

**Richmonders Involved to Strengthen our Communities**

*"And I called a great assembly..." Nehemiah 5:7b*

# RISC

# Nehemiah Action

**"HE HAS TOLD YOU O MORTAL, WHAT IS GOOD AND WHAT DOES THE LORD  
REQUIRE OF YOU, BUT TO DO JUSTICE, TO LOVE MERCY AND TO WALK HUMBLY  
WITH YOUR GOD" MICAH 6:8**

Monday, May 12, 2008  
Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church  
14 W. Duval Street

### Healthcare Report

- More than 131,000 adults in the Greater Richmond area are uninsured. More than 57,000 of these are low-income, meaning they make under 200% FPL or under 42,000 for a family of 4. Most are working.
- When folks do not have a medical home (primary care doctor) they are left with little choice but going to the ER for treatment- 72% of the emergency department visits by the uninsured in Richmond Area hospitals could have been treated more appropriately in a primary care setting.
- A visit to the primary care doctor is about 10 times cheaper than an emergency room visit.
- Avoidable hospitalizations are also extremely expensive- a study by REACH concluded that 33% of the hospitalizations by in the uninsured were likely preventable if the person had received regular primary care.
- While overwhelmed safety net providers and free clinics serve as many people as they possibly can, many of the remaining 57,000 adults must resort to hospital emergency rooms for treatment or get no medical care at all.
- There are state and federal funds made available to VCU to reimburse their care for the uninsured- last year VCU received 104 million to reimburse these costs
- VCU has a choice about how they provide services to the uninsured- a focus on more primary care helps people get access to the right care at the right time, as well as preventing avoidable expensive ER visits and hospitalizations. By increasing focus on primary care, VCU could care for more people with the same amount of money

RISC Leaders have been in extensive conversation with VCU officials and have met on 4 separate occasions. Three of these meetings were with Sheryl Garland, the Vice President of Community Outreach, who oversees the hospitals programs for the uninsured. RISC leaders also met with Dr. Sheldon Retchin, CEO of VCU Health System. Through these conversations, we made several adjustments to our recommendations.

Dr. Retchin was invited to come to our Action meeting tonight- in writing 6 weeks ago, in person 2 weeks ago and again with a hand delivered letter last week.

Our questions for Dr. Retchin, CEO of VCU Health System:

1. Will you work to maximize existing state and federal funds (DSH dollars) by increasing the focus on primary care for the low-income uninsured so that 15,000 additional primary care visits are done by June 1, 2009?
2. Will you work to create a survey of customer experiences with regards to financial screening in the state indigent care program and act on these results?
3. Will you continue to work with RISC and other key stake holders to develop policies to provide primary care for the low income uninsured in our community?

- According to Sheriff Woody, recidivism in the Richmond City Jail is over 70%, meaning that 7 out of 10 people who leave the jail will come back.
- There are over 1500 people in the Richmond City Jail daily, at a cost to taxpayers of 48 dollars per inmate per day, or 18,000 for an average stay of 12 months
- An estimated 80% of the 1500 inmates, or 1200 have substance abuse issues
- Treatment is cheaper than incarceration and it works

Examples of intensive substance abuse treatment programs:

#### Virginia State Prisons

- Run an intensive drug treatment program with licensed professionals and research-based methods.
- The program costs only run about 1500 per prisoner for this type of treatment.
- The recidivism rate for people who've finished treatment is 33%.

#### Fayette County, Kentucky (Lexington)

- Program is run in the jails with 40 men
- Recidivism rate is 19 %
- The County estimates that every \$1 they spend in treatment saves \$4 in taxpayer costs.

#### Central Florida

- Intensive program in a Central Florida jail has a 26% recidivism rate.
- An outside audit showed they've saved \$10 million dollars in the 5 years of the program
- The local Sheriff estimates that for every one graduate of the program, \$68,000 in taxpayer costs are saved

What we want:

We met with Sheriff Woody on Tuesday, May 6 and discussed these questions and format for asking them.

1. Will you create a Task Force including local experts, the DOC and RISC to create a plan for a new intensive substance abuse treatment program in the jail that includes:
  - a) A plan for funding this program
  - b) Evidence-based treatment methods and tracking, including plans for aftercare
  - c) Space for 60 inmates as a pilot, to be used as basis for developing a comprehensive program in the near future
2. Will you work to have this plan completed by January 1, 2009, with implementation by June 1, 2009?
3. Will you meet with us in 30 days to review plans for the creation of the Task Force?
4. Will you identify and direct staff to meet with us quarterly to review progress towards these goals?

## **What is RISC?**

The mission of Richmonders Involved to Strengthen our Communities (RISC) is to bring together diverse congregations in order to powerfully address the root causes of poverty and injustice in the Greater Richmond area. RISC's member congregations are located throughout the Greater Richmond area and are diverse in their socio-economic, racial, denominational and geographic backgrounds. Congregations in RISC work together to build relationships, listen to common concerns, research community problems, and then to take action to see that systems in the community are held accountable to principles of justice and fairness.

Through coming together we build our power and ability to successfully live out God's call found in the words of Micah 6:8 and the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:23. The scripture states what is required of people of faith, "to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God" (faithfulness). RISC is an organization that focuses on congregations partnering together in the arena of justice ministry while supporting the role of congregations in doing mercy and faithfulness ministry. The model for action that RISC will use is found in the story of Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem in Nehemiah 5:1-13.

## **WHAT IS JUSTICE MINISTRY:**

Many of our congregations have traditionally done a lot of **mercy (charity)** ministries, helping people with direct services such as food, clothing and shelter. Through RISC we are building a **justice** ministry to look at reasons why people get into a place where they need help. Is there enough affordable housing? Are our schools strong? Are there enough drug treatment programs? Justice ministry focuses on ensuring fairness in the larger "systems" that affect our lives such as affordable housing, access to healthcare, transportation, safe neighborhoods, etc.

RISC's strength in numbers and diversity is the source of our ability and power to create important changes in the community. RISC uses an organizing process that has been successfully used in other cities to win education reform, millions of dollars for healthcare and affordable housing, massive improvements in public transportation, and implementation of better drug substance abuse and mental health treatment.

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