



Police Respond to Community Action

Last winter, Sandy Fazio from Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, growing weary of the crime and civil disruptions in her neighborhood, joined the church's Local Organizing Ministry. At a meeting in January 2009 with Police Chief Rob Heun, she spoke before a full church and shared her story.

"I live in this neighborhood. I have had my house egged, I have had someone banging down my door in the middle of the night, I have had my tires slashed, but more frustrating than anything... is that every night, when we start with spring break up until the snow hits the ground again, I am awake listening to loud parties and chaos that escalates into very frightening things." Directing Chief Heun's attention to the more than 150 people packed into the church, Fazio said, "We're tired of it...and we are asking for help."

Her statement followed the public testimony of sixteen community members outlining the enormous public safety issues the neighborhood faces. Kristin Munson described how her children have been held captive by the "invisible fence" on her block "brought about by the visible upswing in crime and drug use...The grand opening of the drug house down the street from us slammed our lives shut, holding us hostage."

Kevin Pfeiffer, a 38-year resident of the neighborhood, recited a litany of crimes he has witnessed in the past few years, sadly concluding, "You think [this neighborhood] is completely safe, but it's absolutely out of control."

Mary Rapp's neighbor was brutally murdered in 2007. In her testimony, she told Chief Heun, "You have no idea how much trouble we have gone through to get rid of the noise going on in that house where the murderer used to live. Just because the police went in and got that person, that doesn't mean the problem was solved."

Police Chief Heun addressed the neighborhood concerns, saying, "What I hear is real concern...I hear that people don't necessarily feel that they have been served by their police department." Chief Heun declined to make any specific promises, but said, "What I am hearing here is that you are putting forth reasons why Sand Lake should be a priority... Your comments resonate with me....If something should be a priority, it becomes a priority."




*Sandy Fazio shares her story with Chief Rob Heun, while Pastor Scott Fuller, Beverly Churchill and Frank Box look on.
Photo by Ron Nicholl*

***Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the
ends of the earth.
He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the
powerless.***

~Isaiah 40:28-29

Gloria Dei organizing ministry leaders went on record asking Chief Heun to commit the Community Action Police (CAP) Team to Sand Lake and to assign the Dimond High School Resource Officers to the neighborhood during the summer months.

The response of the Anchorage Police Department was immediate. Within days of the meeting, residents reported an increased presence of police patrolling their neighborhoods, an officer introducing himself to local businesses and leaving his business card, and a swift response to police calls. Within a few weeks, Lt. Gary Gilliam of the CAP Team reported he had spent 40-50 hours "scanning" the neighborhood following the Gloria Dei Lutheran meeting. He noted that crime had indeed increased in Sand Lake, that the neighborhood "needs the services of the CAP team" and that he would support that effort.

For her part, Sandy Fazio has become a believer in community organizing and is sleeping easier. "This police response would never have happened without AFACT and the work of the leaders at Gloria Dei Lutheran. The work has opened up new partnerships with both the police department and the Sand Lake Community Council." 

Alaska Native Families Address Stimulus Funds



Alaska Native leader Gemma Gaudio, standing, poses a question regarding the economic stimulus funds. Seated, left to right, are Susie Delgado, Aimee Aloysius and Loretta Parker. Photo by Ron Nicholl.

While the eruption of Mt. Redoubt quieted Anchorage with a layer of volcanic ash, it did not dampen the passion of Alaska Native families for their children's educational needs. The Alaska Native Organizing Ministry had scheduled the March 29 meeting with Alaska Commissioner of Education, Larry LeDoux, to discuss Governor Palin's position on federal economic stimulus funds for education. The

volcano kept Commissioner LeDoux grounded in Juneau, unable to attend when all flights into Anchorage were cancelled.

Undeterred by Mt. Redoubt, the organizing ministry leaders continued with the meeting in the Commissioner's absence. Carol Beecher, Governor Palin's scheduler, was present to record the proceedings and she agreed to carry the research report, testimony, and clarifying questions to both the Governor and the Commissioner.

