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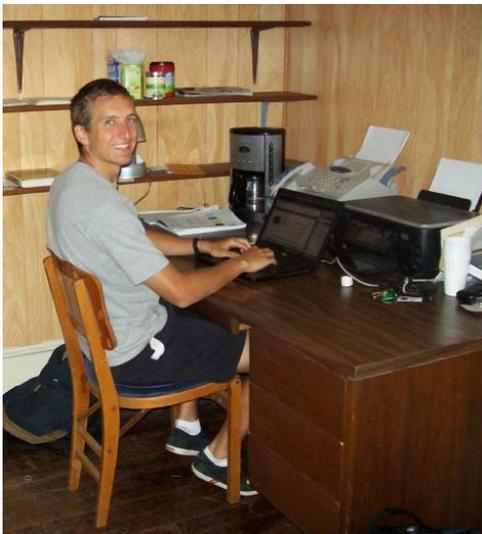
# Annual Summary Report 2011



## Annual Summary Report 2011

### CREATING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Gulf Coast Interfaith (GCI) accomplished a great deal in 2011. Working in the key areas of democracy, disaster recovery, housing, healthcare, employment, education, and Latino Outreach we are proud to say many steps were taken to advance social, economic and health 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.



*Summer Intern – Walker Diebolt*

In April, Steve McIntyre, one of the founding members of GCI, returned to GCI and stepped back into a leadership role. We moved into our office at 2827 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Galveston in July and during the summer and the remainder of the year our administrative interns Walker Diebolt, Bruce Davidson, and Chris Robinson assisted in the office and helped us to continue moving forward. Walker began working for us in May until he left at the end of the summer to return to college with plans to transfer to Cornell (after discussions with GISD teacher and Cornell graduate Laura McIntyre). He was followed by Bruce at the end of the summer. Bruce worked for several weeks before he headed to Egypt for a year of University of Texas graduate work. Chris followed Bruce and worked for GCI for several months performing needed office tasks.

During the course of the summer we solidified a working coalition with local civil rights and community organizations on specific issues. This working relationship eventually evolved into the coalition formally referring to itself as the Galveston County Collaborating Organizations or “CO”.<sup>1</sup>

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<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, Northside Task Force, Gulf Coast Interfaith, Barbour's Chapel Community Development Corporation, NAACP Mainland Branch Unit 6201, NAACP Dickinson/Bay Area Branch Unit 6280, and LULAC Texas City Council 255, and Galveston County Homeless Coalition.



*L-R: Rev. Lewis Little (Mt. Carmel Baptist); Rev. William King (New Hope Baptist);  
Joe Compian (GCI Leader); and Rev. Amos Sowell (Mt. Olive Baptist)*

GCI was successful at conducting 1-on-1 meetings with officials such as GISD Superintendent Larry Nichols, GHA Chairperson Paula Neff, Interim Galveston Police Chief Henry Porretto, Galveston Mayor Joe Jaworski, and City of Galveston Council members Linda Colbert and Chris Gonzales.

We have maintained our relationship and contact with the IEF 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 but uses a hybrid, rather than a strict 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.

On Tuesday June 28th, 2011 over sixty community members and friends of GCI gathered at Moody Methodist Church Fellowship Hall to honor Fr. John Bok, on the eve of his retirement from Holy Family Parish. At the request of Gulf Coast Interfaith, Galveston Mayor Joe Jaworski and the Galveston City Council declared June 28th officially to be "Father John Bok Day" in the City of Galveston. GCI leaders Maria Mercado and Steve McIntyre presented Father Bok with the official proclamation.

The Appreciation Luncheon was the idea of GCI leader Lucille McGaskey from Queen of Peace who wanted GCI to give special thanks to Fr. Bok for his faithful financial and moral support to GCI. The idea was warmly received by the Rev. Ray Pinard of Moody Methodist Church who agreed to host the luncheon and provide luncheon refreshments, plates, cups and cutlery. Special thanks were given to Father Bok by long time GCI supporter Dr. Ahmed Ahmed of the Islamic Community and Rabbi Jimmy Kessler of Temple B'Nai Israel and another original GCI congregation. "It was exciting. I was very excited to see a positive rainbow coalition of interfaith people in one place," said Bilal Abdullah of the Uthmam Ibn Affan Mosque.

