

COMMUNITY FORUM FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP, 2015

PUBLIC FORUMS in 2015

- Jan. We Deserve a Fair Share of the Pie (ALICE Report)
- Feb. Raise the Indiana Min. Wage/ Working conditions in Home Health-care
- Mar School to Prison Pipeline - Panel of Experts
- Mar School to Prison Pipeline - Next Steps – Solutions
- April Your Right to Vote, Protect it and Use it
- May Review of 2015 Session of the IN General Assembly (Sen. Broden & Tallian)
- June “Big Ideas” on Economic Policy to Help Working Families
- Aug. Public Meeting on the South Bend City Budget (Karen White, John Murphy)
- Sept. Break the School to Prison Pipeline Forum (full day conference at IUSB)
- Oct. How will we Revive our West Side Neighborhoods
- Nov. What do New Labor Rulings Mean for Area Workers?

***“THROUGH EDUCATION, ORGANIZING, AND ADVOCACY WE INTEND
TO PROMOTE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EQUITY
AND TO ENCOURAGE GREATER PARTICIPATION IN DECISIONS THAT
AFFECT PEOPLE’S LIVES.”***

GOAL: IMPROVED LIVING STANDARDS FOR AREA RESIDENTS

In 2015, the Community Forum actively supported economic justice for working families. We sponsored public discussion on the minimum wage, economic policy to reduce income inequality, and new opportunities for workers to organize unions and to gain decent compensation and greater respect on the job. We have incorporated data from the United Way ALICE document into our efforts for affordable housing and equitable opportunities for quality education and lobbied both State and local government officials about needed policy changes.

GOAL: BREAK THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

Disproportionate discipline practices in the SBCSC and growing national recognition of the social and economic consequences of removing students from classroom instruction led to our major campaign of 2015 – understanding and opposing what is known as the School-to-Prison Pipeline. The Sept. 12 Forum was organized by a large and diverse group of individuals and organizations who are continuing to develop new initiatives to break the pipeline.

GOAL: REVITALIZATION OF SOUTH BEND'S WEST SIDE

Since our founding in May of 2006, a central concern has been the revitalization of the West Side and we continued addressing that concern during 2015. We advocated for increased City resources for West Side neighborhoods as well as a community-based approach, empowering neighbors to save neighborhoods. and opposing policies that would displace current residents.

GOAL: HELP LOW-INCOME TAXPAYERS AND OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

The Community Forum provided one-third of volunteer hours needed to prepare state and federal income taxes for over 3000 taxpayers in a five-county area of Northern Indiana. The average cost of a tax return prepared commercially is \$331. That means that over a million dollars in tax preparation fees were saved by low-income taxpayers using the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program. These taxpayers also received nearly a million dollars in disposable income through state and federal Earned Income Credits. According to researchers at Stanford and the IMF, every dollar reinvested in a local economy would result in an additional 57 cents of economic activity. That's another million. So in addition to providing valuable financial assistance for low-income families, the efforts of our VITA volunteers resulted in about \$3.15 million dollars for our local economy.

ECONOMIC INJUSTICE TAKES MANY FORMS and the Community Forum worked with other community organizations on issues like immigration reform and the federal minimum wage. 2016 will provide many new opportunities to promote *“the development of a just economy that provides equal opportunities for all and enables everyone to obtain a living standard sufficient to sustain life in dignity.”*