

We Are Concord: Action Forum Summary

Monday, April 4, 2016 at 2pm
St. Paul's Church, Concord, NH

On Monday April 4th, approximately 40 people gathered to build on the input shared as part of the We Are Concord community conversations (February 13-17). The focus was on action steps and identifying organizational commitments to action.

Areas of focus were to:

Build relationships to reduce discord and misunderstandings

Take action to create proactive approaches to address fear and discrimination

Take action to build on common values

Take action with a focus on youth

Improve communication across cultures and languages

Take action to expand English language learning opportunities

Take action to create opportunities to learn about other cultures

Remove barriers to independence and opportunity

Address economic divisions in community

Address needs for Jobs with decent wages, transportation, affordable housing, and access to health care

Participants rotated in small groups through each topic and answered the following questions.

- How will our community be different in 2-3 years as a result of the actions we take?
- What actions do we need to take?
- What can my organization do?
- What new partnerships are needed?

The following feedback was collected from each station. This symbol (●) indicates agreement/support for the idea. Some participants added their name and contact information to indicate their commitment to working on the issue.

Station One: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS TO REDUCE DISCORD AND MISUNDERSTANDING

Take action with a focus on youth

Take action to build on common values

Take action to create proactive approaches to address fear and discrimination

The importance of community events...

Improve communication and spreading the word about events; Find ways to collaborate and support community positive events across organizations and institutions; We need more of a shared approach across these events and organizations; Encourage coverage of events by local media; Many organizations feel there is a shortage of volunteers.

Multilingual and accessible events and opportunities...

Make events accessible, including to disabled and deaf communities; Hold programs in other languages;

●● Build on kid stories and English teaching on TV; Elevate students with a mix of backgrounds to helpers at school and assemblies; Make being from somewhere else "cool"; ● Find common magnets to draw people in.



Education and information...

Add examples of racism and xenophobia to the anti-bullying curriculum so our students understand what it is; Host a forum with all candidates running for office with ground rules (NO BULLYING); Provide reading list to schools/libraries about refugee experience; Provide different role models on local TV; Address the feeling by natives that immigrants are taking "their" resources; ● Help people learn what their rights are--tenants, workers, immigrants, residents of Concord.

Station Two: REMOVE BARRIERS TO INDEPENDENCE AND OPPORTUNITY

Address economic divisions in community

Transportation...

Expand bus schedule and area covered, include weekends; Public transportation that supports millennials' schedules: evenings and weekends; Improve accessibility (physical barriers); ●●●●●●●● Driver Education: needs to be affordable; Help with driving experience, Interpreter to ride along on driving and written test Ascentria must reemphasize need for license; Need for insurance and maintenance; Help purchasing car, not getting ripped off; Translate Driver's Manual into other languages ; Need help transporting kids to sports

Housing

●●●●● Advocate for affordable housing and shelter; More playgrounds available, Maintain neighborhood community centers; Can Concord create more public housing? Rooming houses? ● Expand use of accessory dwelling units and home sharing; Promote availability of Resident Owned Communities (ROC) units and benefits; ●●●●●● Low barrier emergency shelter; Winter shelter in reliable location; Tiny home pilot project.

Jobs

●●●●●● Advocate for higher wages (including higher minimum wage); ●●● Job-specific ESOL classes; ●● Work with carpenters' union to develop apprenticeships (including youth); ● Job Fair? Specific skills training for decent-wage jobs; Navigators – to assist with many things; New ways to test people for professional jobs; Cost of testing? Translating? Modifications for test such as more time; Appreciate the benefits of multilingual/multi-ethnic employees; Unions: networking with teachers, building trades, medical field; Work with employers; Connect new Americans with political campaign jobs, promotes voting and civic engagement; Identify TANF grant opportunities for job creation (via DHHS).

Health

● Address unaffordability of health care premiums;

Station Three: IMPROVE COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES AND LANGUAGES

Take action to create opportunities to learn about other cultures

Take action to expand English language learning opportunities

Improve communication across ages and genders, too; ●●●● Advocate through Chamber, legislature, City and Gov't offices for the business community to provide EL opportunities, on the job training, facilitate with Ascentria, Second Start, NAA. This will grow skilled worker pool and improve wages. Learn about other cultures and religious communities: dinners, events; ● Advocate for development of community center on Heights; ● Be the Change Club – Concord High School - Promote Be the Change events; ● Multicultural Festival more often; Elementary Schools and High School - Go there; Law School-- Invite folks in for an event; Landlords who have many different culture tenants hold events such as New American Africans at Morning Star and Royal Gardens; Love Your Neighbor; Concord Reads – Choose books about other cultures; ● Create Concord-wide conversation partners program; ● CCTV Programs; Non-English programming on radio (WNHN-FM);



Funding for new Americans to attend cultural, art, sports; ●● Promote Friday Family Fun Nights; Welcome other celebrations of Concord immigrant history French, German, Swedish, Greek, Bosnian; Promote host community parents pairing up with newcomer kids for sports & rides; Situate some cultural sharing events in Bow to promote dialogue, familiarity, and understanding; Lunch and Learn at local businesses; ● Concord Monitor – Series telling new American stories; ●●●●● Storytelling events; ●● Youth exchange between high school; Combine Second Start, The Children’s Place, and NHTI; Parenting classes; ESL during evening at IHM; Community language learning (Language cafes) (informal conversation cafes); Create opportunities for US-born people to learn newcomer languages; ● ASL classes for host and newcomers. ●● Promote protocol for multiple kinds of communications in a variety of settings (including seniors); More marketing training for non-profits

We Are Here!

Participants were asked to list the organizations and institutions of which they are a part. The following were represented:

- NH State Legislature
- City Council – The Heights
- Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce
- St. Paul’s Episcopal Church
- Wesley United Methodist
- South Congregational Church
- Unitarian Universalist Church
- Catholic Charities
- Concordia Lutheran Church
- Concord Coalition to End Homelessness CCEH
- Concord Homeless Resource Center
- Disability Rights Center of NH
- CHS Be The Change Club
- Concord Police Department
- New American Africans
- Granite United Way
- American Friends Service Committee
- Second Start
- Task Force Against Racism & Intolerance
- Bhutanese Community of Concord
- Baha’i Faith
- NH Technical Institute
- Sycamore Community Garden
- UNH Law
- WNHN FM (community radio)
- Concord Multicultural Festival
- Welcome Concord
- Family Promise
- Emergency Assistance Network
- Friendly Kitchen
- Friends and Family of Inmates

What did we notice?

After rotating to each station, participants were asked what stood out based on the topics, issues, and ideas raised. Some felt the ideas and actions were overwhelming, confusing, and frustrating. Others noticed that the ideas listed tend to benefit everyone, increase access, and build on work already underway.

Next steps

Action groups will be forming to take next steps. To join an action group please be in touch with Maggie Fogarty at MFogarty@AFSC.org .

