

PIMA COUNTY INTERFAITH COUNCIL HELPS LAWMAKERS BUDGET FOR CHANGE

BY BETH GRIFFIN

One Percent for Children and Youth. The idea was exquisitely simple, a straightforward proposal born of anger, frustration, and reflection on the Old Testament Book of Nehemiah.

For 15 years, the Pima County Interfaith Council (PCIC) in Tucson, AZ, has addressed issues that impact families. With grant assistance from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, PCIC tries to keep families at the core of local public policy discussions. Several years ago, PCIC saw many of its hard-earned gains for working families and low-income students jeopardized by changing governmental priorities. Following Nehemiah's example, PCIC studied the situation and decided to rebuild its community, one brick at a time. In 21st-century terms, that meant proposing that the city budget be amended to include an additional 1% in spending devoted exclusively to the needs of children and youth.

Petra Falcon, lead organizer of PCIC, says, "Arizona ranks 49th out of the 50 states in educational investment per pupil, and three out of five children do not have health care. In Tucson, we devised the One Percent for Children and Youth Campaign to help our community get back on the track of being responsive to families." Specifically, the Campaign added \$1.3 million to the city



MOST REVEREND GERALD F. KICANAS, BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF TUCSON, SPEAKS AT AN INTERFAITH RALLY AT THE ARIZONA STATE CAPITOL ORGANIZED BY COMMUNITY AND FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE PIMA COUNTY INTERFAITH COUNCIL.

budget for after-school programs, job training, and jobs for students at risk of dropping out of school. "This is all newly designated money, money that was not previously allocated for children and youth," says Petra. "PCIC connected people with an issue important to them, so they turned out to vote."

PCIC is a multi-ethnic group of approximately 45 member institutions that include churches, synagogues, labor unions, and adult education centers. Petra says that it is now considered the strongest grassroots organization in Arizona. "PCIC has been able to surface issues that most affect families and their quality of life in Pima County," she says. "It is our job as stewards to work toward the common good."

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend of CCHD:



It's a busy time here at the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. This month found us welcoming new college-age interns who came to Washington, DC, for an orientation before beginning work with diocesan CCHD offices and funded groups. Later this month, our committee of bishops will meet in Los Angeles to make grant allocation decisions for the next grant cycle. We will be awarding at least \$9 million in grants for 2006-2007.

Those grants will make a significant difference to community groups like the Pima County Interfaith Council (PCIC) in Tucson, AZ, featured in this newsletter. PCIC members had an idea that, with CCHD funding, made a real difference to the children and youth of the city. Their *One Percent for Children and Youth* campaign is detailed in our featured article.

You, our donors and friends, are creators of real change in low-income communities. Your financial and prayerful support sows the seeds of success. I pray God will reward you for your solidarity with the poor in the United States.

Gratefully yours,

Timothy F. Collins
Executive Director

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can donate your time, talent, and treasure to CCHD in many ways. Consider supporting CCHD with a stock donation or a matching gift from your employer, or remember CCHD in your estate planning. For more information about CCHD, or to discuss ways to support our mission, contact Mary Mencarini Campbell at 202-541-3365 / mcampbell@usccb.org. Visit our website at www.usccb.org/cchd, or explore the state of U.S. poverty, made up of 37 million Americans, at www.povertyusa.org.

WHAT IS CCHD?

Through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholics and friends of CCHD across the country help poor and low-income Americans to help themselves and their communities out of poverty.

Since 1970, the Catholic Campaign has contributed over \$270 million to more than 7,000 low-income-led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods. CCHD requires that projects develop community leadership and participation so that their solutions to poverty will be long-lasting and effective, and so that CCHD's investment in people will help break the cycle of poverty. CCHD also educates Catholics about the causes of poverty and seeks to build solidarity between poor and non-poor persons.

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Catholics Called to Act Together as One Human Family

The institutional base of the organization is strengthened significantly by the leadership of Tucson Bishop Gerald Kicanas, according to Petra. “Bishop Kicanas is right out in front,” she says. “He is a big proponent of *Faithful Citizenship*, the U.S. bishops’ document that promotes voter and public participation. He has helped PCIC interpret the documents of the U.S. bishops, like *Faithful Citizenship* and *Welcoming the Stranger*, and programs like *Just Faith* and the *Justice for Immigrants Campaign* and bring them to life.”

Petra was a member of her parish council in Phoenix in 1988 when her pastor asked her to get involved with the youth there. “There was violence, death, and gang activity in the barrios because we, as a community, weren’t paying enough attention to the kids,” explains the mother of five. “The pastor identified people in the community who might pursue an opportunity, and we ended up getting a youth center built right across the street from the church.”

