

Ideas into Action Meeting

Moderated by Jessica Boylston-Fagonde

February 17, 2017

Observer: Barbara Griffin

Note: The League of Women Voters - Charleston Area neither supports nor endorses political candidates or political parties. It is committed to civic awareness and education and will advocate for carefully selected and studied issues.

Through its Observer Corps, the League collects and provides reports covering a wide range of government and community organizations as a service to its members and the public. The League neither endorses nor sanctions the organizations sponsoring the meetings nor the views of those speaking or attending. Rather, the League seeks to provide fair-minded fact-based summaries in support of expanding public knowledge and awareness, and civil discourse.

Below is a summary of the remarks and comments made during a meeting held by Ideas into Action on February 21. This report does not attempt to reflect verbatim comments or responses and should not be interpreted as such.

MEETING OVERVIEW & INTRODUCTIONS: Ms Boylston-Fagonde welcomed attendees and outlined the meeting agenda.

EDUCATION PORTION OF THE MEETING: There were two primary presentations during the Education portion of the meeting: 1. The League of Women Voters with Shayna Howell and Sarah Johnson; and 2. Turning Leaf by Amy Barch.

The League of Women Voters:

Overview: Shayna Howell, Communications Director of the League of Women Voters of the Charleston Area provided an overview of the national, state and local League of Women Voters, with an emphasis on member activities. A copy of her Power Point presentation aide is attached.

Included in the overview Ms. Howell outlined the goals, purposes and activities of the League of Women Voters in its efforts to support good government and democracy. She explained the primary areas of engagement.

She also discussed three important and expanding initiatives for the League:

1. Advocacy Training - Upcoming training the League will host on March 8th
2. Citizen Education - The League is undertaking a multi-pronged Citizen Education effort and
3. Encouraging more women to prepared for enter elected office.

In addition to the presentation above, Ms. Howell invited attendees to consider joining the League of Women Voters to become engaged in activities in promoting good government and democracy.

Legislation: Sarah Johnson, Legislative Director for the Charleston League of Women Voters spoke to the League's engagement in selected and studied issues. She highlighted issues of particular concern to the League as "Dark Money and Ethics, and Redistricting.

1. **Ethics Reform & Dark Money:** With regard to Ethics Reform and Dark Money, Ms Johnson outlined a long-term engagement by the League at the Charleston and State levels to promote transparency and the public's right to know. She indicated it has become apparent that the totality of ethics reform is not a "quick fix" undertaking but rather a matter of addressing one issue at a time.

Last year, with the support of the League and others, South Carolina determined to have an independent ethics commission rather than relying on the legislature to self-regulate when addressing ethics issues and violations. Additionally, members are now required to disclose all family income sources.

This year, the League is interested in H 3571 addressing third party campaign contribution disclosure.

2. **Redistricting:** Ms Johnson provided background information regarding gerrymandering and the ways that can impact voter outcomes. H 3339 and S341 are bills that seek to move the determination of district lines from the legislative purview to an independent commission.

Turning Leaf: Amy Barch, founder of Turning Leaf, a small nonprofit in North Charleston provided an overview of the work that Turning Leaf does with its re-entry program serving high-risk men coming out of prison. She began by sharing her personal interest and journey in serving this particular population and addressing the many issues associated with incarceration and recidivism. :

Highlights included data and approach:

- 75% of those who leave prison return within 5 years.
- The cost of incarceration and recidivism and re-entry significantly exceeds the cost of intervention

The Turning Leaf provides a re-entry program for high-risk men, ages 25 - 50, coming out of prison to help them change their attitudes, thinking, and behavior so they can adapt successfully to community-based living without re-offending. A copy of Ms. Barch's Power Point presentation is also attached below.

More information about Turning Leaf can be found at: <http://www.turningleafproject.org/>

GATHERING FOR GOOD: Attendees were invited to make contributions to Turning Leaf and a table was available for that purpose..

PRODUCTIVE ACTION: Various groups provided updates (requests + action items). Among those listed to participate were:

- Indivisible Charleston: Rebecca Hopkins
- Charleston Area Justice Ministry: LuAnn Rosenzweig
- Step Up Network: Liz King
- Arm-In-Arm: Meghan Alexander
- Fresh Start Charleston: Donna Jones
- Environment: Gary Smith
- ChasWomenMarchOnward: Barbara Fry

MORE ABOUT IDEAS INTO ACTION: Issues into Action provided the following background about its organization and purpose:

IDEAS INTO ACTION formed right after November's contentious election. Each meeting is an opportunity to gather large groups of people in a warm, beautiful environment to channel our energy into productive action for the greater good. There are three primary areas of focus:

EDUCATION: At each gathering we invite an organization and/or a community leader to educate on various topics that support civic engagement.