The Alaska Native families who stood in St. Anthony Church and testified were united in their belief that education resources must be brought to bear on the needs of Alaska Native students. The families recognized that the economic stimulus funds would provide an opportunity to train teachers to help Alaska Native students succeed.

Lucy Sparck, once an educator in Bethel, testified directly to the need to accept the education stimulus funds. She noted that the state would not see these funds again for a long time, and "it's the responsibility of our legislators to make sure we get that money to help us today."

Retired Anchorage School District teacher Linda Watson attended the meeting with her nieces and nephews. She noted that in the current economy, education has become even more important, and said, "Our school district needs the funding to help our children succeed in the schools and help them become responsible citizens."


Linda Ongtawasruk, formerly of Teller, spoke about her children's transition from rural to urban schools. She praised those gathered, saying, "It's real good to see this kind of activity going on, for my children, because they are the ones going through the transitional changes."

A number of families noted the difficult history of Alaska Native students in the school system. Retired Anchorage School District principal, Carolyn Lyons, shared that the discussion about Alaska Native education has been going on for many years. She suggested that any change be "systemic" in order to be "successful," starting with training the members of the school board.

Sheila Randazzo, mother of four children attending Anchorage schools, pointed out that historically the Alaska Native community has always educated their children, but now the form of education has changed. Now, she said, "It's time for reform."

The importance of the issue was clear when the Chair, Susie Delgado, asked anyone who knew an Alaska Native child who had dropped out, who had not graduated, or who had failed in the school system to stand. There was an audible gasp in the church when nearly every person stood up.

The organizing ministry leaders, and all gathered, were clear that the economic stimulus funds are a one time opportunity, meant not to substitute existing education budgets, but to supplement them for a two-year period.

AFACT leaders will follow up with both Commissioner LeDoux and Governor Palin as decisions are made regarding the stimulus funds. 

"Our Children – All Children"

On March 30, 2009, AFACT families gathered at a press conference at Bethel Chapel to celebrate a Denali KidCare (DKC) regulatory change that will ease the burden on both families and DKC staff. In several meetings with Health and Human Services Commissioner Bill Hogan, leaders had urged that enrollment processes be changed from six-month to 12-month continuous eligibility. Commissioner Hogan agreed, and on April 1 the 12-month continuous eligibility regulation went into effect.

Amber Rodriguez, a mother of six, expressed her appreciation of the regulatory change, noting the burden of reapplying every six month, as well as the burden on staff to process applications every six months. Alaska joins 30 other states that have instituted 12-month continuous eligibility, saving staff time and precious state dollars.

A number of AFACT and community members attended the press conference, which was both a celebration and a call for legislative action on Denali KidCare. Chair Dahna Graham opened the meeting stating "We are gathered both to celebrate the progress made and to lift up once more our research and the testimony of our families to urge further improvements to Denali KidCare."

Sr. Donna Kramer presented AFACT's research on Denali KidCare, which focused on several key issues raised in hundreds of visits with families. Leaders at the press conference urged legislators and the Governor to restore Denali KidCare to its original income eligibility requirement of 200% of federal poverty level (FPL), allow cost-sharing above 200% FPL, avoid an asset test requirement and invest in adequate staffing to process applications in a timely manner.

Annette Alleva, a member of St. Anthony Catholic Church and mother of five, stated that her family had failed to qualify in the past for Denali KidCare because of a "couple hundred dollars" — not enough to purchase private health insurance, but too much to qualify for Denali KidCare. She said that each time one of her children ventures onto the soccer field, she worries that they might get hurt. For many families, she said,

Mayoral Candidates Respond to AFACT

On Sunday, March 15, 2009, nearly 300 AFACT congregation and community members gathered in Central Lutheran Church for AFACT's Mayoral Candidates Forum. AFACT leaders posed questions to mayoral candidates on the issues of public safety, youth recreation, and chronic homelessness. In the April 7 election, the field of 15 candidates was whittled to two by the voters—Eric Croft and Dan Sullivan, the winner to be determined by a run-off election.

