

Minutes of DFC Advisory Focus on Children Formation Meetings

The shift from the Diversity to the Focus on Children Vision Goals started with conversations at the Friday Market between Joe Murphy and Joelle Dumas, and, separately, with Paul Davis following the August 6, 2018 DFC Meeting when a motion supporting the Bridge Home Concept was adopted.

These conversations resulted in a formal announcement of the shift at the September 9, 2018 DFC meeting.

Since then, several informal advisory meetings – Focus on Children Formation Meetings – were attended by individuals who were invited to help structure the shift in a way that would prepare it for presentation to the Board. This effort resulted in the recent February 11, 2019 DFC Focus on Children Meeting.

Below are the minutes of the above-referenced advisory Focus on Children Formation Meetings, all of which were prepared by Paul Davis:

October 11, 2018

01 Next meeting: Wednesday, October 24, same place/time (EcoleClaire Fontainemain campus, 5:30 - 7:30 PM). All agreed that 2-3 more meetings between that eve and the end of the year would be good to have, as a means of ensuring that we are "up to speed" as 2019 kicks in.

02 We determined that our age-band of interest (ie how old could the kids be) would go from diapered kids up through high school.

03 There was discussion of the CAO, a LA city entity that involved children in its goals/programming - I believe Joe was willing to learn more about its current status.

05 Joelle and others observed that the homeless crisis in LA prompts our additional concern for our children, so that through our caring actions now they can find themselves into sustainable, housed states of life.

06 It was suggested that Taylor Bazley of the councilman's office would be a good contact point for us. Was Joe or Joelle going to contact him soon, or wait til we have a more fully-formed sense of our directions?

07 In terms of further possible contacts for us, and possible next-meeting attendees:

a. Joelle mentioned that she would attempt to reach out to Nicola, youth beach volleyball impresario

b. The Boys and Girls Club of Venice was mentioned - they evidently have an open director position. PD note: I met a staff member of theirs named Jasmin at last night's Venice Chamber event, and she helps run teen afternoon programs. She said she would be happy to come to our meeting so we could talk and learn more about their efforts and how they might complement our thoughts about initial programs for the DFC Children's group. Should I accept her offer?

c. Paul contacted the new "Founding director" of Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences "Equity and Justice Institute", Derric Johnson (bio here: <https://www.xrds.org/page/equity-and-justice/the-crossroads-school-equity--justice-institute/meet-the-director>). I told Derric about our group and our interest in meeting local folks who have an interest that parallels ours, and he was very excited to join us at this next meeting, so we are on his calendar.

d. Paul was going to go by the Venice branch public library and learn more about their free public program for reading aloud to children. I spoke to the children's librarian - Danielle? She loves the program and says they have room for up to 3 additional volunteer readers. The program is city-wide, and called STAR ("Story Telling and Reading"; <https://www.lapl.org/kids/birth-5/star>).She says the program is popular and it could grow. Shall I see if she wants to join us for this coming meeting?

It's YOUR Venice - get involved!

Discussion Forum Committee Advisory FOC Formation Meeting Minutes

1 of 9 - Prepared 2/28/2019

- e. We talked about a program that would set up interested local businesses with 14+ year old interns. Next steps on that front could be discussed with Venice High staff - who was the person who was discussed in that context?
I did meet the principal at a recent chamber event and could try to get him involved. Feedback, please! :)
- f. "Window Between the World" literature was distributed by Joelle - they are looking for a location for their large annual gala (is that right?)
- g. The Venice Skills Center was mentioned. Last night (by coincidence) I met a gentleman named Mark S. Washington, who is assistant principal of operations for the LAUSD's Division of Adult and Career Education at the Venice Skills Center. He is deeply focused on the value of literacy and reading (to/for/by children). He is interested in our programs and I could invite him for the 24th. Seemed like a committed advocate. Please let me know what you think. Joelle, I imagine you know this gentleman - any thoughts?

