



Faith group to meet again

Participants in community dialogues said they wanted to hear from Metro-York.

By JOSEPH MALDONADO
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Nov 19, 2007 — After completing several Open Faith Based Community Dialogues across the county this fall, representatives from various faith based organizations selected their most pressing issue - promoting the value of education.

From the beginning, the goal of the dialogues, which were sponsored by a grant from the York County Community Foundation, was to have people of faith work together to identify issues facing the county.

Then the group was to suggest ways on how their groups could work toward solutions that build a more hospitable place to live.

It was supposed to be the final round of dialogues Sunday evening. But the dozen-or-so representatives who gathered in the downtown offices of the York County Community Foundation agreed that at least one more meeting was in order to discuss the issue.

One of their goals is to support and work with groups already addressing the education issue. In doing so, they hope to reduce redundancies.

In particular, participants want to hear what initiatives are being taken by Metro-York. Like the community dialogue initiative, Metro-York is a collaborative effort of community partners.

Metro-York's stated mission is to improve the county's quality of life, and, like the dialogue members, it sees education as a primary issue.

While the group wants to learn more about Metro-York, members are also preparing to bring ideas of their own to them.

Sally Berry, a Buddhist, said adults must be encouraged to take active roles as youth mentors.

Iris Katz, who is Jewish, said adults must pass on concrete reasons why education is important to the community's young people.

She also said that adults, too, must continue their own education via life skills courses.

The group suggested many ways of accentuating the educational message. Some said it should be filtered down through their leaders.

"We must engage the people of faith to make this matter a higher priority," said Joanne Borders, a Christian.

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Others suggested greater cooperation with state leaders in Harrisburg.

Mark Williams, a member of the Unitarian Universalists, said there needs to be a single school district sharing one tax base.

"I know there will be tremendous opposition," Williams said. "But I cannot think of a straighter way to educational equality."

While the dialogue members have selected education as their most important issue, there are no formal plans of action to address the concern at this time.

On Dec. 2, the group has scheduled another meeting at the offices of the York County Council of Churches. The Rev. Joan Maruskin, council director, said she will seek a speaker from Metro-York to speak at the meeting.

In the meantime, she said, she would send the group a packet of Metro-York's ideas and initiatives. She also encouraged the members to visit the organization's Web site.

Even if a speaker cannot be arranged, Borders said, the Metro-York information that is available will give them plenty to talk about at their next meeting.

"The dialogues should continue on," she said.

CONTACT

For more information on the Open Faith Based

Community Dialogues, call the Council of Churches at 854-9504 or send e-mail to the director, the Rev. Joan Maruskin at jmaruskin@ycccchurches.org . For more information on Metro-York visit <http://www.yorkcounts.org> .

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