With the efforts of many, our hard work and passion for social justice and community empowerment continued in 2011.

## **DEMOCRACY**

GCI became deeply involved in redistricting in 2011. We initially focused on the redistricting of Galveston Independent School District. Our work with other organizations in our GISD effort resulted in the creation of the Collaborating Organizations (CO) and our redistricting efforts against the City of Galveston and then the redistricting of Galveston County commissioners court, justices of the peace, and constables.

### **Galveston Independent School District**

The GISD began preparing its plan for redistricting its seven districts after the 2010 census. It hired noted San Antonio voting rights attorney Rolando Rios and several plans were prepared and presented to the school board at open meetings that were sparsely attended. The school superintendant contacted the President of the NAACP and met with him to discuss any concerns of the African American community. A tentative agreement with the NAACP was reached concerning support for Plan C for adoption and submission to the Department of Justice pursuant to the requirements of Sec. 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Shortly afterwards daily notices were placed in the Galveston County Daily News in English announcing a public hearing concerning Plan C. At the public hearing held on May 18, 2011, Plan C was presented for public comment.

At the May 18<sup>th</sup> public hearing several members of LULAC, GCI and other organizations requested two additional weeks to review the plan. NAACP expressed no objection to additional time being granted to LULAC. Members of the school board pointed out the plan had been made public all week on the website, newspaper, posting and in the Superintendent's office. In the end, the school board voted 5-2 to allow a one week extension until 6:00 pm May 25<sup>th</sup> to allow LULAC, GCI and other organizations along with the general public additional time to review Plan C and to prepare comments and constructive criticism, or decide to support Plan C.

Fortunately, LULAC and GCI did not have to confront the school board pointing out that all the plans available to the public (website, newspaper, and posting) were simply colored sections within lines on a vague map without any statistical information or clear delineation of the district boundaries. Further, the only useful definitive map was in the Superintendent's office and was not publicly known to be available solely through an appointment with the Superintendent. No appointments with the Superintendent were made other than the one sought by the GISD with NAACP.



*L-R Back Row:  
David Miller,  
President NAACP,  
GCI Leaders Joe  
Compian and  
Cornelia Banks,  
Eva Martinez,  
Vice-President  
LULAC*

*Seated: GCI Leader  
Steve McIntyre and  
GISD Superintendent  
Larry Nicols*

Unfortunately, GCI's access to information, data, and a computer mapping program that was needed to have a fair opportunity to review Plan C and to constructively participate in the review and public comment process would not be available until the day after the newly scheduled May 25<sup>th</sup> public hearing and so GCI, LULAC, and others requested that the public hearing be rescheduled for Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup> which was two weeks from the date the census data was made publicly

available. GCI believed allowing the public two weeks access to the same data used by GISD over the previous weeks and months to create Plan C was not an unreasonable request. Another confrontation over the lack of time to review and prepare for a public hearing was avoided when GISD's attorney Rolando Rios, an experienced voting rights attorney who had worked with GCI leaders Steve McIntyre and Maria Luisa Mercado on voting rights issues in West Texas, offered to expedite the delivery of data and supplemental maps that could satisfy LULAC, GCI and other organizations. After the review of the maps, as well as a specially created map reflecting LULAC's concerns, GCI and the organizations concluded that no objection should be filed with the Department of Justice challenging the proposed district lines.

### **City of Galveston**

On May 20, 2011 GCI and the rest of the Collaborating Organizations (CO) sent an objection to the Department of Justice objecting to the City of Galveston's fourth attempt to adopt a 4-2-1 modified at-large redistricting plan because it was retrogressive and diluted minority voting strength and there was a previous objection from the Clinton and Bush Departments of Justice. The Obama Department of Justice notified the City of Galveston on October 3, 2011 that it was not withdrawing the previously existing objection from the Clinton and Bush Departments of Justice.