GATHERING FOR GOOD: We choose a simple task that can make a big difference for a local nonprofit or cause (time, treasure, or talent).

PRODUCTIVE ACTION: We're a clearinghouse for groups + organizations + nonprofits to offer UPDATES and ACTION ITEMS on specific issues and needs within our community.

More information is available on IdeasIntoActionCHS@gmail.com

Addendum

Below is an addendum containing the follow up report from jessicabf@gmail.com from Issues Into Action, which hosted the meeting.

“GOOD NEWS, our Gathering for Good raised \$600 for Turning Leaf Project!!! For small nonprofits like this one, every contribution is so important. If you were unable to join us and would like to still contribute to their program, here's the address: P.O. Box 80112, Charleston, SC 29416.

Several of you have asked ***how can we help Turning Leaf Project?*** Here are ACTION STEPS straight from Amy Barch:

1. Tell our elected officials (city/county council, mayors, state legislators) that you support Turning Leaf Project and want our tax dollars spent on reentry / rehabilitation.
2. Look for / connect TLP to potential employment opportunities (consider hiring a student if you own your own business, work in HR, etc.).
3. Use TLP for any screen printing needs - They have an in-house job training screen printing business (see image below of a training for their students to learn the trade of screenprinting).
4. Coordinate a drive for office and classroom supplies.
5. Find other opportunities where Turning Leaf can speak.



I know so many of you were taken by Chris Cherry’s testimonial of the TLP program. I wish we would have had more time to hear his story—*it was deeply moving!* I sent him a thank you letter encouraging him to public speak. He has an office setup at TLP if you’d like to send one too: *P.O. Box 80112, Charleston, SC 29416.*

I'm also attaching Amy's Powerpoint presentation below for anyone who would like to review it.

The League of Women Voters Charleston—*Shayna Howell, Communications Director* and *Sarah Shad Johnson, Legislative Advocacy Director*—gave a thorough presentation on bridging the partisan divide and legislative updates—and provided ways for us to get involved with their volunteer-run organization. Their Powerpoint presentation is attached below—and you can connect with them on [Facebook](#). **Don't forget to attend their training on March 8th!**



I want to thank the following groups and organizations for sharing updates. A big apology if you attended and we ran out of time to hear from you!

Indivisible action steps:

- 1) Next monthly meeting, **Thurs. March 2nd 6:30 - 8:00pm** at the downtown Public Library on Calhoun.
- 2) They need volunteers to host Tuesday lunch time rallies at Senator Graham & Senator Scott's Offices and/or help get more attendees, if people cannot host.
- 3) They are seeking members for our committees: State MOC, Federal MOC, ACA & Environment.
- 4) We need people to Call & Visit our Senators' offices voicing their concerns every day. Connect with them on [Facebook](#)

Charleston Area Justice Ministry: CAMJ is a nonprofit working to transform systems that cause suffering by holding local officials accountable for resolving inequities and injustices. Their next public meeting will be in April (*they'll need a big turnout!*). More details to come as we get a little closer. Connect via [Facebook](#).

Fresh Start Charleston: [A new small nonprofit](#) providing basic hygiene necessities to those who are experiencing homelessness.

Arm-In-Arm: To get updates on ways to support gun safety legislation, opt-in here: www.gunsensesc.org

Step Up Network: A career readiness program that utilizes the STRIVE INTERNATIONAL training model. The STRIVE Core Training Program's emphasis on job training has become a national model, and has been proven to increase participants' job placement and retention. To get involved, [visit their website](#).

Center 4 Women: Here's a link to their upcoming training, [PATHWAY TO POLITICS](#). It's a GREAT opportunity for any of you feeling called to lead and shift the political climate of our city/state from the inside.

Lowcountry Feminist: *Yes! I'm a Feminist* benefit for Women's and Gender Studies at the Cistern, College of Charleston. Feb. 27, 6pm - 7:30pm. [Event details here](#).

Group meetings to attend: If you'd like a group to take action steps with, contact [Barbara Fry](#) (they meet in Mt Pleasant) and [Liz King](#) (they meet in the West Ashley area).

CONNECTIONS IN DIVERSITY panel/group discussion: Tuesday, Feb 28, 6:30pm-8:30: In a world that is increasingly polarized and fearful, we have the power to create real change through connection. Join our panelist from across faith, spirituality and race for an intimate and raw conversation on what it means to be a woman in Charleston today – and the common threads that unite our experiences. You'll discover

a new framework for understanding your own story and the value and texture it brings to our city. [To learn more and RSVP, click on this link.](#)

We're finalizing the next meeting details (date and agenda) and will follow-up with you asap.

If you have any questions and suggestions, and/or feedback of your experience, please be in touch.

With gratitude,

Jessica

Connect with us on [Facebook!](#)"