

Raising Funds For Staffing  
Worker center funding, rules are discussed.

By Bonnie Hobbs  
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The slogan of the Centreville Immigration Forum (CIF) is "Bringing neighbors together to create a more peaceful community." One way of doing that is by getting day laborers off the streets and into a worker center where they could more easily find jobs.

"Our mission is broader than just running a worker center," said CIF head Alice Foltz. "It's to bring together the many, diverse elements that make up Centreville."

Currently, though, that center is the group's main focus, as its members try to come up with the money needed to open it. Al Dwoskin, owner of the Centreville Square Shopping Center, agreed to provide the space for the facility and pay its utility bills. But much work remains.

"We've been trying to reach out and sell the idea to the community," said Foltz, at the CIF's Jan. 25 meeting. "We're also doing fund-raising — actively seeking grants and donations — so we can open the center without government money."

Terry Angelotti, who heads the CIF's Finance and Fund-Raising committee, told the group, "It's looking good, but we still have a long way to go." Since the December 2010 meeting, she said, the CIF has received \$6,000 in donations.

Angelotti said a total of \$1,800 came from individuals and the rest from organizations. For example, she said St. Charles Catholic Church in Arlington gave \$1,800 and Blessed Sacrament Church in Alexandria contributed \$1,900. Monetary donations also came from churches in Vienna and Washington, D.C.

THE GROUP IS also holding fund-raisers, the first of each month, at Pizzeria Uno in Manassas and has also applied for several grants. Angelotti also encouraged CIF members to reach out to their friends and family, explain what they're doing and ask for donations. "Sometimes, those one-on-one presentations are the most powerful," she said.



Terry Angelotti discusses dollars and donations.



Laborer Carlos Gonzalez explains the worker center's rules and regulations.



Alice Foltz talks about plans for a future worker center in Centreville.



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Area residents and businesses are also welcome to contribute toward the effort. Checks may be made payable to the CIF's fiscal agent, Virginia Organizing. Write "Centreville Immigration Forum" on the memo line and mail them to Virginia Organizing, P.O. Box 81, Centreville, VA 20122.

Donations may also be made online at [www.virginia-organizing.org](http://www.virginia-organizing.org). Check "donate" and find Centreville Immigration Forum in the list of organizations.

"Our goal to open is \$80,000-\$85,000 to cover the salary of a full-time director, plus expenses," said Angelotti. Foltz also noted that the \$1,800 the CIF received from individuals in the previous month were in very small amounts.

"I think that's incredible," she said. "It shows the large donors that a lot of people support having a worker center here. We've received a total of \$15,000 so far, and every donation helps and makes a difference. We're working on getting nonprofit status but, right now, we're partnering with Virginia Organizing — which is a nonprofit — because it takes care of the details for us."

ANOTHER PRESENTATION at the Jan. 25 meeting came from members of the worker committee creating the rules and regulations for the worker center. Bill Threlkeld of Reston Interfaith ran the worker center in Herndon, and he discussed the proposals so far, while worker Carlos Gonzalez translated his words into Spanish for the day laborers attending the meeting.

The new worker center would be open Monday-Saturday, from 6 a.m.-noon.

Threlkeld said that, in Herndon, workers usually received \$10/hour for their labor, and a minimum of \$40 for four hours of work or less. Here, they're considering \$50 for three hours of work or less.

Regarding the rules of work distribution, the first two or three people arriving at the beginning of the day would be on the employee list in order of attendance, in accordance with their skills.

After that, jobs would be distributed by means of a lottery within each particular skill. However, employers would have the option to choose a worker they already know. The details are still being fine-tuned, though.

"Most employers are in a hurry — they want to take one or two workers and go," said Threlkeld. "They don't want to spend time with a lottery."

And what about people who are at the center for one or two weeks and never win the lottery to get work? And if they do get work, how will we keep track of that?"

Angelotti said she pictured workers being in different lotteries for different jobs, such as construction workers or landscapers. "A person could put his name in as many lotteries as he has the skills for," she said.

"They'd all hold their tickets with their names on them and, when an employer said, for example, 'I need a landscaper,' they'd all throw their tickets in the hat," said Threlkeld. "And if they didn't win that job, they could try again for another job."

WORKERS MUST also be honest about their abilities. "At Herndon, if a person exaggerated his skills, we'd get complaints from the employer saying, for example, 'This guy can't hang drywall, at all,'" said Threlkeld. "Then we'd try to weed out this worker."

A woman attending the meeting asked what the employer's liability would be if a worker is injured on the job. Threlkeld said it depends on the employer's homeowners-insurance policy. But, he added, "It's a gray area and we tried not to get involved in those issues, at all."

The workers also devised rules of conduct, plus punishments for violating them. These rules include no damaging, destroying or stealing the property of fellow day laborers or the center, and no fighting or offensive behavior. Threatening or offensive language directed at other workers, employers or center staff is prohibited, as is showing up under the influence of drugs or alcohol or bringing these substances onto the center's property.

Workers are also banned from standing around the center after it closes, possessing firearms and gambling. They're also forbidden to listen to music loudly unless they're wearing earphones.

Foltz advised the laborers to do some more work on how the lottery system should run. "What's good is all the emphasis on respect, honor, communication and working together," she said. "It's a wonderful document, and I appreciate the spirit of cooperation with which they put that together."

"The worker center's success depends on the positive spirit and good nature of everyone involved," she continued. "We believe some large donations and grants will come through, so we feel that we will be ready to open in the foreseeable future. Therefore, we're going to start looking

for someone interested in running this center as the director."

Foltz said the director should have a college degree and communication skills and speak Spanish as well as English. She also noted that this person should be "someone even-tempered who can keep his or her cool."

Once the center opens, volunteers will also be needed, and Foltz said FACETS has offered to train them "so they'll be clear about what they need to do to work at the center."



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