In Tucson, almost sixteen years later, Petra says that the challenge for PCIC is to take risks, be “intentional,” and act systematically to create the will to keep the needs of families at the forefront of

“It is our job as stewards to work toward the common good.”

—Petra Falcon



PETRA FALCON WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE SUCCESS OF PCIC'S ONE PERCENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH CAMPAIGN. HERE SHE CELEBRATES THE ORGANIZATION'S QUINCEANERO (15-YEAR ANNIVERSARY).

the political agenda. “We identified new leaders through the One Percent campaign. Our organizing is about investing in the development of people to engage in public life in a meaningful way,” says Petra. “We are building our broad-based, value-driven organization to focus on the well-being of families, while reacting to things that are happening on both the local and national levels.”

With the success of the One Percent for Children and Youth initiative, PCIC will now focus on holding the city accountable for implementing the programs and will help identify families who need them. “All organizing is reorganizing,” she says. “We have lots of energy and a great opportunity to listen to the families again.”



After a decade of decline, the proportion of children living in low-income families is rising again, a trend that began in 2000.

National Center for Children in Poverty

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Thirteen million American children live in poverty. That's one in six. Children represent 35.2 percent of all Americans living in poverty, yet they comprise only 25.2 percent of the total population. Community-based organizations all across America are working tirelessly to change these statistics. In 2005, CCHD granted \$9 million to over 300 community organizations that are finding permanent solutions to poverty.

MEET BARBIE URIAS: A DECADE OF DEVOTION TO THE COMMON GOOD

BY BETH GRIFFIN

As a child, Barbie Urias crossed town to visit her grandmother in a hardscrabble South Tucson neighborhood. When she ended up moving there ten years ago, as a struggling single mother of seven children, she was appalled at the deterioration of the area. The impoverished area was rife with drugs and crime. “The first week we were there, a prostitute was shot in our alley,” Barbie recalls. “The next week, a man was murdered.”

Barbie’s parish, Santa Cruz, called a meeting of local officials and parishioners to brainstorm solutions. “I didn’t even know it was happening, but they were able to get federal funds to clean up the neighborhood and get counseling, support, and other jobs for the prostitutes,” she says. “It turned out that the leader of the group was the man in the pew next to mine at daily Mass. I was impressed that my church took the lead.”

Santa Cruz parish is an active member of the Pima County Interfaith Council (PCIC), which receives funds from CCHD. It’s also one of the poorest parishes in Tucson, according to Barbie, but its members are among the most active in PCIC. “The great thing about PCIC is that you may be one small person, but all these little people can make a big difference when we work together and it’s a right-on feeling when it’s done,” she says.

Barbie’s contribution to PCIC is speaking in public from her own experience. “I speak for the people. I am the voice for the single parents, the workers, the Native



Americans, people seeking a livable wage—and I’m pretty good at it, sometimes.” When she addresses the livable wage issue, for example, she describes her struggle to get surgery for her child, who was in danger of going


deaf from a brain tumor. “The Indian Health Service and the State Health program denied the surgery because he wasn’t actually deaf yet. It wasn’t until I was able to get a living wage job with medical benefits that he was able to have the surgery.” Barbie’s son is now a healthy, self-supporting young man.

Acting on Faith

For Barbie, participation in PCIC is an act of faith. “The Holy Spirit gives you gifts and you have to *do* something with them. You don’t let them go dormant,” she explains. “You go to church, you get the Word of God, and you try to look out for one another. You can’t put your religion on a shelf and be a pew-warmer.”

But it has been a huge challenge for her. “When you’re with PCIC, you’re either accepted in your community or treated like the plague,” she says. “When some people see a religious person get involved in public life, they get very uncomfortable.” That discomfort has caused employment problems for Barbie. “Some supervisors have a hard time dealing with my involvement,” she says, “It’s hard to find people of justice, people who don’t have a ‘How dare you live your faith?’ attitude.”

Barbie has enjoyed some direct benefits of her involvement with PCIC. Her neighborhood is now safe enough that she bicycles to and from her 12:00-9:00 p.m. job. Her children, while not active in PCIC, are more open to talking about issues they see on the news. Barbie says, “If they don’t go into public life, they’ll be leaders in their own way.”

Barbie describes PCIC as a team effort. “We work together. We make an agenda and we help and critique one another.” There’s no room for pew-warmers. 

WHERE’S MY MONEY GOING?

All CCHD funds received are used solely for the support of CCHD’s anti-poverty mission. CCHD abides by the charitable standards set by a leading donor advisory service. Our funds are divided as follows: 89% is assigned to CCHD’s core program mission of community empowerment, economic development, education programs, and supporting services; 3% is allocated to coordinate the annual appeal; and 8% is assigned to various administrative costs. We thank you for helping to break the cycle of poverty through your ongoing support for CCHD.