



Mailing Address:
Gulf Coast Interfaith
c/o St. Patrick's Catholic Church
1010 - 35th Street
Galveston, Texas 77550
Contact Telephone: 409 939-8017
Email: info@gulfcoastinterfaith.org
Web-Site: www.gulfcoastinterfaith.org

Annual Summary Report 2010



Annual Summary Report 2010

CREATING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Gulf Coast Interfaith (GCI) accomplished a great deal in 2010. As in 2009, GCI was compelled to forgo work in the key areas of healthcare, employment and education, and focus all its efforts on working within our democracy to address disaster recovery and housing. We are proud to say many steps were taken to advance the recovery and opportunities for the residents of the city of Galveston and Galveston County. 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.

We have maintained our relationship and attended meetings of Houston IAF affiliate - The Metropolitan Organization. IAF organizations are basically broad-based, multi-issue, non-partisan organizations of institutions that advocate for the empowerment and leadership of individuals through a democratic process. GCI remains a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and tries to follow the IAF approach to providing assistance, empowerment, advocacy, and leadership in the community to achieve social change.

An important part of our community organizing effort is educating the public. We have been fortunate to receive positive media coverage over the years in the Houston Chronicle, Galveston County Daily News, Guidry News Service and The Texas Observer. These articles can be found on our website.

With the efforts of many, our hard work and passion for social justice and community empowerment continued in 2010.

DISASTER RECOVERY AND HOUSING

Housing Recovery Committee

GCI leader Laura Murrell has served with Chula Sanchez as co-chairs of Galveston's Hurricane Ike Housing Recovery Committee since it was formed after Hurricane Ike. During 2010 the committee focused on identifying and assisting families in participating in Round 1 recovery efforts for home owners. Round 2 will come in late 2012 or 2013.

Galveston County Recovery Fund

On February 24, 2010 the Galveston County Recovery Fund (GCRF) awarded Gulf Coast Interfaith (GCI) a grant in the amount of \$25,000 to support the lead organizer position. The grant was to be expended over the next six months. The GCRF investment of \$25,000 helped GCI do the work necessary to leverage a dramatic shift of \$300 Million in CDBG funds and an extension and re-allocation of \$14 Million in SSBG funds to organizations serving Galveston County.

Home Restoration through GCRR

During 2009 and early 2010, GCI worked with other community organizations to form and sustain Galveston County Restore and Rebuild (GCRR) as a long term recovery organization capable of repairing homes, dispersing unmet needs funds, and providing case management for families needing assistance in recovery. During that time GCRR partners restored over 225 homes through the generous support of the Galveston County Recovery Fund and other donors. Due to the end of private funding, the last active builders, UMCOR and CRWRC have now concluded their efforts. GCRR also distributed over \$1.2 Million in unmet needs funds to over 1,000 households.

Analysis of Hurricane Recovery CDBG Funding

GCI repeatedly analyzed and disseminated our analysis of state and local proposals for the division and use of over \$3.2 Billion in Community Development Block Grant funds and Social Service Block Grant funds for disaster recovery. So far, Galveston and Galveston County have been allocated about \$1 Billion in CDBG funds and \$35 Million in SSBG funds. Over 56% of the CDBG funds will be used to assist about 3,000 families in restoring their homes. GCI worked very closely with Texas Low Income Housing and Information Service (TLIHIS) and Texas Appleseed to challenge the state of Texas' "weather model" allocation methodology.

From February through May, 2010 the GCI lead organizer and leaders organized themselves to participate in public hearings and meet with state, local and federal officials. Early in the year, the Texas Department of Rural Affairs issued a revised plan which made some of the changes GCI was pushing, but TDRA continued to cling to use of the "weather model" and GCI continued to critique that model in the press and to elected officials. Our leaders also traveled to Austin on numerous occasions to meet with Mike Gerber and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs to fight against the "weather model" or to fight for rules that helped cities recover.

Result of our advocacy around CDBG funding

Both TLIHIS and Texas Appleseed relied on our analysis of the weather model in their administrative complaint to HUD. In May, 2010, as part of the settlement of that complaint, TDRA agreed to abandon the "weather model" and this resulted in an additional \$300 million in CDBG funds being moved from inland communities which received little damage to the H-GAC region. GCI leaders expressed our support for the new allocation funding because about ½ of this additional amount will eventually come to Galveston County. GCI maintains a working relationship with both organizations but did not join them in their administrative challenge on fair housing grounds as we did not feel that was an appropriate role for the organization.

