

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI VOICE
PROGRESS IN 2011

We as Christians and Franciscans must promote social, economic and political conditions that elevate human dignity and promote the common good. This is the teaching of the Catholic Church. When we see poverty, hunger, homelessness, in our community it challenges us to respond. Church based organizing is one viable way to do this.

LOCAL ACTIONS:

- Recognized that foreclosures in Prince William County had led to empty houses, blight, slum lords and increased crime in Williamstown.
- Set up numerous meetings with residents of Williamstown, their board of Directors, and the Police Chief of Dumfries to address safety issues in the community;
 - This action resulted in establishment of regular patrols by police officers and the posting of no-loitering signs at the bus stops.
- Aided residents in initial meeting to form a Neighborhood Watch;
- Conceived and led the planning of our parish “Faith in Action” Sunday.
- Benefited from relationships with those of other faiths involved in VOICE

COUNTY WIDE FORECLOSURE CAMPAIGN:

- Conducted county wide research to find number of homes foreclosed upon using improper paperwork. Results showed 25% had incorrect paperwork.
- Obtained commitments from Bank of America and JP Morgan Chase to fund 5 new non-profit housing counselors in Prince William County, Manassas, Manassas Park in the amount of \$360,000;
- Connected more than 800 local families to free, non-profit housing counseling and –for Bank of America & JP Morgan Chase customers–to a streamlined modification process, keeping many families in their homes.
- Obtained commitments from the above two banks to make sure families applying for mortgage modifications are treated fairly and in a timely manner;
- Obtained commitments from these two banks to negotiate seriously about a multi-million dollar reinvestment plan to rebuild communities and homeownership in the County and affiliated areas.

PENDING ACTIONS FOR 2012:

- Sponsoring another Foreclosure Workshop on Feb. 19th;
- Continuing to work with Bank of America and JP Morgan Chase on reinvestment plans;
- Announcing results of further research showing extremely high default rates of improper loans made by WMC mortgage within Prince William County;
- Working with local and state leaders to continue/further develop support for local VOICE actions;
- Continuing to put pressure on GE to take ownership of its responsibility for WMC loans;
- Cataloguing of empty and foreclosed properties in our communities that are falling into disrepair;
- Within the parish, finding issues that will interest parishioners and encourage involvement in this ministry; Homelessness, special needs children, eldercare, environmental care, and ways to help out of work parishioners, etc.