

# **ACTION PLAN FOR THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CENTER**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

For 40 years the Martin Luther King Jr. Center has been a valuable community resource in the City of Redding. Over the years the City has partnered with numerous groups and agencies to facilitate the delivery of programs to serve the needs of our community, including after-school and summer care activities for low-income children. After many successful years of operation, participation levels at the MLK Jr. Center have dropped significantly in recent months. In response, the City convened a Blue Ribbon Committee to develop and adopt an Action Plan for the MLK Jr. Center that addresses program needs and priorities, updates policies, and increases awareness of MLK Jr. Center activities within the surrounding neighborhood.

The Blue Ribbon Committee assembled a dozen key individuals with expertise in primary education, after-school programs and community building. Their fact-finding efforts included reviewing best practices and investigating sustainable programs, traveling to Sacramento to view model after-school programs, and convening four focus groups to collect information from key stakeholders including neighborhood residents, after-school program attendees and their parents, and members of the Shasta County Multi-Cultural Advisory Board.

The key recommendation of the Committee is a partnership with the Redding School District to establish the MLK Jr. Center as a satellite site for the Cypress School After-School Education and Safety (ASES) Program during the 2009-10 school year. This option allows Cypress School to bring its successful and well-funded program closer to its students who reside in the MLK neighborhood. Once established, the ultimate intent is to work with the Redding School District to expand the MLK Jr. Center-based ASES program to children attending other schools in the district.

The Action Plan outlines the provision of after-school services, complementary enrichment programs, various multi-cultural activities, and marketing and community outreach initiatives through the MLK Jr. Center. Staffing will be provided through the combined efforts of the Redding School District, the City of Redding and community volunteers. A coordinator hired by the City of Redding will provide oversight.

The Action Plan also identifies six primary goals with established metrics to measure success:

1. Provide after-school enrichment programs for children grades K-5.
2. Foster an atmosphere of a friendly family / neighborhood center.
3. Promote an awareness of multicultural backgrounds and history to the community.
4. Nurture relationships with other groups to promote partnerships.
5. Conduct neighborhood survey.
6. Continue ongoing communication with neighborhood and supporters.

With the appropriate resources and community support, the MLK Jr. Center has the potential to return to being a thriving neighborhood center. This Action Plan assembles the partnerships, identifies the resources and provides the road map to achieve success.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Blue Ribbon Committee makes these specific recommendations to the City relative to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center:

- The City partner with the Redding School District to establish the MLK Center as a satellite site to the Cypress School After School Education and Safety (ASES) program to best meet the after-school care needs for the children in the neighborhood.
- The after-school program start with the K-5 program for children attending Cypress School and once that program is successfully running work with school district officials to reclassify the MLK program such that children from other schools could attend as well.
- An emphasis be placed on the youth and family participation, and increase the program offerings for this audience.
- The multi-cultural program be expanded beyond holiday celebrations to workshops and talks about interpersonal relations, tolerance and understanding. Shasta County Citizens Against Racism has already offered to assist with such programming.
- A comprehensive marketing plan be developed for the Center that includes communication plans targeted at the individual/family, the neighborhood and the community.
- The City of Redding augment district provided after-school staff with two additional staff members.
- For activities outside the after-school program, the City hire a Center Coordinator to maintain safety, ensure consistency of offerings, market and staff the complementary programs, report any maintenance needs, direct activities and act as liaison to the neighborhood and community.
- The City hire a Site Coordinator as soon as possible to begin research, marketing and implementation of complementary programs to be offered at the Center.
- Utilize the Center to a greater extent with city-wide recreational programming.

## **Background**

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Center was built with funds awarded January 26, 1968 from the Department of Housing and Urban Development grant in the amount \$79,119 and a contribution from the City of Redding of \$36,482 for a total development cost of \$115,601. The dedication took place on October 11, 1968 and the Grand Opening was held April 4, 1969. The Center was originally operated by the Poverty Study-Action Association of Shasta County from 1968 – 1985 under an operating agreement with the City of Redding. The MLK Jr. Memorial Center nonprofit corporation, under an operating agreement with the City, operated the Center from 1985- 1988. This group disbanded due to lack of resources and the City of Redding began managing the programs in 1988 through the Recreation Division of the Community Services Department.