On October 7, 2011 GCI and the other Collaborating Organizations sent a letter to the City of Galveston advising its legal counsel of our support for the adoption of Map R by the City Council as the preferred map for the upcoming public hearing and for later adoption and submission for clearance to the Department of Justice. The City Council held a workshop on the morning of October 13<sup>th</sup> where its attorney Bob Heath reviewed the process for approving a plan. He suggested the council decide on one map to submit to the public at a public hearing. During the review there was also some discussion of challenging the fourth Department of Justice rejection of Galveston's attempt to adopt a 4-2-1 plan by filing a law suit in federal court in Washington DC. The discussion ended with a decision to not proceed in federal court. There was also a presentation of Map R wherein Mr. Heath described Map R as:

*"...a good plan...has support of the minority community...about as strong a Hispanic district and about as strong of an African-American district that can be drawn...very compact...and would pass muster with the Department of Justice." (Galveston Municipal Television, Workshop Video of October 13, 2011)*

After the presentation of Map R, council members made a slight adjustment to Map R which resulted in shifting about 100 voters that had no statistical significance to the racial composition percentages in any district. Then some council members stated a desire to review Map O. The council spent most of the meeting tinkering with Map O and eventually settled on an altered configuration referred to as Map O2. The council concluded its workshop by then deciding to submit two, rather than the recommended one map, to the public - Map R2 and O2.

On October 24<sup>th</sup> GCI and the CO submitted written testimony to the City Council prior to the scheduled October 27<sup>th</sup> public hearing. The five page letter concluded by saying:

*“We agree with the Department of Justice that under the existing method of election, Latino/African-American voters currently have the ability to elect a candidate of choice in three of the six single-member districts. We believe, in contrast, this ability would only exist in two of six districts under the proposed Map O2. This is the same prohibited retrogression in violation of Section 5 that the Department of Justice rejected ten days before the City Council work session that created Map O2.*

*We believe Map R2 best reflects the roughly 50% split between Anglos and Latino/African-Americans by creating three districts where Latino/African-Americans have an ability to elect a candidate of choice. We believe it is a fair map for all the reasons articulated by Mr. Heath during the City Council work session on October 13, 2011. Further, we believe Map R2 is the only map presented to the public for consideration that can be submitted without objection and be approved by the Department of Justice.*

*We believe Map R2 is the best map for the City of Galveston and encourage the City Council to adopt it for submission for clearance to the Department of Justice.”*

The City Council voted 4-3 to send Map R2 to the Department of Justice and no objection was filed by GCI and the CO.

### **Galveston County Commissioners Court**

Prior to Galveston County’s October 16, 2011 submission of its proposed map to redistrict the Commissioners Court to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), public hearings had been held where a significant portion of the public expressed their concern about the fairness of the various proposed maps and the process. During the process the lone minority commissioner on the Commissioners Court submitted a map for the Commissioners Court. At the final hearing an alternate new map was suddenly submitted, discussed and adopted with a 3-2 vote along partisan political lines. The map was eventually presented to the DOJ and at the same time a law suit was filed by Galveston County in United States District Court (USDC) in Washington DC. Since the late presentation of the map to the DOJ created time constraints and problems for potential candidates, elected Democratic public officials from Galveston County filed a lawsuit in USDC in Galveston, Texas. A court hearing was held on November 21, 2011 and an order issued shortly thereafter. Tea Party/Republican residents of Galveston County intervened in the Galveston USDC case and additional hearings were scheduled to review possible interim maps. On November 22, 2011, the Collaborating Organizations sent a letter to the Department of Justice objecting to Galveston County’s proposed redistricting map that had been submitted on October 16, 2011. The CO submitted a supplemental objection on November 29<sup>th</sup> along with our proposed map that would create a second minority impact district in Galveston County. Another court hearing for an interim map was scheduled for March 23, 2012.



*L-R: Steven Holmes, Galveston County Commissioner, Derrick Rose, Precinct 3 Constable, GCI Leaders Anne McLaughlin, Steve McIntyre, Pat Toliver and Laura Murrell*

### **Galveston County Justices of the Peace and Constables**

Public hearings were held prior to Galveston County's submission of the proposed Justice of the Peace map to the DOJ on October 16, 2011. A significant portion of the public expressed their concern about the fairness of the Commissioners Court map and the process and raised other questions. Many complained about the reduction of the number of judges and constables. At the final public hearing a Justice of the Peace and Constable map was adopted with a 3-2 vote along partisan political lines. The map was eventually presented to the Department of Justice and at the same time a law suit was filed by Galveston County in USDC in Washington DC. Since the late presentation of the map to the DOJ created time constraints and problems for potential candidates elected Democratic public officials from Galveston County filed a lawsuit in USDC in Galveston, Texas. A hearing was held on November 21, 2011 and an order issued shortly thereafter.

