



Mailing Address:  
 Gulf Coast Interfaith  
 c/o St. Patrick Catholic Church  
 1010 - 35<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Galveston, Texas 77550  
 Contact Telephone: 409 939-8017  
 Email: [info@gulfcoastinterfaith.org](mailto:info@gulfcoastinterfaith.org)  
 Website: [www.gulfcoastinterfaith.org](http://www.gulfcoastinterfaith.org)

*Gulf Coast Interfaith (GCI) continues its work in the key areas of democracy, disaster recovery, housing, healthcare, employment, education, and Latino Outreach in an effort to advance social, economic and health opportunities for the residents of the city of Galveston and Galveston County and the Gulf Coast area. Collaborating with local congregations and community advocacy groups, we are consistently reaching to fulfill our goal to produce tangible, sustainable solutions to the issues facing our neighbors.*

## GCI

### ***Galveston County Collaborating Organizations***

Gulf Coast Interfaith continued its collaborative work with the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations.<sup>1</sup> GCI made its office at 2728 Ave Q available to the Collaborating Organizations (CO) for meetings on Jan.10<sup>th</sup> and March 21<sup>st</sup>. There were wide ranging discussions and strategy sessions covering R1 housing defects, R2 outreach and recovery, voter education in the upcoming Galveston municipal election, and adoption of a pay day lending ordinance in Galveston.



LULAC Vice President Tina Colunga and community member Mrs. Virginia Compian listen as NAACP President David Miller describe his concerns about the wages of workers at GISD and City of Galveston.

## EMPLOYMENT

### ***Living Wage Study Group***

A regular monthly meeting was held on June 14<sup>th</sup> at St. Patrick Catholic Church where it was decided that studying should end and that it was time for action. The Collaborating Organizations were asked to schedule meetings and meetings with City Manager

<sup>1</sup>The membership of the coalition known as the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations varies depending on the issue. Generally the CO is comprised of: NAACP Galveston Unit 6180, LULAC Galveston Council 151, Galveston County Coalition for Justice, Galveston Northside Task Force, Gulf Coast Interfaith, Barbour’s Chapel Community Development Corporation, NAACP Mainland Branch Unit 6201, NAACP Dickinson/Bay Area Branch Unit 6280, LULAC Texas City Council 255, and Gulf Coast Homeless Coalition.



GCI leader Steve McIntyre, Galveston City Councilmember Cornelia Harris-Banks (and GCI leader), Father Maynard Tetreault, Galveston County Democrat Party chairman Lloyd Criss, LULAC Vice-President Tina Colunga, Mrs. Virginia Compian, and Harris County ROC director Ashley Hernandez discuss strategy for securing better wages for workers in Galveston.

Brian Maxwell on June 30<sup>th</sup> and GISD Supt. Larry Nichols on July 7<sup>th</sup> were arranged to discuss the basic wage structure and benefits of city and school district low wage workers in Galveston.

## LATINO OUTREACH

The difficult issues surrounding immigrants from Central America have grown larger and more political in 2014. Comprehensive solutions need to be agreed upon by elected representatives but while we wait the local humanitarian concerns remain.

Shortly after recognizing the humanitarian crisis with the arrival of unaccompanied minors, The Children's Center was asked to license and operate a second facility in Brazoria County. The Children's Center reached out to GCI Leader Joe Compian to arrange for a blessing of the children and the facility in June. Fr. Tom Ponzini, formally the Pastor at St Mary's in Texas City and a GCI supporter, is shown below with the children whose ages range from 8 to 14.



## DEMOCRACY

### *Galveston City Council*

The Collaborating Organizations met with: Dist. 3-Kate Marx (4/7), Dist.6- Carolyn Sunseri (4/14), and Dist. 4-David Hoover (4/21) at the GCI office. A page of questions were prepared and submitted to the

candidates and all CO members who were present were encouraged to return to their organizations with the information they obtained.

GCI member Cornelia Banks was in a run-off against Tarris Woods who challenged her reelection in District 1. Woods won the run-off.

Richard Batie, who actively participates in the CO, ran again in District 2. Batie missed by two votes being in a run-off in 2012 against Rusty Legg. Legg decided to not run for reelection. Craig Brown, however, won the Dist. 2 council seat without a run off.

## **DISASTER RECOVERY and HOUSING**

### ***Outreach for Ike Round 2 Housing Recovery in Galveston***

GCI hosted a breakfast on March 27<sup>th</sup> for the leaders in Galveston's housing recovery to discuss the final outreach effort to encourage poor homeowners to file an application to have their house rehabbed or rebuilt in Round 2. The breakfast was at the Lighthouse Charity Operations Building at 6918 Broadway and was provided by Lighthouse Charity. Kevin Hamby and Jeff Piatt who were contracted to conduct the R2 outreach made a presentation that answered questions and resulted in the commitment of additional effort by community leaders to secure more applications by April 21<sup>st</sup> and to develop a plan for the use of any unspent funds.

GCI leader Steve McIntyre and Chula Sanchez met separately on April 2<sup>nd</sup> with Heber Taylor, editor of the Galveston County Daily News, to discuss this last opportunity to apply. Taylor wrote an editorial about signing up for R2. Flyers were also prepared and distributed to the Spanish-speaking congregations at St. Patrick Catholic Church, New Life and Moody Methodist Church.

### ***Source of Income Discrimination***

During the May 6<sup>th</sup> candidate forum hosted by LULAC at the VFW, Galveston mayoral candidate Don Mafrige was questioned by GCI leaders Compian and McIntyre concerning the problems of poor people with vouchers from GHA, Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, or other reputable entity being denied housing or facing eviction because the vouchers were not acceptable by landlords. Mafrige promised to assist in arranging a meeting with the Galveston Apartment Association and similar organizations on the mainland to identify the problem and resolving it.

## **HEALTH CARE**

### ***UTMB***

Steve McIntyre met with UTMB med students on June 4<sup>th</sup> at Mod coffee house in Galveston to discuss their ethical concerns surrounding the treatment of poor people and desire to help their patients. The

discussion included UTMB's Charity Care Policy, lack of a contract between UTMB and Galveston County to provide indigent health care, registration for the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) and the failure of Texas to expand Medicaid.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### *Payday Lending Ordinance*

Galveston city councilmember Beeton's push for a new Payday Lending Ordinance during April was met by resistance from the CO because of the sensitive timing of the effort. After it was tabled at the April 24<sup>th</sup> work session that was also attended by Ann Baddour, an attorney with Texas Appleseed, the CO pledged its support for further review and passage by the newly elected city council.



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