Over the course of this time, the composition of neighborhood has also changed. In the late-1970's, thirty-six families were relocated from the Linden Canyon to make way for a proposed extension of Buenaventura Boulevard. The project was later re-designed to what is the current alignment down Canyon Creek Canyon. In the 1990's, a larger numbers of families of Asian ancestry lived in the neighborhood. Some of those families moved to ownership opportunities in other parts of the City. Between February 2003 and 2007, 11 new homes and 50 new apartments were completed in partnership with the Redding Redevelopment Agency. Many of these new residents are families with children. Today, the ethnic make-up of the neighborhood more closely mirrors the city at large with a predominantly Caucasian population.

The City partners with a number of organizations to provide a variety of health, education, and social events to the neighborhood. The most notable partnership is the Shasta County Multi-Cultural Advisory Board (Advisory Board). The Advisory Board's primary objectives and purposes include providing programs and services that will advance the ideas, philosophy and teachings of Martin Luther King Jr. and promoting and supporting education, health, recreation and social opportunities and provide resources and services to the community.

The after school program has been the backbone of youth programming at the Center. Attendance has reached as many as 40 children per day with the majority of the youth living in the neighborhood. The primary purpose of this program has been to provide educational assistance augmented with social activities. The Center is also the site for families in the neighborhood to get together for special events. These have included the Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday celebration, basketball tournaments, community concerts, and National Night Out.

While the Center has had many successful years of operation, participation over the last year has waned. In March 2009, the Community Services Director convened a Blue Ribbon Committee to develop and adopt an Action Plan specifically for the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center. The Action Plan was to provide a framework for programming at the Center including: a review and update of Center policies; programming priorities and goals; and an outreach program to increase awareness of the MLK Jr. Community Center activities within the surrounding neighborhood.

## **Committee Work**

The Blue Ribbon Committee was formed, convened its first meeting April 6, 2009 and held a total of five meetings and two field trips. Committee members included: Cindy Bishop, Fran Brady, Georgia Fowler, Sue LeVier, Eddie McAllister, Charles Menoher, Judy Salter, Monique Taylor and Jodie Van Ornum. Mrs. Isaac Lowe and Mrs. Patricia Sansom were also invited to be committee members, but were unable to attend the meetings. Community Services Director Kim Niemer, Management Analyst Matt McCallum and consultant Theresa Muth were also part of the committee.

After the initial session of introductions, Center background and overview, the Committee visited three afterschool programs in the Sacramento area. At the next meeting, a presentation of after-school best practices and model programs was made to the committee, followed by a brainstorming session to come up with complementary programs and activities.

Early in the committee meetings, it became clear that a partnership with Cypress Elementary School for the after-school program at the Center was the best option. This partnership will allow the Center to start from day one with a program already successful on the Cypress campus based on the best practices for the profession. Additionally, the school connection will provide some continuity with classroom activities, state-funded after-school staffing, and program materials. This partnership allowed the committee to address other youth and family serving activities rather than needing to design an after-school program.

Four focus groups facilitated by Linda McBride were held at the MLK Center. Each group focused on different audiences: neighborhood/community; youth participants, parents of youth participants; and the Advisory Board. Mrs. McBride presented summaries of each of the meetings and trends among them to the Committee. (See attached results) The common theme that came from each focus group was the need to increase the offerings at the center.

In the next two meetings the committee discussed the results of the focus groups as well as the ASES program design and proposed staffing structure for the facility. The committee was asked to identify possible partnerships for the suggested list of complementary programs. At the next meeting the committee set priorities for the complementary programs and marketing/outreach efforts. Cypress Teacher Molly Stimpel led the committee members on a tour of Cypress School and the ASES after-school program. The program was well-staffed and the children appeared to be engaged in the academic part of the day. The final meeting of the committee was a review and discussion of the draft action plan.