On November 22, 2011 the Collaborating Organizations sent an objection to the Department of Justice objecting to Galveston County's proposed Justice of the Peace and Constable redistricting map.

Tea Party/Republican residents of Galveston County intervened in the Galveston USDC case and additional hearings were scheduled to review possible interim maps. Along the way the Department of Justice requested additional information from Galveston County.

## **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 and 2011 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.

### **SSBG**

Joe Compian organized a Social Service Block Grant celebration and discussion for September 13<sup>th</sup> at the Galveston Convention Center that was hosted by UTMB's Ben Raimer. It was very well attended by all the social service organizations that benefited from the additional \$14,000,000 from GCI's advocacy in 2010 that helped Galveston County recover from Hurricane Ike.

### **FHAST**

FHAST is a form to help jurisdictions applying for disaster CDBG funds perform assessments of their impediments to fair housing choices, plan actions to address identified impediments, and communicate their plans to the State of Texas and HUD. GCI leader Cornelia Harris Banks of Reedy Chapel Church was invited to join the City of Galveston FHAST Working Group. GCI leader Joe Compian of Holy Family Church joined the Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments FHAST working group.

### **Ike Round 1 Recovery**

GCI and CO testified at Galveston County, COG and HGAC hearings about problems with Ike Round 1 recovery.

### **569**

GCI and the CO also participated in numerous hearings and meetings concerning the rebuilding of GHA's 569 and mixed income housing.



*GCI's Cornelia Banks and Laura Murrell with Leon Phillips of Galveston County Coalition for Justice at a press conference.*

GCI was invited to a private meeting with Assistant HUD Secretary Mercedes Marquez on April 29<sup>th</sup>. GCI leaders Joe Compian, Cornelia Banks, and Laura Murrell joined Sue Johnson and David Miller of the Galveston Chapter of the NAACP at the meeting with Assistant Secretary Marquez. Assistant Secretary Marquez oversees the administration of Disaster CDBG funds for Hurricane Ike. GCI members conveyed stories about challenges faced by citizens seeking City and County CDBG funds to repair or rebuild their homes damaged by Hurricane Ike. The Assistant Secretary applauded the collaborative efforts of the CO and asked that we keep in contact with her and her staff in writing on any issues faced by citizens seeking Disaster CDBG funds. She also confirmed her continued support to fund the reconstruction of 569 units of public housing in the City of Galveston.

### **Jack Johnson Statue**

At the Galveston Housing Authority Board Meeting of June 27th, Gulf Coast Interfaith requested that the GHA Board and a local Homeowner's Association avoid action that may be perceived as discriminatory. The Association had asked the GHA Board to remove a wood oak carving, like the many that are found on Galveston Island, of the first African American heavyweight champion boxer and Galveston BOI Jack Johnson. The Association alleged that the wood tree carving was creating a traffic hazard as a result of the numerous persons visiting the carving. Subsequently, after discussions with residents of the Oaks Community, it was determined that there was no traffic hazard and only 2 of 21 homeowners objected to the Jack Johnson statute. GCI joined with the Galveston Unit of the NAACP in asking the Board to focus on post Ike reconstruction issues affecting the Oaks Community and to refrain from moving the Jack Johnson Statute.

## HEALTHCARE

### Health Care Access

The Cancer Coalition of Galveston County was created in 2006 as a requirement for a grant from the National Cancer Institute to UTMB. This community group's task was to decide on the most important issues to address. One of the first projects involved videotaped interviews with low income patients and social service providers. The interviews showed there were significant problems with access to care in Galveston County. In order to get more information, Galveston area hospitals and clinics were surveyed using a template from the community health care advocacy organization, Community Catalyst. The survey projects have been called "Free Care Monitoring Projects" by Community Catalyst. Members of Gulf Coast Interfaith joined with members of the Monitoring Project to help ensure adequate assistance to complete the surveys. After the survey and additional research was completed, a report was provided to the hospitals and clinics and to the public in December, 2009. The title of the report is "Clearing the Fog: Achieving Reasonable Public Disclosure of Available Free and Reduced Cost Health Care in Galveston County, Texas." It is available at the GCI website.

