

LOCAL NEWS

Justice in July Jamboree offers resources for housing, transportation, employment



Local leaders and community members participate in “Justice in July Jamboree” resource fair at Rialto City Hall in Rialto, Calif. on Saturday, July 22, 2017. The fair focused on providing social resources to struggling families. (Photo by Rachel Luna, The Sun/SCNG)

By **MONICA RODRIGUEZ** | morodriguez@scng.com | Daily Bulletin
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RIALTO >> One after another, the women stood at a podium in the City Council Chambers of Rialto City Hall Saturday and explained to elected officials the challenges they face involving housing, transportation and employment discrimination.

Some were single mothers and others were not, but all said they have one or more issues that keep them on the verge of homelessness, or from advancing in their careers.

Legislation can help with some of those issues, said Kim Carter, founder and executive director of Time for Change Foundation. Others require funding.

“We’re not asking for a handout,” Carter said. “We’re asking for those taxpayer dollars to recycle themselves here.”

Time for Change Foundation, a nonprofit organization that works with homeless woman and children to become self sufficient with the help of evidence-based programs, organized the event, known as the Justice in July Jamboree, outside of Rialto City Hall.

Scores turned out for the event that included music, food and plenty of booths with information on subjects ranging from assistance to cover utility expenses to job training opportunities.

Theresa Williams of Fontana was looking for an agency that could help her figure out if it was legal for her landlord to raise her apartment rent by more than \$200. Williams has a disability, can no longer work, and is living on a fixed income.

To help elected officials see the predicaments residents face, the Foundation created a listening session as part of the Jamboree that was attended by state Sen. Connie Leyva, D-Chino, Assemblywoman Eloise Gomez Reyes, D-San Bernardino and Rialto Mayor Deborah Robertson, along with representatives of other nonprofits.

Some women said barriers to economic stability include limited service from Omnitrans, San Bernardino County’s Public Transit system and a shortage of low-income housing.

After hearing one woman complain that Omnitrans buses don’t run at night or holidays, when many low-income workers need transportation, Omnitrans transportation manager Jeremiah Bryant, said he would take the information back to agency officials. He added that Omnitrans is trying to meet many needs.

“It’s a balancing act,” he said, with funding going to where “it’s most effective.”

Keisha Murphy of San Bernardino spoke of her predicament trying to advance in the nursing profession.

In 2004, Murphy was imprisoned after being convicted of grand theft. After leaving prison, she knew that the path to a better life was education.

She was able to train as a licensed vocational nurse specializing in wound care and caring for patients but would like to enroll in a program that will prepare her to become a registered nurse. Yet Murphy has been rejected by various academic institutions.

“They said I won’t be able to do the clinical rotations” that are part of the training, she said, because the conviction will show up on the background check.

Murphy said she has demonstrated she is responsible and has the necessary skills and commitment to care for patients, but the conviction is keeping her from doing more.

People who have changed their lives “can’t have a lifetime ban and life time punishment,” Murphy said.

Gomez Reyes said she has introduced legislation, AB 1008, that attempts to bring employment opportunities to those with felony convictions. Others speakers said the Inland Empire needs more job opportunities with good wages.

Leyva said she and others are working to do just that but often the Inland Empire is seen as a place that is only interested in warehouse jobs.

The area should push for jobs with living wages, she said.

“We have to work together,” Leyva said, referring to state and local elected official, in order to attract good jobs.

Gomez Reyes said in the coming months a package of legislation will be assembled focusing on addressing affordable housing needs.

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