## **Program Proposal**

### AFTER SCHOOL

The Committee recommends the City partner with the Redding School District to establish the MLK Center as a satellite site to the Cypress School After School Education and Safety (ASES) program to best meet the after-school care needs for the children in the neighborhood. ASES is a state-funded afterschool program, currently operating successfully at Cypress School and other Redding School District campuses. The Cypress program serves 123 children in grades K-5.

The two key program components of the ASES program are literacy and enrichment. The program is meant to be an extension of the school day and to provide a safe environment as well as opportunities for relationship building. The program starts with a healthy snack daily, followed by a “power hour” where children get time for and help with their homework, and ends with an enrichment component consisting of art, music, recreation, or other activities based on the interest and needs of the students. It is the intent of the program for participants to attend the full day of the after school program every day.

The demographics of the neighborhood surrounding the Center provided by the Redding School District showed there are currently a total of 157 children that attend schools in the Redding School District. The majority of the children attend either Cypress Elementary School (57) or Sequoia Middle School (34). All others attend Manzanita, Juniper, Sycamore, or Turtle Bay. The committee’s recommendation is to start with the K-5 program for children attending Cypress School and once that program is successfully running work with school district officials to reclassify the MLK program such that children from other schools could attend as well.

### YOUTH AND FAMILY

The focus group meeting participants identified a strong desire to increase the number of family programs and events offered. They also wanted enrichment opportunities for their children outside the K-5 range. The Committee recommends an emphasis be placed on the youth and family participation, and increase the program offerings for this audience.

A prioritized list of recommended complementary programs for the Center is attached. Some of the top activities and events proposed include: BBQ’s and rummage sales to increase a sense of neighborhood cohesiveness; cultural activities to promote awareness of ethnic diversity in the area; personal interest classes to improve self-esteem and promote education; and scholarships to provide opportunities that may not have otherwise been available to the youth in the neighborhood.

## MULTI-CULTURAL

The Committee recognizes the long standing role of the MLK Center to celebrate and promote the variety of cultures represented in the Redding area. This is an important role of the Center and should be continued and expanded to include new partners. The Center is the perfect home for these celebrations. The Committee recommends the multi-cultural program be expanded beyond holiday celebrations to workshops and talks about interpersonal relations, tolerance and understanding. Shasta County Citizens Against Racism has already offered to assist with such programming. Additionally, seek out both physical and aesthetic improvements to make the Center more inviting to people of all races.

## MARKETING AND OUTREACH

The Committee recognizes that in order for any program or special event to be successful, it must have an effective marketing strategy. Accordingly, the Committee recommends a comprehensive marketing plan be developed for the Center that includes communication plans targeted at the individual/family, the neighborhood and the community.

Among the highest priority marketing and outreach items identified were a direct mail and door to door campaign to the neighborhood residents and a reader board in front of the Center. The importance of direct contact with the neighborhood is extremely important to ensure the Center is being programmed to meet their needs.

Other methods of marketing identified were public service announcements in the newspaper and on the radio stations, cross promoting of programs with partnership organizations, and the creation of a Center logo and slogan. A complete list of marketing and outreach priorities is included in the Appendix.

## **Staffing Proposal**

The Committee believes staffing is critical to the implementation of successful, high quality program. Staff members must have appropriate skills and experience, a passion for their work, a high work ethic and receive relevant ongoing training and supervision. For purposes of the after-school program, the Redding School District will provide trained staff members to support a 20 to 1 student to staff ratio. The Committee recommends the City of Redding augment with two additional staff members. The two staff members from the City of Redding could be contracted through the Americorps program. For activities outside the after-school program, the Committee recommends the City hire a Center Coordinator to maintain safety, ensure consistency of offerings, market and staff the complementary programs, report any maintenance needs, direct activities and act as liaison to the community. If it is possible to hire one person to be both an after-school staff member and the Center Coordinator, the Committee believes this would be highly desirable.

Additional staffing will be needed on an event or program by program basis. Volunteers will be recruited and used to help augment programs offerings, as will contracted instructors, and staff from other partner agencies and organizations.

