

FCRPCV 2017 SIGNATURE PROJECT: SUPPORT “THE 4th
MULTICULTURAL EVENT” ORGANIZED BY POWR.
SUMMARY
PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTIVITIES FOR 2018

We started our planning for “working with the refugees “in January at our Board Retreat hosted by Jan Miller, our President.

Out of those discussions we established our goal to create a signature project that would aid refugees and be consistent with the third goal of Peace Corps.

Our chairperson was Bernadette Miron. She formed a committee and a survey was conducted. The Committee decided to pursue a multi-cultural dinner of some kind.

Fortunately for FCRPCV, we had two of our members, Michelle Karolak, who is Director of the Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program, and Frances Luna who works in that program.

Michelle and Frances put us in contact with Ja Htu Bu Sarah Maley, who, for the past three years, has organized, on behalf of the Refugee Resettlement Program, an event called Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees, POWR.

This Multicultural event has been hosted by different parishes in the St. Augustine Diocese. Sarah had a 12- 16 person committee, of former refugees, like herself, in place for the last three years. In March, Bernadette & Rosemary Calhoon Takacs, were invited to join their monthly meetings to see what role FCRPCV could play. At that first meeting a challenge was delivered: “North Americans buy tickets, but they never attend, we think they are afraid of us”.

When pressed in that meeting as to what FCRPCV could do to help, besides buying tickets and attending, the committee agreed that FCRPCV could provide a dessert of some kind. After discussion, it was agreed chocolate chip cookies would be suitable. As to how many, the number 1000 was suggested. So that is how FCRPCV got in the business of providing 1000 chocolate chip cookies for the 4th Multicultural event, on July 30, 2017, at Christ the King Parish, on Arlington Road in Jacksonville Florida.

From March to June the Committee worked to address several problems:

Who will buy tickets and can we raise \$1,000.?

-Over 31 persons bought tickets, including participants in our first happy Hour in St. Augustine. Total cash contribution from FCRPCV was \$964. And non-cash contribution was reported at \$1,228 for a total of \$2,192.

-How to prepare and bake 1000 cookies?

Tom Bliss searched out the best solution, COSTCO will sell you a box of 334 premade cookies which just have to be baked.

-What package should we use and how many to a package?

Bernadette in consultation with members of the committee settled on a Dollar Store cellophane package used for party favors, that could hold 2 cookies. Tom printed up the FCRPCV logo with a caption "From your friends at FCRPCV" which was pasted on the cellophane package.

-How and where do we assemble the packages?

Participants in the May 6 potluck provided the man and woman power.

-Where do we bake 1000 cookies and who will put them in the packages?

-By June we had all the logistics worked out except this one. Helen Covington attended the June POWR Committee meeting, and decided the oven at CTK parish Hall would be more than suitable

for baking and assembling by 10 members the day before the event.

It turned out that mother nature decided to send a monsoon to Jacksonville, the morning of Sunday, July 30. Attendance was affected. More importantly the outdoor activities on the 15-acre campus at CTK were moved indoors. FCRPCV turnout was estimated at 20. The program was in two parts.

1. A Mass of Unity in Diversity was offered. Bernadette and husband David, were asked to lead the entrance procession of National Flags. A multinational choir sang and prayers were offered in many languages. Michelle gave a lovely speech after the celebrant spoke.
2. The buffet was rich with food from too many countries to mention. Dancing and singing representing groups in native costume went on for hours.

There is no doubt this 4th Multicultural event was a big hit, from the viewpoint of the POWR Committee. FCRPCV was identified as a sponsor, and our participation in the monthly committee meetings has resulted in good friends. Five of us have attended these meetings. We have built a relationship that will be helpful in the future both personally and institutionally. Our reputation, as a group that can be counted on has been established. The thank you messages from Sarah & Michelle were lovely.

Our members turned out to support this 2017 Signature Project in ways and numbers, that exceeded expectations.

In January, we said we would make this a multi-year event. Clearly, we have made a start, and a recognizable contribution. Now the question for us as a Board, and membership, where do we go from here.

-Immediate feedback from some of the 20 FCRPCV attendees was the desire to have a smaller event that would allow for more personal contact with refugees. How do we proceed?

-We did a good job of collaborating with the Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program. We learned that this kind of activity ‘working with refugees’ cannot be done in isolation of organizations that have much better contacts than us. Are there opportunities we can explore by supporting others’ efforts?

As a Committee we met on September 15 to review the above information. Present were Bernadette, Phil, Jan, David, Nina Frank and Rosemary. Ellen Siler joined us for part of the meeting. No one suggested any changes to the information above.

Our discussion was quite fruitful. We decided we had an inclination to do smaller scale projects that involved our working directly with Refugees. We also would be available to work through and with Catholic Charities and Lutheran Social Services. More importantly we thought we needed a statement of purpose, grounded in The Third Goal of the Peace Corps, to guide our future actions. Here is our statement of purpose for discussion at our Annual General Meeting to guide 2018 activity.

WE AS MEMBERS OF FCRPCV WISH TO PROMOTE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF OTHER PEOPLE ON THE PART OF AMERICANS.

WE WANT TO FACILITATE MEANINGFUL INTERACTION BETWEEN LEGAL ARRIVALS, AND US CITIZENS WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF FOSTERING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, TOLERANCE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE.

We propose for FCRPCV members who want to join this effort that we host small dinners prepared by refugees who would be referred to us by either CC or LSS. One possible way these dinners could work would be along the lines of the following:

1. The refugee family, or the RPCV host, would be given a stipend to purchase food for the dinner which they would prepare.
2. The RPCV host & the refugee family would work out the dinner menu, shopping, travel, etc.
3. The cooking could be done in the RPCV Host kitchen or at the refugee family's kitchen
4. RPCV Host would invite neighbors and or friends for dinner and to hear the refugee's story.

We think that this simple, direct, people to people approach can work. We invite your discussion, and hopefully your participation with us in 2018.

On behalf of the Committee composed of Bernadette Miron, Colombia, Jan Miller, Botswana, Rosemary Takacs, Paraguay & Guatemala, Phil Stantial, Sierra Leone & CD Slovakia, Nina Frank, Moldova and David Miron, Colombia, Thank you