



Meeting Minutes

Date: 02-27-2025 **Time:** 3:00 PM

Meeting Called to Order By: Van Roberts

Location: Wayside Center @ 44219 10th St W, Lancaster, CA 93534

Organizations in Attendance

Parents Anonymous, Voices of Our Youth, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Veterans Mental Evaluation Team (VMET), Tarzana Treatment Center, Children's Law Center, Lancaster Police Department

Minutes

Minutes were posted to the VOYCC webpage on the Voices of Our Youth website.

Reports

There are no reports at this time.

Old Business

There was no old business at this time.

New Business

The gathering began with members introducing themselves, with a few unfamiliar faces present.

Van initiated the meeting by prompting each person to share a successful community initiative undertaken by their organization this year.

Alex announced that Parents Anonymous will host their inaugural Parent Resource Event at Sycamores in Palmdale on 02/28/2025, starting at 2:30 pm until 5 pm. Attendees can access resources, enjoy food, and much more at the event.

Kim shared that Lancaster PD is prioritizing community-led policing, with Project Wow targeting troubled areas to provide resources and prayer. The initiative is set to launch next month, welcoming anyone interested to join. Reach out to Kim at kdorris@cityoflancafterca.gov for more information.

Kim also mentioned that they are collaborating with Tammy within the legal system and probation to break the cycle of recidivism.

Deputy Ken mentioned that VMET is prioritizing outreach efforts, with the outreach service team seeking greater community involvement.

Van inquired of Kim how they could eliminate the stigma surrounding the lack of collaboration between the city and sheriff's departments.

Kim emphasized the importance of taking action and collaborating for the community's benefit. She highlighted the common goals we share and the necessity of unity. Kim urged us to join forces and work together towards our shared objectives.

They will also introduce a community mini-grant program expected to start this fall.

She also spoke of a Salvation Army – Moment in Time program that offers a one-time financial grant (ranging from \$300-500) to help with emergency expenses to prevent homelessness.

Additionally, she mentioned the presence of multiple homeless initiatives at the Kensington campus.

Deputy Ken stated that VMET addresses smaller encampments, while the Homeless Services Team handles encampments with over four individual camps.

He mentioned that a major concern in Kensington is the lack of privacy in dorms. Additionally, homeless individuals often prioritize their pets over accepting shelter, caring for their animals better than themselves. Challenges may arise based on the breed of their pets.

Numerous homeless encampments are plagued by issues such as domestic violence, human trafficking, substance abuse, prostitution, and more.

Max and Sarah expressed concern over the prevalence of youth human trafficking cases in the courts. They noted the alarming frequency of such cases involving young victims.

Van posed the query: How can we enhance resource assistance?

Ken emphasized the importance of establishing connections and recommended reaching out to Community Relations Sergeant Carrie Almanza for insights from the Sheriff's perspective.

Kim mentioned that Voices of Our Youth (VOY) has greatly supported Lancaster PD. The organization's assistance has been particularly valuable during late or after-hours calls. Having a readily accessible list of contacts and appropriate times to reach out would be beneficial for the police department.

Van mentioned that the objective is to secure 80-100 vouchers through the fundraising event on March 29, 2025.

He also mentioned that the vouchers provide more than just housing, serving as a comprehensive support system. Participants receive assistance and connections to secure stable housing, along with services to alleviate stress and improve their well-being.

Skip asked if the vouchers were accessible to DCFS. Van clarified that at this time the initiative is currently exclusive to law enforcement.

VOY assumes all responsibility for participants and their behavior. We carefully select program participants, including children, considering potential triggering traumas. Our priority is ensuring a safe and supportive environment for everyone involved.

It has been suggested that there is a need for a more structured environment to support children who require additional supervision.

We must prevent youth from being ensnared in the system and shield them from becoming casualties of a system designed to support them.

Streets to Suites is a program created by Voices of Our Youth. VOY manages the program and seeks partnerships with organizations that can provide resources to participants.

Kim stated that city support hinges on data-driven practices, while Lancaster PD has more flexibility. We assured her that we are introducing new forms for the upcoming voucher cycle, which will monitor various data points for measuring success.

Max inquired about the support needed for the program.

Van informed him that assistance is required with cooking, legal guidance, and accessing resources.

Van also highlighted the significance of the Streets to Suites initiative in supporting parents and alleviating their stress. Additionally, there are occasional opportunities to provide financial assistance to families by covering bill payments.

Van then changed the subject and inquired Kim about the recent youth smash and grabs. She redirected him, suggesting that the Sheriff's department would be better equipped to address that topic.

Van inquired about the types of cases Sarah and Max encounter. Sarah mentioned they handle various cases including domestic violence, sexual abuse, mental health issues, and human trafficking, with significant overlap. Skip noted a rise in case intensity and decreased service quality post-covid, alongside an increase in behavioral issues.

Van mentioned that VOY will organize a school tour to tackle the challenging behaviors of youth. He emphasized the need to retrain school security personnel based on his personal observations.

The upcoming school tour will feature renowned old school rappers DJ Quick, Little Easy, and Crazy Bone who will engage with the youth. Hailing from similar backgrounds, these artists can connect with the youth on a personal level and inspire them through their shared experiences and relatable stories.

Van also mentioned that we have a scheduled meeting with Principal Dunn from Highland High School to address the current challenges they are facing. These challenges include parents engaging in physical altercations with students, brandishing weapons, trespassing by hopping gates, and incidents of riots.

Kim expressed her desire to support in any capacity possible due to her familial connections with youth at Highland High School.

Sarah mentioned that one of their judges is a Highland High School graduate, suggesting they could see if he was open to being involved in some capacity.

Sarah inquired about the number of families we support. Van stated we provide food for 800-1000 families weekly, sometimes more.

Van emphasized our collaborative approach, uniting diverse voices. Our organization fosters unity through arts and entertainment, prioritizing the well-being of individuals and communities. Our name holds no significance; it is the people we serve who truly matter.

Join us on March 29, 2025, at the Wayside Center for our upcoming fundraiser. This event will feature a unique blend of "Honey" and "You Got Served," promising an exciting and memorable experience. Your support will help us support programs like Streets to Suites.

In our recent meeting, we outlined our priorities for the upcoming year. Based on feedback gathered in December, we have identified key focus areas: The topics of focus we identified for this year include engaging with youth, educating parents on the roles of Law Enforcement, providing support to families through services and resources, fostering community engagement, raising awareness of events, addressing homelessness issues, guiding youth behavior, promoting literacy for children, ensuring supervision of custody visits, offering mentoring opportunities, and prioritizing mental health, especially for the youth.

We narrowed down our focus to engaging with youth, supporting families with services, and providing mentoring opportunities. Next steps include setting goals, creating an action plan, tracking progress, and establishing benchmarks for success. We will present detailed breakdowns at the upcoming meeting to finalize our action plan.

Other Information

None to report at this time.

Committee Reports

No reports at this time.

Announcements

No announcements at this time.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned around 5:00 pm.

Next Meeting

Thursday, March 20, 2025, @ Wayside Center @ 44215 10th St W, Lancaster, CA 93534, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.