## Goals and Outcomes –

- 1. Provide after school enrichment programs for children grades K-5**
  - Partner with Cypress School to provide quality ASES program at MLK
  - Be serving 40 neighborhood children from all schools by the 2010-2011 school year
  - Create quality, educational, fun and esteem building activities for youth and teens
  - Support and grow Sweethearts program
  - Start program for boys comparable to Sweethearts
  - Explore establishing sport teams at the Center
  - Continue to promote youth concerts with YAC
  - Offer 2 personal interest classes quarterly based on neighborhood survey results annually
  - Offer 4 workshops to improve self esteem and improve interpersonal communication for teens annually
  - Explore offering field trips
  - Goal of 20 event/activity days annually including those listed above by 2011
  
- 2. Foster an atmosphere of a friendly family/neighborhood center.**
  - Host National Night Out event annually
  - Quarterly rummage sales at the Center
  - Hold 2 Neighborhood BBQ's annually
  - Holiday celebrations
  - Goal of 12 event/activity days annually including those listed above by 2011
  
- 3. Promote an awareness of multicultural backgrounds and history to the community.**
  - Identify 4 events annually to promote multi-cultural awareness
  - Encourage ethnic food nights
  - Goal of 6 multi-cultural programs event/activity days annually including those listed above by 2011
  
- 4. Nurture relationships with other groups to promote partnerships.**
  - Solicit participation from Francis Ct. and Linden Apartment residents in planning and implementation of events
  - Create relationships with Shasta College and Simpson University for mentorship programs
  - AARP for tax preparation and driver safety courses
  
- 5. Conduct Neighborhood Survey**
  - Perform a door to door canvas of the neighborhood to solicit the opinions of the residents on what they would like to see offered at the Center
  - Results compiled by July 31, 2009 to address future programming
  
- 6. Continue ongoing communication with neighborhood and supporters**
  - Publish monthly newsletter announcing activities for the upcoming month
  - Create calendar to market programs in the center and distribute throughout the City.
  - Hold community meetings to keep current with the needs.

## **Conclusion**

The Blue Ribbon Committee firmly believes the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center has the potential to be a thriving neighborhood center given the appropriate resources and community support. It is the recommendation of the Committee to move forward with plans to provide an ASES After School program in conjunction with the Redding School District/Cypress School this fall. The after school program will meet the immediate needs of the K-5 students in the neighborhood who attend Cypress School. The ultimate goal is to expand the partnership to be able to include all K-5 students without a concern for which school they attend.

It is also the recommendation of the Committee that the City hire a Site Coordinator as soon as possible to begin research, marketing and implementation of complementary programs to be offered at the Center. A thorough canvassing of the neighborhood will provide more specific direction for relevant programming for the revitalization of the Center.

With limited staff and financial resources, partnerships will need to be created to help with the new programming for the center. Shared activities will bring the needed resources to provide quality services.

The following mission statement was created as a result of the work done by the committee and will be adopted with the revitalization.

**The Martin Luther King, Jr. Multicultural Center can be a vibrant, active and welcoming neighborhood center with an emphasis on youth development and celebrating diversity.**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAMS FOR THE MLK CENTER AS PRIORITIZED BY THE BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE**

#### **Highest Priority Program Ideas**

Math as it relates to Sports

Music Programs (includes guitars, drumming, garage bands, concerts and vocals)

Community Events (includes BBQs and block parties, neighborhood yard and garage sales, talent shows, monthly ethnic nights, holiday celebrations, and National Night Out)

Sweethearts Club (weekly meetings)

Provide Recreation Scholarships (includes kayaking, sports and aquatics programs, classes)

Personal Interest Classes (includes dance, karate, gymnastics, photography, media, drama, ceramics and pottery)

#### **Priority Program Ideas**

Life Skills Training (includes cooking, budgeting, public speaking)

Field Trips (destinations include planetarium, court house, railroad club)

Classes for Adults (includes computer instruction, home improvement tips) **G.E.D**

Self-Esteem and Interpersonal Communication Workshops

Cultural Awareness and Social Identity (w/ a family focus)

