

2009-10



INTERFAITH CENTER OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA ANNUAL REPORT

INTERFAITH CENTER
OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

*Dare
to
Understand.*

Letter from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

Now in our sixth year, we at the Interfaith Center remain firm in our commitment to advance religious pluralism and interreligious cooperation in our great city. It has been inspiring for me, our staff and Board of Directors to see this work truly take hold across the Greater Philadelphia region, affecting people of all ages, races, and backgrounds.

A note on our new tagline: *Dare to Understand.*

One of the many rich experiences that we were blessed with at the Center last year was the completion of a comprehensive Development and Direct Marketing Assessment.

This capacity-building effort, made possible by the generosity of Philadelphia Foundation, engaged a cohort of diverse stakeholders to gauge their reactions to the work of the Interfaith Center and to seek their insights as to what we could be doing better – with particular attention to marketing and emphasizing the urgency of our mission message. We learned a great deal from this process.

Our staff and Board of Directors went right to work and the result, ***Dare to Understand***, is both a statement of fact and a call to action. Take a look on the following pages to see the various ways in which we, and you, our most loyal friends and supporters, dared to understand in 2010.

Since our inception we have served nearly 10,000 individuals, partnered with more than 150 local religious congregations and over two dozen community organizations. To date, we remain one of the few organizations of our kind across the country, receiving attention from leaders in the interfaith movement, the mayor's office, and major media outlets. We are so proud to be at the forefront of this critical issue of local, regional, and (inter)national urgency.

The theme of this report reflects the new tagline for the Center, "*Dare to Understand*," which encapsulates so much of what makes our work unique. It conveys a sense of the courage

required to participate and engage in interfaith work, the fear of the religious "other" felt by so many, and the need to overcome such fears. It challenges us to be bold in learning about one another, to dare to listen for the crying needs of our time, and to work together to contribute to the good of our region. Not only is our tagline a call for a deeper understanding of the religious "other," it is also an invitation to continued discovery within one's own self, heritage, and unique perspective.

Our continued success – especially in light of this year's economic downturn -- is a testament to the gifts and dedication of our Board, staff, interns, community partners, and our donors. We look forward to another year carrying out our vision of contribution to and celebration of the rich history of religious pluralism in Philadelphia, and we thank you most sincerely for your willingness to *dare to understand* your neighbors.

In gratitude,

Abby Stamelman Hocky
Executive Director

Dare to Understand.

THE CAPACITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

Youth Development, Service Learning and Leadership

The Interfaith Center continues to innovate sophisticated interfaith programming designed for young people at the high school level. This year, our signature “Walking the Walk” initiative engaged more youth than ever before – 91 in all, a 400% increase from its inception just five years ago. This continued annual growth is a testament not only to the quality of programming being offered, but also to the incredible work of many volunteers, community partners, and network Group Leaders. Highlights from this and other Interfaith Center youth programs, including the annual Youth Day of Service and Alternative Spring Break follow below.



“Walking the Walk changed my life! Before this experience, I respected my heritage and faith – but now I embrace them as “my own.” This has helped me to challenge stereotypes and navigate some serious challenges in my life.”

Halima,
Walking the Walk Alumna

*This year alone, Walking the Walkers contributed more than
2,200 hours of service to the community.*

WALKING THE WALK

Walking the Walk is a nationally recognized youth service-learning program that is specifically designed for high-school students. Participants come from local schools, congregations, and communities and gather together 13 times annually for interfaith engagement, service learning and community building. Over the years, ICGP has proven itself a leader and innovator in the arena of interfaith youth work, both on a regional and national scale, through this program. Last year, *Walking the Walk* was more expansive than ever before, bringing together 91 young people and five networks across diverse faith traditions and socio-economic backgrounds. Together, these young people and their mentors contributed more than 2,200 hours of service to the community.