Community Oriented Policing—

Since 2004, AFACT has repeatedly raised concerns about public safety, focusing specifically on community oriented policing. At the forum, Sandy Fazio, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, reminded those gathered of the recent meeting on public safety in the Jewel Lake area and the issue of School Resource Officers (SROs) remaining in their neighborhoods during the summer.

In response, Eric Croft voiced his support of SROs remaining in neighborhoods because “they know the kids there, they know the problems...”

Dan Sullivan stated that Anchorage needs more proactive policing and “a zero tolerance policy like Rudy Giuliani did in New York, everything from graffiti to pan handling, it's got to be dealt with immediately, otherwise it grows.” He acknowledged that “SROs working in the community during the summer is a great idea.”

Children's Recreation—

Sharon Stockard, St. Anthony Catholic Church, asked the candidates about accessible, affordable youth recreation. She shared the importance of the Neighborhood PLAY program at St. Anthony's for her family and noted that although the partnership programs at Central Lutheran Church and St. Anthony Parish serve many neighborhood children, AFACT has to fight for funding every year.

Dan Sullivan responded that “[youth recreation] is an issue near and dear to my heart...there should be an opportunity every single day to have good healthy recreation without having to wonder if you have a couple bucks in your pocket...” As for funding, he said that “Campfire and church



Mayoral candidates answer questions posed by AFACT families. Photo by Frank Box.

programs should be a top priority of city grants...Kids come first.”


Eric Croft pointed to his experience and said, “You need a mayor who understands, listens and can target these underserved communities... knowing where the underserved children are and knowing how to bring the resources together so that we can solve these problems.”

Chronic Homelessness—

Kay Gajewski, a leader at Holy Family Cathedral, reminded the candidates of a March 2008 AFACT meeting on chronic homelessness. At that meeting, the community had called for greater coordination on homeless services, increased detox facilities and outreach work, and a new focus on Housing First programs in Anchorage.

Eric Croft supported “housing as a solution for homelessness,” adding that “the Safe Harbor program was even cheaper than what was described there, very effective. I was a big supporter in the Legislature of the funding that got that going.”

Dan Sullivan urged “tough love” and said “It may mean involuntary confinement into a rehabilitation program. We need to make sure we get proven methods, like what was going on at the Clitheroe Center, back up and running and funded again.”


The run-off election between Sullivan and Croft will be held on May 5. 

“Our Children – All Children” continued

increasing the income eligibility level would “...make the difference between peace of mind and constantly worrying what if...”

Ironically, Sarah Weber, scheduled to speak at the press conference, was

home caring for her sick children. Dahna Graham pointed out that Weber, unsure of her status with Denali KidCare, might well be spending the next day in the emergency room, getting medical attention for her children.

In closing the press conference, Dahna Graham said, “We are speaking for our greatest resource, our children—all children.” 

From the Board Chair...



Dear Friends,

With the warmer weather and snow melting so quickly, I hope that you are enjoying the wonders that spring brings. Spring brings hope and an anticipation of summer. Hope is such a powerful word, isn't it? At AFACT, we work with vigilance and hope for a better community. We hope for better education and health care for our children. We hope for a safer community, recreation for our youth, and care and compassion for our neighbors, the homeless among us.

As we strive for a just and better community, I hope that you will join us in this vision by supporting AFACT and keeping those affiliated with AFACT in your prayers. I also hope that you will consider making a financial commitment to AFACT. Our donors believe in our vision, mission and work. Please join us.

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
- Romans 12:12

Susie Delgado
Chair, AFACT

AFACT Member Congregations

Alaska Native Lutheran Church
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church
Anchor Presbyterian Church
Bethel Chapel
Catholic Native Ministry
Central Lutheran Church
Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church
First CME Church
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church
Holy Family Cathedral
Immanuel Presbyterian Church
New Hope Baptist Church
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church
St. Anthony Catholic Church
St. Mark Lutheran Church

For more information contact:
**Anchorage Faith and Action –
Congregations Together**

P. O. Box 143294

Anchorage, AK 99514

907-297-7731

www.anchoragefact.org

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Address Services Requested

Anchorage, AK 99514-3294
P. O. Box 143294

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