Establish Girls Inc. / Girls on Run Clubs Boy Council / Boy Scouts

Seniors Activities

MLK Center Sports Teams and Athletics

#### **Prospective Priority Areas**

Community Service to Seniors and Local Residents

Community Garden

Science-Related Activities (includes build-a-robot and software programming)

Career Connections (includes science and technical focus, STEMS for high school, training for technical careers)

## **APPENDIX B - Marketing/Outreach Ideas for MLK Center AS outlined by the Blue Ribbon Committee**

### **Highest Priority Marketing/Outreach Ideas**

Direct mail campaign to neighborhood residents outlining Center programs and opportunities to participate

Door-to-door campaign to neighborhood residents re-introducing Center programs and soliciting their interests for Center activities

Public service information in newspaper/radio

Cross promotion of programs with partnership organizations

Center logo and slogan - Consider graphic branding for Center to be used on all Center productions

### **Priority Marketing/Outreach Ideas**

Improvement to Recreation Guide coverage. Our department programs booklet includes information on all programs and facilities. The space allocated for MLK Center activities could be used more effectively in future editions

Center newsletter - Consider creation of Center newsletter specific to the activities of the Center

National Night Out

Existing web page

Reader Board - Consider adding a large reader board to announce Center activities that is visible to cars passing by

### **Prospective Priority Marketing/Outreach Areas**

Emails/postcards to previous participants

Existing bulletin board

Banner campaign- In advance of and in concert with a reader board

Facebook/Myspace/Craigslist - Consider posting Center pages on these sites and distributing Center info to “friends” or subscribers to these pages

Web addresses - Consider purchasing a new web page domain specific to the Center and keeping it current with calendar of events and opportunities

## Appendix C - Focus Groups Summaries

The Community Services Department contracted with McBride Consulting to facilitate four (4) focus groups at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center. The purpose was to explore with various audiences what programs and services are going well, what programs and services would enhance the Center, and what programs and services are no longer needed or need to be changed.

The format for each focus group was to introduce the audience to the purpose of the focus group; let the audience know that there would be specific questions introduced, and to solicit other information or ideas from participants not already covered in the original set of questions.

For the purpose of this report the format will be to identify the Focus Group audience, the questions asked and the responses from the Focus Group.

### **Community Focus Group (held April 8, 2009 – approximately 15 attended)**

Question #1 – What purpose do you think the Center provides the youth and families using the Center?

- Symbol for the Community
- Builds a sense of Community and positive relationships
- Provide a supportive environment
- Unity and community culture
- Offers educational opportunities, resources, partnerships with other organizations
- Positive alternatives to other activities that might not be safe
- Meaningful activities in a safe place
- Mentorship, role models, support for parents
- Need to target middle school and high school youth

Question #2 – Are there programs and services that you are aware of that you would like to see at the Martin Luther King Multicultural Center?

- Music program that is affordable/low cost
- Children's music museum
- Youth fest
- Gardening – organic vegetables
- Frisbee golf course
- Parent education
- Programs for smoking cessation
- Art and community art projects (parade float)
- Exercise programs
- Sports programs (volleyball, baseball, basketball, etc.)
- Holiday activities, e.g., Easter egg hunt, Halloween activities, Cinco de Mayo etc.
- More cultural activities & activities to celebrate diversity

- Focus activities on times when youth are out of school
- Better staffing ratios and higher trained staff
- Enrolled programs (rather than drop in) where activities can be well planned and ratios are appropriate  
Note (one person felt that drop in was important)
- Job shadowing/career exploration
- Tutoring in math & reading
- Service learning projects, for example, Christmas could be about giving/helping others
- Volunteer corps training/mentor training
- Food from different cultures – perhaps highlight a cultural a month
- Celebration picnics for the Community
- Outreach needs to better to the Community – email, posters, flyers, utility bills, radio, etc.
- Community gathering events
- Ongoing volunteer & staff in-service & training
- CPR Training (Paula Percy is a basic life support training and willing to volunteer training time)
- Need enrollment forms & emergency contacts. Procedures for participation
- Nutritional program expanded camping, day trips, fishing, field trips
- Cooking classes
- Teaching chess & other board games
- Counseling
- Collaborating more with Eagle Soar
- Train peers to do peer counseling
- Support buddy system for play with older youth helping younger youth
- Tai chi & other martial arts to teach self discipline
- After school programs
- Equipment for play & learning
- Boys Council & Girls Circle Groups
- Have event calendar
- Provide consistent programs so that people know when they will occur
- More structured activities

Question #3 – Have you or your family used the services and programs at the Center? If so, what were the strengths? What needed to be strengthened?

