

the **Anti-Hunger Advocate**

October 2009

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801-364-7765

Word from AHAC Board co-chair: Come to the 2009 poverty summit!

By Lou Anne Stevenson

Hi, folks! I want to invite and encourage everyone to come to our annual poverty summit on Saturday, October 3 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral (231 E 100 S), Salt Lake City. It should be good! It will be exciting hearing from our guest speaker Mayor Peter Corroon and learning his stance on the poverty issues that we are working on. I am looking forward to getting more information on who to contact on these issues.

One year we staged a debate between two candidates on an issue. The

poverty summit is a little different each year. I really like hearing from the speakers and getting deeper insight on the issues and learning more of what I can do about it. It helps to have more in-depth understanding of what I am dealing with.

I like getting involved because it gives me more hope that something will change and empowers me to be able to bring badly needed change. I am sure that you all feel the same way or you wouldn't be a part of AHAC.

We look forward to seeing you October 3!



annual poverty summit

Saturday, Oct. 3
9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
St. Mark's Cathedral
231 E 100 S

FREE LUNCH!

Come discuss poverty issues and hear Mayor Corroon, our keynote speaker! Call Sarah at 801-364-7765, ext. 130 with questions.



CENTER: Lou Anne Stevenson, co-chair of the Anti-Hunger Action Committee Board, takes notes during the 2008 poverty summit. Also pictured are AHAC members Ted Gurney, David Hughes, and Don Reifsnider.

Opinion piece on healthcare

AHAC member Gerald Long insists: Debates on healthcare reform should be civil!

In the debate on healthcare, the one thing we must all reject is hatred and thuggery. Sometimes what you are discussing is less important than how you discuss it. The willingness to invade town hall discussions sponsored by our Representatives and Senators, and purposely disrupt them by shouting down anyone--and I do mean anyone--is more important than the issue that spawned these tactics.

Yes, the hecklers were even shouting down speakers who were on the hecklers' side of the issue. And then they shouted down a wheelchair-bound woman suffering from two incurable autoimmune diseases as she tried to share her hardships under the current health care system. No, I am not describing a political event from 1939 Germany. This happened [a little over a month ago] in NJ during a healthcare town hall meeting sponsored by Representative Frank Pallone (D 6th District). (See <http://www.nj.com/ledgerlive/>

[index.ssf/2009/08/health_care_reform_town_hall_n.html](http://www.nj.com/ledgerlive/index.ssf/2009/08/health_care_reform_town_hall_n.html))

Especially charming were the hecklers who shouted things like "it's your fault" as people described their unfortunate or even tragic circumstances.

Let me just say this: "Wow!"

And maybe it's a really good tactic, because decent people may think, *Perhaps the hecklers are right, perhaps they shouldn't have a public option and should be left to the mercy of the insurance companies.* And thus, we are converted to their cause. It's a little Darwinian of me, I know, but it's hard not to want to just let the lemmings jump off the side of the cliff in this case. If only to keep them from showing up at meetings (intended to enhance the democratic process) and monopolizing them with hysteria, rage, and outright thuggery.

I mean, we all come from dysfunctional families, but we leave all that at home when we are practicing our democracy, right? That's why we have voting booths. That's why we use

them for voting and not for target practice. That's why we exercise the class and dignity that keeps us from bullying disabled and sick people confined to wheelchairs.

We know that even if some of these things are technically legal they still are unacceptable, and we refrain from them not because it is required that we do so, but because it is decent. The danger here is no longer that we will lose our opportunity to have affordable healthcare--it's that we will lose our humanity.

If we allow these kinds of tactics to succeed, we might as well bust out the brown shirts and the swastikas right now and start practicing our goose step. This is how it starts.

This is our defining moment, where we decide what kind of government we will have and whether this democracy will survive. The one issue that we can all support is the right to be heard and understood and the obligation to listen and understand. Our freedom depends on it.

How did AHAC members reach out this month?

Each month AHAC members volunteer in some way--maybe an hour a month at a food pantry, maybe an hour a month helping us plan action steps, or simply handing out three AHAC newsletters to neighbors, friends, family, etc. The outreach from these newsletters helps more people know about the group, causing more people to get involved in fighting poverty! So how did AHAC members reach out this month and inform people about the group?

Patty Critchley: "I gave newsletters to a teenager who's disabled, and my home teachers [people who check on your families, invite you to church, etc.], who I hope will be interested in

them and pass them along to their clientele and the people they know. I'm just hoping that the good news will travel on."

Vince Lobato: "I handed newsletters out to my family at the family barbecue, and then I made copies and handed out more. Some of 'em were pretty receptive and said they'd look into it."

Lou Anne Stevenson and Gerald Long submitted written work to the October newsletter.

Laine Gardinier, Alice Griffin, Lou Anne Stevenson, Jason Weeks, and Margo Westley participated in a

healthcare prayer vigil outside Rep. Matheson's office on September 1.

Alice Griffin is giving poverty summit flyers to her writing class, and one to her mom (who works at the Broadway Theatre and can hopefully post it there).

Darla Ball: "I mailed the newsletters to Arlington Hills [the physical therapy center]. I talked to them before I sent it over, and the social worker said she'd like to see it. I told the lady who schedules the social outings about it. I posted the poverty summit flyer downstairs in my apartment building to let people know."