08. Joelle suggested that her associate Kristen might edit Paul's long and early draft text on our goals. She has now sent that to me, and I will respond to her with thanks tonight and maybe propose a few further adjustments - I'm sure we can share some distilled effort at the upcoming meeting, if not before.

October 24, 2018

NEXT MEETING: Monday, November 5, 2018 (Same time and location)

Attending

Community Members: Medina Goodman (parent and creative industries placement executive), Derric Johnson (Founding Director, Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences Equity and Justice Institute), Mark Washington (LAUSD, Assistant Principal of Operations, Division of Adult & Career Education, Venice Skills Center Service Area)
Meeting Organizers: Joelle Dumas (Director of Ecole Claire Fontaine), Joe Murphy (VNC Discussion Forum Committee Chair), Paul Davis (parent and architect)

Note: the following minutes are a distillation of free-form discussions held, and also feature points of discussion introduced by attendees in follow-up correspondence.

01 Visitors from the community were welcomed and introduced.

02 Joe, Joelle and Paul described the DFC, Joe's initial impetus in directing the committee's focus toward children's issues in Venice (to paraphrase: "If you want to get something right in a city, design it from the perspective of children"), Joelle's sense that listening to children, learning from them, and acting generously on their behalf can accomplish tremendous things in our society..

03 The group's goals relative to the VNC were reviewed – our plan is to approach them in the coming New Year, make a presentation as to our raison d'etre and goals, and seek their support (in the form of a motion) for our activities.

04 The committee's "draft framework" was reviewed – this written passage is intended to summarize the group's motivating force, goals, and proposed methods and programs for realizing them. In a subsequent discussion, the meeting organizers agreed that reaching consensus on the document prior to our next meeting would be valuable. Joelle and Joe will attempt to share some feedback on Karen's recent draft.

05 Under the broad topic of "Programs and Possibilities", opportunities for contributing to the strength of the Venice community (through initiatives focusing on local youth) were discussed.

Points Introduced by Derric Johnson (DJ)

- With the theme of encouraging interaction between kids from different schools, neighborhoods, and socio-economic backgrounds, DJ described his involvements with schoolkids who have benefitted from collaboration in programs with kids in detention here in SoCal (the benefit was two-way, of course).
- Derric requested a survey or some type of documentation of need (needs assessment) re: current condition of children in the Venice area and community assets available
- He requested a galvanized list/group of community agencies that focus on issues of consequence in the Venice community
- Discussion Forum Committee Plan = Solicitation of the VNC re: a vision/goal focused on children
 - What do we/community/children care about?
 - Defining a vision for the group
 - Between now and the New Year, begin to garner “pre-request” support from VNC to adopt a motion focused on children
- The group needs to centralize collective action agreements with other local organizations who pledge to support the intended effort (prior to meeting with VNC) as a united voice behind a movement
- The target demographic for programming was identified as 0-18 years of age
- DJ mentioned potential issues to address: Youth Homelessness, Adjudicated Youth (Juvenile Justice Population), Foster Youth, Youth Hunger, literacy, areas for Peer to Peer volunteering/mentoring, etc.

Points Posed by Mark Washington:

- Joe appears to have a present and historical understanding of the community, while Joelle reminds us that everything worth anything starts with the child. These are significant points of view that could well be the basis for continuous neighborhood improvement.
- Question for consideration: What is the status of the VNC with their elected representatives? (e.g. City Council, Assembly, Senator, Congressman, School Board member)
- Do they (the VNC itself and the other local political figures) share the DFC’s views and want to see the group succeed in its vision, etc.? Have they assisted? Will they?