FOURTH ANNUAL DAY OF SERVICE

Each year, the Interfaith Center gathers *Walking the Walk* participants, Board members, and a host of other volunteers for a Day of Service in honor of Earth Day. This year's event was our largest ever, attracting 175 participants representing 25 faith communities to come together for a clean-up of Cobbs Creek Environmental Center. The event was structured to include environmental action, interfaith conversations, arts and workshops, and a closing ceremony.

ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK

In 2006, the Interfaith Center began hosting Alternative Spring Break programs at the special request of external groups. Stemming from this initial success, the Center now offers the program annually, hosting a week long immersion program for students that combines interfaith learning with visits to multiple faith communities along with intensive community service projects. In 2010, we were pleased to host students from North Carolina State University, the University of Maryland, and Blair Academy.



Adult Learning and Leadership

While we cannot control religious conflict on a global scale, we can – and must -- address it in tangible, realizable ways right here in our home community. Our programs provide both personal enrichment and practical approaches for living and working in increasingly diverse settings. Below is a snapshot of our work this past year in Adult Learning and Leadership.



ENCOUNTERING OTHER FAITHS

Encountering Other Faiths, our signature Adult Learning and Leadership initiative, continues to flourish as an interactive education and dialogue series designed to break down stereotypes and explore challenging interfaith issues. In addition to interactive multi-session workshops, we also offer facilitator training, single faith immersion, workplace diversity, and interfaith dialogue as part of this program area. Last year, 1,765 participants took part in Encountering Other Faiths programs.

GATEWAY TO RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

We were proud to launch our first fully public program in January 2010 called *Gateway to Religious Communities*. From our experience, we know that it can be difficult for individuals to simply walk into an unfamiliar sacred space without a specific invitation. Yet such exposure is critical to deepening one's understanding of a new faith tradition. Our new program is designed specifically with this reality in mind and aims to help curious individuals cross the threshold. In the first six months, more than 345 participants have taken advantage of this extraordinary opportunity to visit six religious communities.



RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Increasingly, the Center receives requests from local companies, universities and civic organizations to assist them in training around issues of religious diversity and sensitivity. This past year, we adapted our adult programming for a professional context, hosting our first-ever workshops on "Religious Diversity in the Workplace" for more than 300 employees of PECO-Exelon and 75 students, faculty and administrators at Villanova University.

Dare to Understand.

THE ENRICHMENT THAT COMES FROM CROSSING THE "GATEWAY" INTO A NEW COMMUNITY AND EXPERIENCE.

In its first six months, Gateway to Religious Communities offered monthly open houses in Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Baha'i and Lenape Nation communities, engaging a total of 345 participants. These initial events succeeded beyond expectation, both in terms of the numbers of attendees and the emotional impact on participants. One participant put it best in saying "We learn so much from these encounters; we NEED people throughout our region to take advantage of this incredible opportunity."

Dare to Understand.

Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia

Founded in the spring of 2006, the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia is dedicated to building relationships of mutual support, serving as a moral and spiritual voice in the region, and identifying issues of critical concerns for dialogue and action. This past year marked the fourth anniversary of the Council, with 26 official members/faith communities -- collectively representing two million people.

As a neutral "home," the Interfaith Center facilitates communication and cooperation among the Council's member religious communities; coordinates **Zones of Peace** and other work of the Religious Leaders Council, and maintains the fiscal, program, and policy records of the Council.

ZONES OF PEACE INITIATIVE

Zones of Peace is the Religious Leaders Council's first major coordinated effort to address the epidemic of violence in our culture. It was piloted this year with over a dozen leaders from Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim faith communities. The initiative aimed to help congregations commit themselves to activities that curb violence and promote peace.

By the end of its pilot year, this initiative achieved some great traction, engaging more than a dozen congregations and schools, implementing projects addressing the root causes of violence in their respective neighborhoods, homes and schools. These pilot organizations have also built relationships with community partners such as Heeding God's Call, Mothers in Charge and the Amachi Mentoring Program. This early success prompted the Religious Leaders Council to imagine an even wider impact through a regional roll-out of this initiative.