### CLEARING THE FOG

Achieving Reasonable Public Disclosure of  
Available Free and Reduced Cost Health Care  
in Galveston County, Texas

Many members of the Cancer Coalition left Galveston as a result of Hurricane Ike. The remaining members of the Free Care Monitoring Project have continued working with GCI to improve access to care for low income residents by ensuring area hospitals and providers have:

1. A publicly available written charity care and financial assistance policy.
2. A policy that is applied consistently and fairly.
3. Increased transparency and accountability in the charity care and financial assistance process and funding.

Since the release of the 2009 report, members of the Project and GCI have been conducting meetings designed to educate the public and professionals about the problems in Galveston County. This education process has often centered on UTMB since it has been the historic prime provider of medical care to the poor in Galveston County. GCI and Free Care Monitoring Project met with Lone Star Legal Aid staff to discuss UTMB and the Indigent Health Care Act. During the summer GCI leaders Compian and McIntyre joined Free Care Monitoring Project leader Merle Lenihan in a trip to Austin to meet with Texas Legal Services Center staff. As a part of the effort to educate the public, GCI and Project members published an update to the "Clearing the Fog" report in December of 2011. Information gathered on problems related to access to care since the original report is included in the update.

## UTMB

The first meeting with UTMB staff occurred in December 2011. The meeting was mainly concerned with the lack of a publicly available charity care and financial assistance policy that would allow any member of the public to know if they are eligible for free or reduced cost care.



*Meeting with Texas Legal Services Center staff concerning access to Health Care.*

After the publication of articles about UTMB in the Houston Chronicle, Galveston County Daily News, and Texas Observer, a meeting between UTMB administration officials and leaders from GCI and the Project was scheduled for January 19, 2012.

## Galveston County Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention

GCI leader Steve McIntyre continued attending bi-monthly meetings of the Galveston County Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Task Force.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Sec. 3

Section 3 requires any agency, developer, or contractor that receives HUD funds over \$200,000 to the “greatest extent feasible” employ individuals and/or businesses that are public housing recipients or low to very low income.



*Collaborating Organizations meet with GHA Chair Paula Neff  
L. Clockwise: Pat Toliver, Paula Neff, Willna Gatson, Leon Phillips, David Miller, Laura Murrell.*

The CO worked with Texas Low Income Housing and Information Service staff to create a model Section 3 policy for GHA. Joe Compian presented a power point on the requirements of HUD Section 3 on disaster CDBG Round 2 projects at the June 23<sup>rd</sup> GCI meeting at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church in Galveston. Our members testified at hearings about the need for a strong Section 3 policy in Galveston. GCI leader Laura Murrell and the Collaborating Organization members continued meeting with Galveston Housing Authority to improve the federally mandated Section 3 policy.

### Wage Theft

During the Summer GCI assisted workers living at the Salvation Army who did day labor on the west end cleaning houses in obtaining some of their wages after a wage theft incident.

## EDUCATION

### School Discipline

GCI and the CO continued to consider problems with school discipline and the long range effects of maintaining a zero-tolerance policy. Texas Appleseed, an Austin based organization GCI works closely with, produced a well researched report in 2009 about the criminalization of school discipline and the Texas school-to-prison pipeline that reflects our concerns. We had several meetings with Supt. Nichols concerning GISD policy, employment issues, and the budget.

## LATINO OUTREACH

### Spanish Translation

GCI testified at an HGAC hearing for needed translation of all Ike recovery documents into Spanish and Vietnamese.

GCI filed a written objection with the Galveston Housing Authority and at a November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting with interim GHA Director Mona Parguson persuaded GHA to cancel its previously scheduled Sec. 8 registration and to not reschedule it until after it provided legal notices in Spanish of the proposed Sec. 8 registration and to translate other relevant GHA documents into Spanish.

## IN SUMMARY

Gulf Coast Interfaith (GCI) was founded in 2004 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 2012.

- **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**
  - **DEMOCRACY**
  - **DISASTER RECOVERY AND HOUSING**
  - **HEALTHCARE**
  - **EMPLOYMENT**
  - **EDUCATION**
  - **LATINO OUTREACH**
-



*Fr. John Bock, Fr. E.J. Stein, Mrs. Virginia Compian, Fr. Maynard Tetrault, and Fr. John Paul Flajole*



## **GULF COAST INTERFAITH**

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