Points Posed by Medina Goodman:

- She is very much interested in and favors the idea of helping enable young people in the neighborhood to gain business/industry experience through a structured internship program with local businesses and organizations, optimally those with a focus on the student’s particular area of interest.
- Medina mentioned the idea of introducing a pop-up play area or a petting zoo area at the Venice farmers market to compliment the current sidewalk chalk drawing activity. The drawing activity has been one of her daughter’s main sources of attraction to the market and introducing more fun things for the kids to do could create a more worthwhile experience for the parents and shoppers alike. An additional benefit be keeping the kids engaged for much longer - i.e. perhaps they wouldn’t be as likely to sprint around, bumping into shoppers in a desperate bid to find more fun entertainment.
- She suggested that a small seating area be introduced at the farmer’s market, to encourage visitors to socialize and “stay a while”. Paul mentioned that the Voice of the Canals neighborhood group had once brought chairs regularly to the market.

05 Adjournment: It was agreed that further action/discussion on these topics was to be pursued.

END

November 5, 2018

NEXT MEETING: Monday, November 19, 2018 (Venice Public Library, 5:30 – 7:30 PM).

Attending

Community Members: Rachel Bindman (Senior Librarian, Venice Branch Library), Medina Goodman (parent and creative industries placement executive), Mark Washington (LAUSD, Assistant Principal of Operations, Division of Adult & Career Education, Venice Skills Center Service Area), Sandy Bliefer (artist and artist housing advocate), Heather Sky Hilary (artist, young person's arts educator)

Meeting Organizers: Joelle Dumas (Director of Ecole Claire Fontaine), Joe Murphy (VNC Discussion Forum Committee Chair), Paul Davis (parent and architect)

Note: the following minutes are a distillation of free-form discussions held, and also feature points of discussion introduced by attendees in follow-up correspondence.

01 Visitors from the community were welcomed and introduced.

02 Rachel spoke about the library's role in fostering community. Key points:

- Kids come for contacts – ie face-to-face relating with other kids and adults.
- Bridging private communities is hard – people tend to stay with their own schools, neighborhoods, churches, etc. Trying to create the bridge is important. Pry them away!
- Long-term commitment to programs that engage young people is critical.
- It is particularly difficult to continue to keep young people interested in library programs when they enter their teens. Programs that involve the whole family help youth of all ages stay interested.
- Piano lessons, Harry Potter themed events, spelling bees (possible future activity) are successful now or might be in the future.
- Library goals and programs sound very well aligned with the aims and plans of this DFC committee (secretary's note)
- "Venice Moms" and other local groups are a good way to get the word out about programs and opportunities for community building.

03 Sandy suggested that a new community group under development seek infrastructure support and venues for operation from existing organizations (like the library, in our case). "Don't reinvent the wheel!" "Don't rent a room!" "Don't micromanage!"

Further points:

- Venice is essentially a neighborhood, and a family-oriented community. Residents are invested in their families. Organizations that act with and through families can be effective in community-building here.
- One way to leverage family-style connections would be to promote interaction between the younger and older members of the community – ie create senior citizen mentoring programs for kids after school. This would be like enjoying time with grandparents.
- Developing things from the standpoint of children seems like a powerful approach.
- Speaking of children, perhaps they could have a role in helping to program Sandy's main-focus project now:
- She is leading an effort to convince LA transportation authority Metro to build out the permanent project at the old bus yard on Pacific (possible site of the contested Venice Bridge Housing program) as a mixed-use project focusing on artist's housing.

- In the current draft version of the design her group has developed - with pro-bono help from a local architect's collective - the adjacent walk streets extend themselves through the site as linkages to the broader community.
- Among possible programmatic elements at the project would be community-building spaces such as a library, public gallery, park (perhaps with kids playground equipment), and arts center.
- Metro plans a public event (on Lincoln?) as of Dec. 1 to unveil community feedback on this project. Sandy is collecting letters from Venice residents in support of her campaign.
- Would the Focus on Children Committee (FOCC) like to help organize an event at the site where local children draw or otherwise share news of what they would want the project to include? This could be an early org-building project for the FOCC.
- It was resolved that Sandy would attempt to learn what the presentation/submittal requirements are for inclusion in Metro's Dec. 1 event, and report back asap. Perhaps the committee could assemble a graphic presentation suggesting the kids-on-site event and/or a list of participants in the FOCC and their intention to get kids involved in the project programming process.