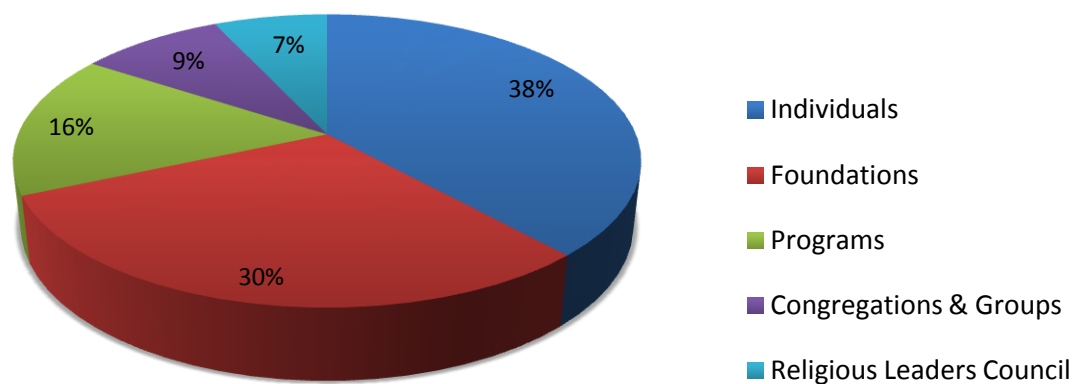
THE IMPACT THAT 2 MILLION PEOPLE OF FAITH
COULD HAVE IN **STOPPING VIOLENCE** IN
PHILADELPHIA AND BEYOND.

*The **Zones of Peace** pilot Initiative engaged more than a dozen schools and congregations in creating grassroots solutions to all forms of violence. Already, it has served as encouragement for communities to take the next step with existing programs and partnerships or as inspiration to prioritize an action they've intended to take for a while ... in order to become part of something "bigger than themselves" to turn the tides of violence."*

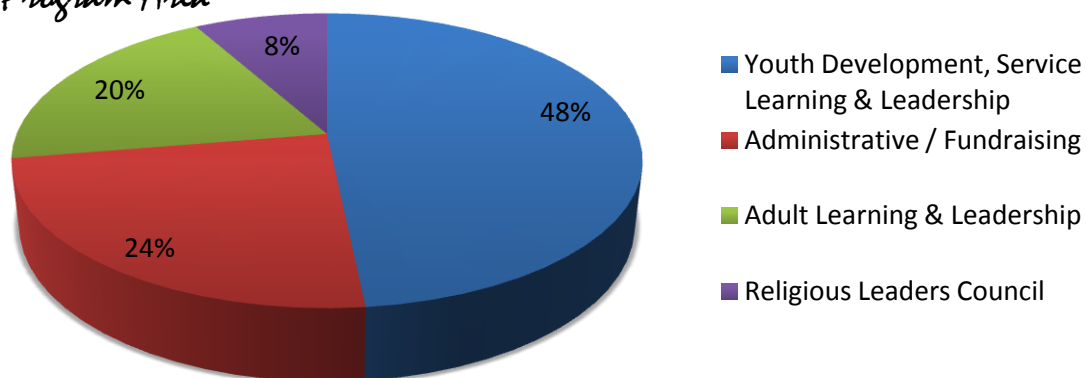




Sources of Revenue



Costs by Program Area



Dare to Understand.

THE POWER OF PHILANTHROPY

Foundations and Corporations

Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church Outreach Council
Connelly Foundation
Douty Foundation
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*It is with great celebration of the life he shared that we honor Tom Stewart's passing on August 25, 2010. We will fondly remember Tom, whose son-in-law perished on September 11th, as a visionary who channeled personal tragedy into interfaith conviction. He was truly the personification of "daring to understand."

The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia advances mutual trust, understanding and cooperation among faith communities, in order to work together for the common good of the region.

The Center enables people of all faiths to share their deepest convictions, shape solutions to common problems, and live out their highest values and aspirations, through celebration, service, education, and action.



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