February to identify the main focus of the video and began writing a script to reflect the reality of poverty in York Region, the importance of healthy communities and what that means, and most importantly a call to ACTION so viewers would realize that there are things they can engage in to make the necessary changes.

- We help *regular meetings in the north and the south of YR* to mobilize members to participate in the development of the Tool Kit, the production of buttons to share our message, and the plans of how to outreach to others as well as to reach MPPs with our letter writing strategy. With Community Partner Community Living York South, we engaged on a very successful letter writing campaign to MPPs, helped to prepare them for 2 meetings with their MPP Helena Zaczek, and we also jointly purchased a button maker which was to become a great tool for engaging volunteers and producing our own advocacy buttons.

**January 2011** – Tom Pearson and I presented the YR Social Audit Report – Behind the Masks to the YR Community and Health Services Committee; they accepted they report and its recommendations and requested that Council accept and endorsed the recommendations which they did one week later. Included in those recommendations was the key one focused on the \$100 HFS which our AAA project is working to gain widespread awareness of and support for. This was a huge step in bringing forward support for the HFS and credibility for our advocacy work, which in turn paved the way for a closer and productive working relationship with the staff at the region.

### **March – June:**

We worked with our community partners and a smaller video development group to produce a quality AAA video entitled – It's not too Late to Change the World. We utilized local individuals from NM-Aurora to star in the video. Our host for the video discussion was a young woman who had grown up in Newmarket and who had witnessed the changes in her own community from 15-20 years ago until today. Also, others in the video included YRFN families and Poverty Action for Change parents and children. We utilized photo images from the YRAEH Photo Voice project and other images were provided by Tom Pearson a local media person and PACC. It was definitely a homegrown project.

## **May-June**

In anticipation of our video being completed by the end of June, we planned several initiatives in May and June to do outreach and education to the communities of York Region.

We held three community screenings of the Film **POOR NO MORE**; we facilitated discussion of the social determinants of health/poverty as well as the need for an increase in the social assistance rates in Ontario to ensure that individuals have enough money to purchase healthy food.

1. *Georgina at the Town Council Offices* – we held the first one in Georgina on Hunger Awareness Day – June 1<sup>st</sup>
2. *Richmond Hill at the Library* –
3. *Newmarket at the Crosslands Church Theatre* -

**Presentation at OMSSA** I presented and provided a powerpoint presentation at the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association Meeting of commissioners from across the province. I was invited by the Chair, who is also our Commissioner of Community and Health Services in YR, Adelina Urbanski.

We had been in discussion with John Taylor, Regional Councillor from NM and Adelina Urbanski, the Commissioner of Community and Health Services for YR, regarding holding a Poverty Free Ontario presentation in York Region in June 2011. *Marvin Novick and Peter Clutterbuck of SPNO agreed to visit YR as one of their many visits across Ontario to unveil the PFO plan including an emphasis on the \$100 HFS which our project is endorsing.* Councillor Taylor supported and promoted the initiative throughout the Region and Co-Chaired the event along with Pat Taylor, Co-Chair of the SPCYR. We had approximately 70 people in attendance at the event at the Aurora Library.

## **In Cooperation with Other Campaigns to Eradicate Poverty and Improve our Communities...**

As part of the PFO Ontario Strategy heading towards the provincial election, YRFN through the AAA project and CLYS in partnership shared their button making resources to be able to produce approximately 3,000 for the campaign province wide. We worked closely with the Campaign throughout the summer.

## **July – August**

**Video Promotion** AAA Video is on YRFN website; also shared with PFIB provincial website and later with SPNO. Also, widespread distribution of the link to the video provided to other partners, agencies and individuals in York Region

***Set up our On-Line Petition for the HFS*** and distributed the link and Request widely to promote it.

***Explored other social Media options*** but decided to continue with Facebook and the on-line petition urging people to support the Healthy Food supplement;

Redirection of Focus on Advocacy Efforts from MPPS and General Public to specific Targetted Groups.

***\*\*One thing that was not in our favor was that throughout this year, with the Federal election in the spring and the upcoming Provincial Election in October, there were numerous campaigns and requests for all MPs and MPPs time as well as the time and attention of citizens and even organizations so that we were aware that people were being inundated with requests to support many different groups/campaigns. We decided it was best to target two specific groups of people who we felt could be champions for this cause and for whom it would have a real impact. Simultaneously we as a provincial network, continued to pursue municipal and regional governments to endorse the \$100 HFS and make their requests known to the Premier.***

- a. ***Boards of Directors of organizations serving the public***
- b. ***Emergency Food Program (FB and Meal program) VOLUNTEERS*** – We started the Ontario food bank Awareness Group which began meeting in June of 2011; goal to empower volunteers who work in emergency food sector to advocate for the individuals and families they serve who are living in poverty as well as for themselves. Many of the volunteers have been working for up to 20 years, average age is mid 60's to 70's. They are tired, frustrated and unable to leave their volunteer work for fear of what will happen to their clients. In most cases, supplies of food are dwindling, while demand for food continues to increase. It's a crisis of huge proportions for individuals and for the volunteers/ volunteer organizations. Now known as the ***FREEDOM 90 Group***.