04 Mark Washington talked about event-planning as a possible means by which non-profits can help community members grow in their job skills and future potential.

- He would like to see Chambers of Commerce team with his Skills Center to create "open entry – open exit" learning programs that adults can benefit from. No degrees or credentials, just learning.
- Food and Art events in the Valley that were organized by the Skills Center were a great success.
- He may have students that could help the FOCC assemble programs and events as a resume-building activity.

05 Heather Sky Hilary mentioned being able to host future meetings in a house that she operates in Venice. The group was very appreciative and likes the idea for a FOCC birth celebration in the new year.

06 Possible next meeting attendees (to be approached by the FOCC team): Sparc, Boys and Girls Club.

07 Adjournment
END

November 19, 2018

NEXT MEETING: Monday, December 10, 2018 (Venice Public Library, 5:30 – 7:30 PM).

Attending

Community Members: Danielle White, Jasmine Carey, Connie Clotworthy, Jessica Brown (Worthy Beyond Purpose Mindfulness for Kids), Nicole Wainright (Director of Innovations, Safe Place for Youth), Medina Goodman (parent and creative industries placement executive), Sandy Bliefer (artist and artist housing advocate), Heather Sky Hilary (artist, young person's arts educator)

Meeting Organizers: Joelle Dumas (Director of Ecole Claire Fontaine), Joe Murphy (VNC Discussion Forum Committee Chair), Paul Davis (parent and architect)

Note: the following minutes are a distillation of discussions held, and also feature points introduced by attendees in follow-up correspondence.

01 Visitors from the community were welcomed and introduced.

02 Representatives from Worthy Beyond Purpose (meditation and mindfulness for young people) talked about their programs for introduction of mindfulness and meditation in youth-oriented social service settings such as "A Place Called Home" (non-profit youth center in South Central LA) and schools, etc. around LA. The very high value of this in the lives of kids seems clear. Some LAUSD schools have mindfulness in their curriculum but it is by no means standard.

Key quote: "If every 8 year old in the world is taught meditation, we will eliminate violence from the world within one generation" - The Dalai Lama

Meeting attendees were enthusiastic about the potential for FOC collaboration with Worthy Beyond Purpose. Joelle will introduce the WBP staff to a local Santa Monica group that may represent an opportunity for collaboration ("Reflective Parenting"?).

03 Nicole Wainright of SPY described the new SPY "Venice Youth Network" program, and its kick-off celebration on December 15. The network intends to unite Venice service providers and the community at large in efforts to serve young people in need more effectively. All are invited to the Dec. 15 event (10:00 AM) - email invites will follow.

Nicole mentioned the importance of a group such as ours making a purposeful choice about the age range it will serve (FOC: through 18!). All agreed that the term "young people" was preferable to "children" for us.

Although SPY's mission in setting up of the Venice Youth Network sounded somewhat parallel to the goals of the FOC group, clearly the two efforts can be complimentary, since FOC may (at its most useful) help young people steer free of life difficulties that could lead to homelessness.

Nicole mentioned a website/app called "1degree.org" which is a community-building source of support and resources for low-income people. This site is of real interest overall and could also be helpful in our efforts to build a database of agencies and efforts that can help Venice unite in offering more to its young people.

In considering programs that provide young people the opportunity to participate in activities with others from differing socio-economic status, it is important to encourage meaningful and mutually beneficial engagement. Be careful to avoid the sense that more advantaged kid are just getting a chance to "see how others live" – in a way that offers nothing to their less-materially blessed compatriots.

04 Heather brought up the value of considering practicality as we discuss how our group can make a most valuable contribution: "What can actually get done?".

"Free Arts" (formerly "Free Arts for Abused Children") is a group we should track – they are very well organized. They offer very valuable programs for kids who need support. We will learn more.

