

## **Consultant Report from Ruth Benn May – October 2015**

The two things that have taken a lot of time since May are:

1. Much time working on the website upgrade/change. It's coming along – always takes longer than one hopes. Most of the main pages are plunked onto the new site but there is still quite a bit of work to do to fix it up and make it launch-ready.
2. Finally completed a change/update of Practical 7 on health care/income security/inheritance etc. Posted on website, and print version just came in.

- I have missed Erica's contact and input since her bike accident in July – enough of a concussion to knock her out of commission as far as work goes. I've filled in on posting on the blog and maybe a bit more on Facebook than I normally would. Twitter is mostly left to run itself as Erica has various posts set up. Sometimes I remember to add something. I have not been able to keep track of some other things like the advertising campaign.
- Minutes, photos, and reports, etc, from May Milwaukee gathering – cleaned up, posted, mailed.
- Set up Loomio account (an online consensus decision-making forum) to use for proposal discussions prior to the November gathering. I think it has potential but we'll need to discuss it at the next meeting also. It's hard for me to monitor the variety of forums/fori we have now.
- Emailing and calling around for November meeting location – Las Vegas secured & have been in communication with AdComm, Catholic Worker, Desert Experience, and Jennifer Carr for various aspects of the weekend. I do an online postcard thing that announces the gathering to about people in a wide region vaguely close to each meeting (157 postcards, printing and mailing for about \$1 each). Can't say it gets certain response, but it is an efficient way to inform more people on our list about our gatherings. Still working on New Orleans for a future meeting – getting slightly more possible but help is needed – any contacts would be useful.
- Wrote annual report and got out May fund appeal with Karen Marysdaughter's letter.
- Fundraising Committee has had a call or two. Financially we are doing well, though a couple things that came in larger checks were alternative funds that closed their funds. Between them that was about \$2,400. We got another \$1,000 from a small fund in Ithaca in August for the second time.
- June/July, Aug/Sept, Oct/Nov newsletters done; bulk issues (200 copies) are mailed to about 24 people who ask for them, and hopefully get them out. Another 300 get it by postal mail and there are 647 on the e-list now (probably some dupes between lists).
- Went down to Philly in June for 2 nights to table at the Social Forum. Reports have been in blog and newsletter. Coordinated with Erica, Cathy and Anne B about San Jose Forum and sent lit etc.
- Arranged for Anne Barron to table at Vets for Peace convention in San Diego + workshop. Her report is in Oct/Nov next newsletter. Tried to get someone for Christian Peacemaker Teams in

Detroit but no luck. Didn't get a rep to Campaign Nonviolence in Santa Fe either though worked on that a bit. Shipped lit here and there for various events, including Mennonites in Kansas and FOR in Northwest. Card orders seem to have dropped off. Probably we need a new design....

- I plan to go to the New England WTR gathering in a couple weeks. Was involved in some emails and calls related to the organizing, but mostly I just attend and am not on any committee.
- Writing a blog post once a month and post on Facebook when I have something of interest. Update web pages, like the home page, summer reading, things on the right column and such. Peter Smith updates contact list, profiles, newsletter pages, and this and that. Ed and Dave fix things up off and on.
- The usual general office stuff, some filing, lots of email, mail in and out, etc...
- I think the #1 counseling call now is people who say "The IRS called and said they are suing me...." Amazing how many of these calls are hitting people in our network or close to our network. I keep putting it in the newsletter and on our website, but the fact that many in our network have tax debts makes it seem all the more real.
- Justin Becker, a student at Sarah Lawrence College, got in touch with me in the summer about potentially doing some work this semester for NWTRCC. He did a short internship with Center on Conscience & War, who told him about NWTRCC. Since we had budgeted money for office help last May, I've given it a go. It helps that he sought NWTRCC out and is very interested in learning about working in the peace movement so it's good to have him around. He started right after Labor Day and will be here through most of December. He's helping with some mailings and office tasks, offering some ideas for social media which he uses a lot, potentially making a short video on "how to fill out a W-4," helping with cleaning up old files, maybe writing an article on student debt for the next newsletter, etc. It's always an experiment to find which projects are the best fit but it's a good experiment for me. He comes in 2 days for about 4 hours each at a rate of \$10/hour.

Generally I am feeling pretty good with NWTRCC work these days and hope I can stick it out a while more – I'm just at a new awkward age, this one for job hunting.... This fall I am dropping one of my other jobs that is one day a week, more or less. Partly it's getting a bit harder to deal with the many interruptions and multi-tasking that comes with freelance work, and there are some issues with the staff changes at the agency I've worked with for lo these many years – 15 without and IRS levy!

In part that leads me to ask to restore to the budget the 5 hours (paid) that I dropped a couple years ago to make room for an increase in Erica's hours when our finances were tight. Even without her being sidelined recently, I find I am spending the 25 hours at NWTRCC anyway, which the Coordinator job was intended to be. AdComm didn't seem to think this needs to be a formal proposal, but it will be flagged in the budget discussion.

It continues to be a privilege to do this kind of work for a living. So thanks!



October 7, 2015