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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

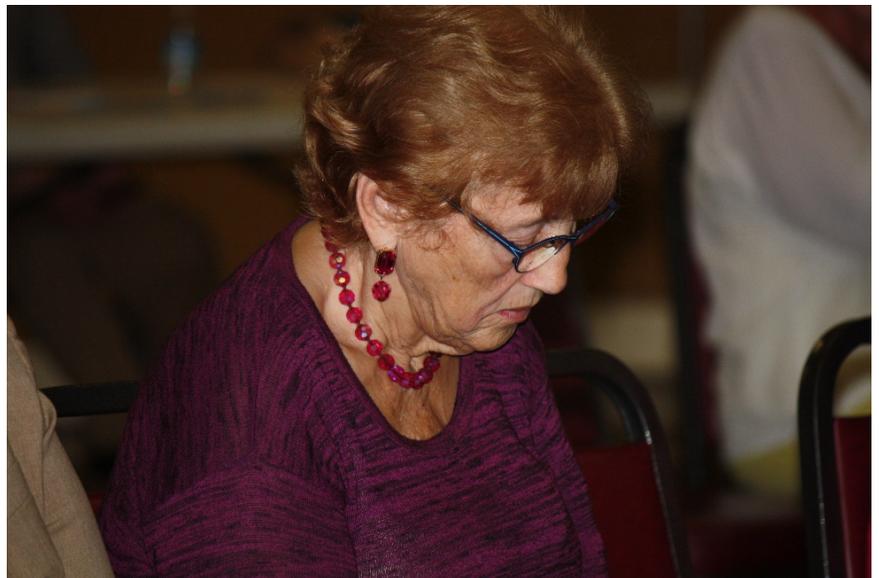
Laura Murrell Day

GCI leader Laura Murrell was recognized on January 28, 2016 by the Galveston City Council for her many years of unselfish work in the Galveston community. The proclamation declared¹

Whereas, Laura Murrell, has had a long and distinguished legal career in her home state of Kentucky and then in Texas, and wisely chose to live in Galveston when she retired; and

Whereas, upon moving to Galveston she vigorously began participating in the Galveston community at many levels and continued year after year in her efforts to assist and advocate for her adopted home; and

Whereas, Laura Murrell is a long time member of NAACP Galveston Unit #6180, Galveston Northside Taskforce, Galveston Coalition for Justice, and she attended several HGAC meetings in Houston where she advocated for recovery assistance from Hurricane Ike; and



¹ Link to the January 28, 2016 Galveston City Council meeting where Laura Murrell Day was proclaimed. See Item 6-3d at 22:17-30:20. <http://galvestontx.swagit.com/play/01282016-723>

Whereas, Laura Murrell was selected as one of the delegates from the Galveston Unitarian Universalist Fellowship that joined with other congregation delegates that founded Galveston County Interfaith in 2004; and

Whereas, Laura has worked tirelessly on issues concerning housing, disaster recovery, voting rights, health care, living wages and civil rights as GCI evolved into Gulf Coast Interfaith; and

Whereas, Laura Murrell served with Chula Sanchez as co-chairs of Galveston's Hurricane Ike Housing Recovery Committee when it was formed after Hurricane Ike to organize volunteers to go door to door identifying and assisting families in participating in recovery efforts for home owners; and

Whereas, Laura Murrell, was one of the founding members of the Galveston Living Wage Study Group on September 8, 2012, helped lead the first Galveston Living Wage Conference on September 13, 2013, and has worked diligently to study and help the public understand the difficult situations faced by struggling low wage workers in Galveston; and

Whereas, the residents of Galveston who have worked with Laura have benefitted from her unselfish and countless efforts to make Galveston a better place for all; and

Whereas, Laura Murrell has returned to her home in Kentucky during the Thanksgiving holiday where she will now share her life and time with her children and grandchildren. Laura will be missed by all.

Therefore, we the Mayor and City Council for the City of Galveston do proclaim January 28, 2016 as:

Laura Murrell Day in Galveston

In testimony whereof, witness my hand and the Seal of the City of Galveston this 28th day of January, 2016.



James D. Yarbrough

James D. Yarbrough, Mayor

Janelle Williams

Janelle Williams, City Secretary





GALVESTON COUNTY COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

GCI made its office at 2728 Ave Q available to the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations (CO)² for meetings on January 9th, February 3rd, and March 7th. There were wide ranging discussions covering Northside development, privatization of the Galveston Sanitation Department, delay in occupying GHA's mixed income housing and building the remaining public housing, outreach to the 569 former residents, search for a new GISD superintendent and city police chief, as well as social justice, and prioritizing the needs of the community and the available volunteer time.

EMPLOYMENT

Galveston Living Wage Study Group

The Living Wage Study Group held their monthly meeting at St. Patrick Catholic Church on Thursday, Jan. 28th from 6:00-7:30 pm and on Saturday Feb. 20th from 10:30-12:00.

Councilmember Pappous and a model Living Wage project

GCI leader Steve McIntyre reported to the Study Group that on Feb. 18th he was contacted by Galveston city councilmember Norman Pappous, along with Heber Taylor, Michael Smith, and Leonard Woolsey, about an idea Pappous had to help the public better understand the economic relationship of low wage workers and their employers and the government subsidies provided low wage workers so that the employers can continue paying low wages. McIntyre met with Pappous on February 22nd where the details of a demonstration project were discussed.

GCI Employer Survey

It was reported at the November Study Group meeting that there were 129 surveys in the GCI database and that it would be best to have 500 in the database before making any type of public statement. At subsequent meetings there was discussion about modifying the survey to make it more user friendly. It was suggested the print size be doubled, number of questions be cut from 15 to 8, and the questions be altered to multiple choice or yes/no. Suggested changes were circulated but there was no final decision.

² 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 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, Gulf Coast Homeless Coalition, LULAC Galveston Council 22270.

Sanitation Department

The Study Group's ongoing effort opposing the move to eliminate the requirement in the Galveston City Charter to hold an election referendum before the city can attempt to privatize the Sanitation Department apparently succeeded. After several members of the Study Group (who are also members of the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations) met with members of the Charter Review committee and City Council, the Charter Review Committee ranked eliminating the need for a referendum election as #9 of the 10 items the Committee recommended to the City Council for the upcoming May ballot. The City Council then added more items to the list of possible ballot issues and ranked them all again. At the City Council work session on January 28th, the City Council staff distributed a survey of the councilmembers preferences that indicated placing the elimination of the Sanitation Department referendum election on the upcoming May 7th ballot was #31 of 32. Since the Council and the acting city attorney repeatedly stated they anticipated only about 10 items on the May ballot, it was clear the effort to make it easier to privatize the Sanitation Department had died.

DEMOCRACY

NAACP announced it would be holding a candidate forum prior to the city council election on May 7th.

GCI leader Cornelia Banks announced to members of the community that she would be running for election in District 1 against Tarris Woods.

DISASTER RECOVERY and HOUSING

Infrastructure – Northside Development

On January 8th John Henneberger and Maddie Sloan met with the CO to discuss development on the Northside. The CO's scheduled meeting with Mayor Yarbrough on Jan 19th was later cancelled to allow for additional information and discussion. The meeting was not rescheduled.

Mixed Income Housing & Public Housing

On January 27th the Austin Advocates (Texas Appleseed and Texas Low Income Housing Information Service) attorney sent a letter to HUD Secretary Castro expressing deep concern about any further delay in the one-for-one replacement of the 569 public housing units destroyed by Hurricane Ike.



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