05 Sandy Bliefer is collecting additional info about the upcoming Metro project for the Venice bus yard. She will report back. As to a possible arts/crafts event focused on the future bus yard project and collecting kids' input as to what it might include (and for encouraging general community awareness of arts/artists, perhaps through events), she mentioned "Trash for Teaching" ("t4t.org"), a warehouse making industrial discards and other interesting arts/crafts materials available for educational programs. Kids love color, texture and "manipulables". Crisp, hard-edged modern stuff, not as much. Sandy spoke of the value of interdisciplinary arts education, in which arts exposure is combined with other disciplines.

06 Medina highlighted the importance of the community's working to help provide housing for families with children who would otherwise be homeless. She and Joe will meet to discuss this and report back. Joelle has mentioned knowing of at least 80 unhoused kids in Venice.

07 Participants offered suggestions re: revised verbiage for the mission statement. Suggestions will be e-mailed to the FOC Admin Committee (Joe and Paul and Joelle) for consideration and re-assembly. Key input: make it short. Present important points early. Background/history about the Discussion Forum Committee and its previous efforts may not be needed.

The word "virtual" (ie "virtual youth community center) was felt to be overly "tech-y" in its connotation, and it was suggested that "network" be used instead, in statements about "what we are". Sandy was the early proponent of this perspective, and many present agreed.

08 Possible next meeting attendees (to be approached by the FOC team): Sparc, Boys and Girls Club.

09 Adjournment
END

December 10, 2018

NEXT MEETING: Monday, January 14, 2019 (Venice Public Library, 5:30 – 7:30 PM).

Attending

Community Members: Danielle White, Jasmine Carey, Connie Clotworthy, Jessica Brown (Worthy Beyond Purpose Mindfulness for Kids), Nicole Wainright (Director of Innovations, Safe Place for Youth; Ron Harris, Safe Place for Youth), Medina Goodman (parent and creative industries placement executive), Tamara Johnson and Isaac (parent and child, both residents), Mark Washington (LAUSD, Assistant Principal of Operations, Division of Adult & Career Education, Venice Skills Center Service Area)

Meeting Organizers: Joelle Dumas (Director of Ecole Claire Fontaine), Joe Murphy (VNC Discussion Forum Committee Chair), Paul Davis (parent and architect)

Representing the VNC: Ira Koslow, VNC President

Note: the following minutes are a distillation of free-form discussions held, and also feature points of discussion introduced by attendees in follow-up correspondence.

01 Visitors from the community were welcomed and introduced.

02 Ira Koslow (VNC President) spoke generally about the VNC ("It acts in an advisory capacity to the councilman and all city departments"; election is in June for 3-year appointments – normally terms are 2 years, see VNC for nomination forms) and addressed several questions put to him in the meeting agenda:

Q: How can local agencies and groups working on behalf of the youth of Venice get VNC support for their efforts?

A: The DFC can advance motions that enlist the support of the VNC for various causes or events, including those sponsored by the FOC's Collective members. Note: Roberts Rules of Order are strictly followed in all public VNC proceedings, as is the Brown Act, which requires transparency and "guarantee's the public's right to attend and participate in local legislative bodies" (Wikipedia). A 50% + 1 quorum is required for any official public meeting.

Q: How can their programs get "published"? (ie can VNC outreach be used, and how?) A: Local agencies can have their events and programs mentioned at VNC meetings as part of public comments, or they can be placed on meeting agendas by DFC with standard 72 hour notice (if discussion as DFC business or announcements are appropriate).

Q: In the past, funds were made available to efforts (administrative expenses and specific projects). Can the groups involved in the FOC benefit from this, and how? A: VNC has earmarked city funds available and can allocate them to programs if approved by motion. Funds are limited.

Q: What are speaker opportunities at VNC meetings - to inform board and public about events? A: "Public comment" speaking opportunities of 1 minute, 5 minute DFC event announcement opportunities when approved for agenda. "Keep it short" is a good rule! (ie in answer to follow-up question "What are restrictions?")