***Developed a data base*** of agencies and organizations throughout YR to which we could send emails, invitations, our video and other AAA resources.

***Coalitions and Partnerships in Advocacy*** - Through the AAA Project, I participated on the ***CYFS Forum in the planning of their ONE VOICE campaign*** targeted at all candidates for the fall provincial election.

- Carolyn Mooi and I worked together to plan for joint training of volunteers, soon to be advocates for the ***Healthiest Candidate Campaign and the AAA Campaign***.

- Participated in the ***Poverty Free Ontario Campaign*** planning meetings as they prepared their strategies and campaign heading towards the provincial election.

## **September - October**

The weeks of September and into October were of course leading up to the provincial election and all that went along with that. Groups, organization and individuals we would usually be working with, were very busy at this time. Case in point, the Children Youth and Families Forum of YR were rolling out their own meetings with candidates from all parties to express their priorities and find out from candidates where they stood on issues relating to children and families.

### **AAA Training along with Heart and Stroke Healthiest Candidate Training**

**Hosted a Poverty Free Ontario Event on September .... At the Inn From the Cold Building in NM.** As part of this provincial strategy to run a mock election around poverty issues, lawn and window signs were produced that stated – I'm voting for a poverty Free Ontario. We distributed over 100 signs in YR. We also produced the buttons for the campaign and disseminated them across the province to other social planning networks who were involved in this campaign.

**Attended All Candidates Meetings and Meetings for Candidates with the CYFS Forum of YR.** Prepared questions to be used at the Candidates Meetings to bring attention to the public and the candidates of the need for increased social assistance levels and healthy food for all.

**Provided direction to the SPCYR as to how they could be involved in advocating on the issues and informing voters about the issues and how they could get involved.** Presented our AAA Project to them and ways in which they could assist in advocacy.

## **November – December 2011**

**Two presentations at the children, youth and families forum of YR re: the AAA project** and how the forum can be directly involved in the advocacy work around income inequity as well as affordable housing. They are a member group of the HSPB so are involved by virtue of their connection to that planning table but have demonstrated much interest in using our AAA resources and training and also endorsing efforts to see SA rates raised and to invite the SAR Commissioners to YR for a community consultation. Various ways of working with the Forum are being considered and ways in which to use the Video and resources. Currently I participate on the Advocacy Subcommittee of this group.

**Community and Health Services professional development and planning day for Staff:** Presented AAA Video and Project and participated in small group planning to discuss how to incorporate the Making Ends Meet objectives in the work of staff as health teams and inspectors.

## **January 2012**

**Presentations to Grade 12 Health and Nutrition Classes at Bayview Secondary School in Richmond Hill.** Yvonne (staff) and 2 community advocates presented the AAA Video and

powerpoint presentation “Poverty in our own Backyard.” To two classes. Presented multiple options for the class to get involved in addressing poverty. They agreed to complete the Do the Math Survey exercises and also check out the Petition on line for the Healthy Food Supplement.

Worked with the teacher to provide her with more anti-poverty materials and links between health and poverty to be used in future classes. She is going to share the success of the presentations with other schools and staff.

**Future – Dates TBD – Invitation for a presentation to the Civics class at Huron Heights in Newmarket.** Developing another powerpoint to accompany the video that focuses more on the political and economic realities of poverty that relates to the civics curriculum.

Supported the application of one of our advocates to be a member of the YRDSB Equity and Inclusivity Community Committee that will begin in March 2012 and run for the next 4 years. We’re awaiting final decisions but this advocate, Kristine Carbis, a long time anti-poverty worker, and more recently outspoken advocate and presenter, has been wanting for many years to have inroads into the secondary school system in YR. This is a perfect opportunity for her and she would make a great addition to their committee in an advisory, membership position.

### **Future Opportunity to be Explored for 2012**

**Webinar for Advocacy Training Purposes to share Strategies and Lessons Learned from Various campaigns held across Ontario this past year.**

**AAA Project (Lead)**

**PFIB (Lead)**

**ISARC – Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition**

**PFO – Poverty Free Ontario with the Social Planning Network of Ontario**

**The STOP Community Food Centre – currently doing webinars to share their own strategies and successes; would like to build on that**