Once the funding was shifted, GCI leaders met with key staff at H-GAC including Jack Steele, Steve Howard and Chuck Wemple to assure that the revised funding model they would use for Round 2 funding would provide adequate funds to Galveston and Galveston County. H-GAC proposed to use essentially the same data and follow the same procedures as the Round 1 allocation, and GCI leaders were satisfied that Galveston and Galveston County would receive our fair share of the Round 2 allocation.

Analysis and Advocacy around SSBG funding

During May through July, GCI began focusing our organizing work to win an extension of time to use SSBG funds that was made necessary because H-GAC and the state were so slow in distributing those funds to local organizations. GCI worked to educate local community organizations about how to seek an extension. GCI also worked through FEMA to identify interested parties in other states and established new relationships with state agencies from Illinois, Missouri, Florida and Louisiana in order to educate a broad group of Congress members about the need an extension. We worked along with Neighborhood Inc. of Houston on a daily basis with the staff of Sen. Cornyn's office to get an extension through the U.S. Senate with key sponsorship by Senators from all 4 of the other states with whom we worked. Due to the fact that bill passed the Senate very late in the night on September 30, when Congress was ready to adjourn for the November elections, a single member of the House was able block its adoption in the House.

Despite the widespread belief that there would be no further opportunity to obtain an extension, GCI leaders continued to press Sen. Cornyn, Rep. Olsen and several members of the House to get the Senate bill passed during the "lame duck session" under a procedure that should require only a 2/3^{ds} support rather than 100% agreement. Rep. Shiela Jackson Lee of Houston became fully engaged in this matter and was able to convince Speaker Pelosi and majority leader Hoyer to bring up our bill during the early days of the lame duck session. The bill passed with overwhelming support and over \$35 million of SSBG funding in Texas was extended for another 12 months.

Following the extension in November, GCI organized the major social service groups to meet with H-GAC to discuss how the extension process would take place. H-GAC agreed to develop a simple procedure for extending those funds and for organizations to seek additional funds from those organizations which had un-expended funds that they did not wish to extend.

Result of GCI Advocacy around SSBG funds

As a result of GCI advocacy to extend SSBG funding, all four of the Galveston County collaborative disaster recovery groups were able to retain much needed SSBG funding. This retained funding totaled about \$11.5 Million. Each of these collaborative groups then applied to receive additional funds from organizations which did not wish to continue their program. These organizations received an additional \$2.5 Million in re-allocated SSBG funds. The total benefit to Galveston County from GCI's work to extend SSBG funds was, therefore, \$14 Million.

Outreach efforts

GCI leaders have been very involved in attempting to inform residents of the opportunity to apply for assistance and how to navigate the difficult application process. In April, GCI leaders held a gathering of over 70 clergy and religious leaders at Barbour's Chapel Baptist in LaMarque along with County Judge Yarbrough, the leadership of the County recovery program and their contractor. This meeting resulted in more clergy actively encouraging their members to apply for assistance from the County program or through one of the case management organizations.

Ongoing Organizing and Advocacy Work of Gulf Coast Interfaith

Despite our successful efforts in 2010, it is necessary for GCI leaders to continue to advocate for policies which will get homes rebuilt so that families can complete their recovery. GCI leaders continue to advocate for the restoration of high quality public housing and the restoration of homes through CDBG and SSBG funds. GCI leaders are continuing to confer with the key leadership of Texas Low Income Housing Information Center and Texas Appleseed.

GCI was prominently involved in an article in The Texas Observer which discussed how dysfunctional the disaster recovery process is in Texas and GCI leaders continue to work at the national and state level to re-organize the system of disaster recovery so it is more effective and expeditious.

IN SUMMARY

Galveston County Interfaith (GCI) was founded in 2006 to organize and strengthen our community. GCI continues to build our local community. Successfully focusing on our collective power and strength we are able to work together on each issue, cross culturally, with many voices as well as across diverse faith traditions. We look forward to working with you again in 2011.

- ***COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS***
- ***DEMOCRACY***
- ***DISASTER RECOVERY AND HOUSING***



GULF COAST INTERFAITH

c/o St. Patrick's Catholic Church, 1010 – 35th Street, Galveston, TX 77550 • Phone: 409 939-8017
info@gulfcoastinterfaith.org • www.gulfcoastinterfaith.org