Q: Can handouts list the VNC as supporting a program? How? A: Yes, if VNC has supported an event by motion, support can be cited in published materials. Announcements should be 3 months prior to an event.

Q: How can a committee like ours be most valuable to the VNC? A: Keep in mind that the DFC is the committee, not the "FOC entity" (ie in the eyes of the VNC). The established Vision Goal is our mission statement. We can announce ourselves as "FOC" if we use clever graphic/text layout to emphasize that title/cause while not failing to mention DFC. Also: "Keep reports short. Follow the rules. Don't demonize anybody. Hate the idea, not the person. No cursing! As in life, persistence and follow-through are the keys to success."

03 A free-ranging discussion ensued, with treatment of the FOC's evolving mission, organizations whose work can be of interest to us, and how we might be most helpful to the community. A sampling of comments:

- Effective work through the VNC requires proposing of motions that can be officially supported.
- Be pragmatic – don't take on too much!
- Note the important work of Lauri Burns (The Teen Project for homeless at-risk trafficked young women)
- Therapeutic attention and programs of many types can help undo the harmful pasts of homeless youth
- But: institute preventative efforts – deal with the young ones!
- Resources are available – outreach is required so people are aware and can benefit
- "Asset Mapping" creates exposure and accessibility for a resource network
- Individuals and agencies in the FOC effort can join the Venice Youth Network
- It is important to establish clear divisions as to what we are doing, in terms of ages served
- A quest: get to the roots of homelessness in family
- Kids must read and be read to! Any and all reading can be transformative of lives.
- The library makes a wide range of programs available for community members of all ages. It is a melting pot for all
- Reading and mindfulness are clearly appealing focuses for the FOC's efforts. What others may be most needed and impactful? For further discussion!

04 Adjournment

END

January 14, 2019

NEXT MEETING: Monday, February 11, 2019 (Abbot Kinney Memorial Branch Library, 5:30 – 7:30 PM).

Attending

Community Members: Jasmine Carey, Connie Clotworthy (Worthy Beyond Purpose Mindfulness for Kids); Ron Harris (Safe Place for Youth), Medina Goodman (parent and creative industries placement executive), Davida Persaud (SPARC), Rachel Bindman (Los Angeles Public Library, Venice Branch)

Meeting Organizers: Joelle Dumas (Director of Ecole Claire Fontaine), Joe Murphy (VNC Discussion Forum Committee Chair), Paul Davis (parent and architect)

Note: the following minutes are a distillation of free-form discussions held, and also feature points of discussion introduced by attendees in follow-up correspondence.

01 Visitors from the community were welcomed and introduced.

02 Discussion of how to initiate the DFC/Focus on Children database; Ron Harris mentioned an LA County Library on-line resource. Joe Murphy highlighted the existing DFC database in the VNC site. He will provide a link so those interested can look it up. Much information (current and historic) is available.

A quote offered, regarding FOC's necessary organization phase: "Slow down. Create the Network!"

03 On the topic of services the DFC/FOC effort could provide to the Venice youth community, establishing safer access paths to the Venice Public Library (Abbot Kinney Memorial Branch) was discussed. Crosswalks and/or signals are needed. All agree - this seems like a very good topic for future action.

04 Internship program possibilities:

- Rachel offered the library facility (perhaps Mar Vista Branch too) for an "Intern Career Day" program, in coordination with local schools
- The Venice Chamber of Commerce could be a resource for finding businesses that could host interns
- Internship-hosting businesses and agencies, artists, etc. could also be written to and approached in person by neighborhood, for example, Abbot Kinney
- Local schools and social services agencies could be contacted in an effort to locate young people who might benefit from internships
- It is resolved that we will draft a motion on this effort, in order to solicit VNC support, and proceed.

05 A Parade: We are inspired by Madame Joelle's vision to believe that creating an annual Venice Children's Parade (suggested date: Valentine's Day?) would be quite compelling. FOC will advocate for adventure! Parade fits.

06 Adjournment

cc: File/NB