

Quality of Life Council Committee

Meeting Record (DRAFT)

Meeting Date: 3-8-2010

Convened: 12:02 p.m.

Adjourned: 1:29 p.m.

Pauline Medrano, Chair
Vonciel Jones Hill, Vice-Chair
Sheffie Kadane
Dave Neumann
Steve Salazar
Carolyn R. Davis
Angela Hunt

Delia Jasso (non-member)

Briefing Presenters:

- Susan Hoff, Senior VP Community Impact United Way Metropolitan
- Julian Huerta, Director of Programs Foundation Communities
- Cynthia Yung, VP for Grants The Boone Family Foundation
- Yolanda Eisenstein, Animal Law Attorney

Special Guests:

Animal Shelter Advisory Commission Members

AGENDA:

1. **Approval of February 22, 2010 minutes**

Presenter(s):

Information Only: _____

Action Taken/Committee Recommendation(s):

Motion to approve the February 22, 2010 minutes.

Motion made by: Vonciel Jones Hill

Item passed unanimously: __X__

Item failed unanimously: _____

Motion seconded by: Angela Hunt

Item passed on a divided vote: _____

Item failed on a divided vote: _____

2. **Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Free Tax Preparation Services**

Presenter(s): Susan Hoff, Julian Huerta, and Cynthia Yung

Information Only: __X__

Action Taken/Committee Recommendation(s):

The purpose of the briefing was to present opportunities and challenges of earned income tax credit. There is up to \$5,000 in increased credits over the next two years for a family with two or more children. Yet, \$1.4 to \$1.9 billion has been unclaimed in Texas annually. 20-25% of eligible individuals do not file claims because they are unaware that they are eligible or need to file a tax return to receive credit. A single mother with two kids and an annual income of \$18,000 can receive a \$5,000 earned income tax credit, a family with three kids and income of \$26,000 can receive a \$4,500 credit.

VITA community tax centers provide free tax preparation and EITC filing. In San Antonio the number of tax returns filed is an average of 39,000 compared to Dallas which has only about 4,500. Therefore the Earn It! Keep It! Save It! Program was initiated by Mayor Tom Leppert in

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the fall of 2008 along with numerous partners and community volunteers. The goal is to serve at least 10,000 families in Dallas and bring more than \$15,000,000 into the local economy. More than 500 volunteers have been recruited to commit at least 25 hours during the tax season, receive IRS certification training, prepare taxes, translate and intake work.

There are four locations in Dallas. Most sites open at least 40 hours per week, including evenings and weekends, have paid site managers and intake specialists, and have bilingual staff. Outreach efforts are advertised through utility bills, Dallas ISD, 2-1-1, *Al Dia*, *The Dallas Morning News*, television and radio. The council can help by telling constituents through newsletters, e-news, speaking engagements and the press.

Motion made by:

Item passed unanimously:

Item failed unanimously:

Motion seconded by:

Item passed on a divided vote:

Item failed on a divided vote:

3. The Relationship between Animal Cruelty and Human Violence

Presenter(s): Yolanda Eisenstein

Information Only:

Action Taken/Committee Recommendation(s):

Animal abuse is a crime under the Texas Penal Code 42.09 and 42.092. Potential animal abusers include hoarders, spouse/partner abusers, puppy mill owners, children, dog/cock fighters, criminals, violent criminals, serial killers and next-door neighbors. Many times the abuse by adults is intentional to control the animal, retaliate against an animal, satisfy a prejudice, express aggression through an animal, enhance personal aggressiveness, shock people, retaliate against people, sadism or even because assaulting a human is too risky. Animal abuse by children often times is because of curiosity or exploration, peer reinforcement, forced by a more powerful person, kills to prevent abuser from torturing, phobia, identification with child's abuser, post-traumatic play, imitation, practice before violence against a person.

Whether animal cruelty is intentional or negligent there are human costs to children, families, and the community. The graduation theory says an individual starts abusing animals, then graduates to human violence. Violent criminals were nearly three times more likely than nonviolent criminals to have abused animals as children. Animal abusers were five times more likely to have a violent criminal record.

There is long-term damage to children with exposure to witnessing animal abuse between the ages of three and six years old. This desensitizes and damages the child's capacity for empathy, fosters the idea that animals and people are expendable, damages a child's sense of safety, and leads to acceptance of physical harm and violence. Sexually abused children are five times more likely to abuse animals. By hurting animals, the child may be rehearsing his/her own suicide.

The PREP: Youth Village Dog Training Program uses non-violent juvenile offenders to train dogs as a way to develop personal skills. Professional dog trainers provide training and help the

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youth develop new skills while also creating adoptable dogs. Psychological evaluations are taken to measure results. All participants have shown positive changes in their behavior and attitudes toward people and animals. Graduates of the program receive training certificates from Canine Dimensions proving their successful completion of the program.

71% of battered women reported that their abuser had harmed animals, 32% reported that their children had hurt or killed animals. Leading to 25-40% of battered women unable to escape abusive situations because they worry about what will happen to their animals. Incidence of dog bites is 11 times greater in violent homes. 88% of homes with physically abused children also include abuse of the family pet. 62-76% of animal cruelty in the home occurs in front of children. 97% of the public considered "protecting animals from cruelty and abuse" to be important. The public sees animals as helpless victims, often making animal cruelty more disturbing than person-on-person violence.

Strategies include early intervention, public education, investigation, reporting and tracking, training, best practices, enlist and utilize community support, pass stronger laws, better language definitions in the law, collaboration among various entities, greater enforcement of existing laws, strengthen veterinarian reporting, have dedicated prosecutors, judges, courts, law enforcement, and support from all levels of government.

Motion made by:

Item passed unanimously:

Item failed unanimously:

Motion seconded by:

Item passed on a divided vote:

Item failed on a divided vote:

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Pauline Medrano, Chair
Quality of Life Committee