- Yes – several had used the programs (note: one man used the Center when he was in elementary & high school)
- Need to bring people back to MLK
- The Community is smaller (referring to the number of different ethnic groups)
- Good events will attract more people
- Need more services for adults & older adults (adopt a grandparent)
- It is difficult for kids who are not in the immediate neighborhood to access the services
- More programs needed for teens
- More family focus programs (family movie night, family picnics, etc.)

Question #4 – Do you have special interest, skills, or talents that you feel would be beneficial to the youth using the Center? If so, what are they and would you be willing to give time or services to the Center?

- Paula Percy – as an RN and trained in Basic Life Support – willing to do training in her area of expertise
- Health Improvement Partnership – Boys Council/Girls Circle (Art & Linda McBride)
- Sherry Brooks (Shasta County Public Health – gardening, nutrition & training volunteers)

**Youth Focus Group (held April 9 2009 – 9 youth between 1<sup>st</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grades)**

Question #1 – What do you like about the Center?

- Legos
- Jungle Gym
- Ball court (need more basketballs)
- Park (need more balls)
- Computer games (but don't get to use the computers)
- "I like the computer but we don't get to use them"
- Homework help
- Snacks
- Activities & games
- Field trips

Question #2 – What activities would you like to see at the Center that is not here now?

- Swimming pool & swimming classes
- Skate board park (need elbow pads, helmets & knee pads)
- Sliding socks to slide on the floor
- Games like Sharks & Minnows, Heads up Seven up, etc.
- Homework help needs to be limited to 10-15 minutes then a break
- Video game place with non-violent games
- More field trips
- Bikes and bike rodeos (need helmets, knee pads & elbow pads)
- More art, science projects & history/geography
- Birthday parties
- Having a garden
- Making stuff from wood
- Hiking
- Helping at Mission
- Clubs like Club Penguin
- More playground time and games like baseball, football (tackle), etc.

Question #3 – Do you have enough time for your homework?

- Yes
- Too much time (comment from older boys)
- Plenty of help
- Would like use the computer for research

- Need more help – like you get at Sylvan

Question #4 – How could the Center staff help you better in school?

- Be a lot nicer to kids
- More snacks
- Staff are always telling us what to do (too controlling)
- Help learning to type (keyboard)

Question #5 – Would you invite other kids to come to the Center? Why? Why not?

- Yes when it is fun
- I tried but they have more important things
- “No teenagers” (from one of the girls)
- I would invite kids if their parents need them to go somewhere
- If parents are working I would ask them to come

Anything you would like to add?

- Don’t like dogs pooping in the park’
- More outside activities
- I would like team sports
- I like the park
- Don’t like homework time
- Inside isn’t as fun
- Don’t like the inside
- 

**Parent Focus Group –(held April 9, 2009 – 10 in attendance)**

Note: of the 10 in attendance there were 2 couples from the immediate neighborhood, 1 foster parent who uses the Center but is not from the immediate or greater neighborhood, 1 homeless mother from Eagle Soar. There were 4 “others” in attendance. Dinner was served by Kim Niemer and Jan Lopez (for parents and children).

Question #1 – What do you like about the Center?

- That it is free
- Child are safe and it is in their best interest to be at the Center
- Get homework help/tutoring
- Summer is wonderful – gives parents a break
- Supervised socialization
- Crafts
- Parents know where kids are and what they are doing

Question #2 – Are there activities that you would like to see that are not currently at the Center?

- Christmas time have free gifts
- Have free potlucks/barbeques for families
- Need tables in park
- A baseball field, volley ball net, etc for family games
- More family activities like a monthly family night
- More advertising on website, use Craig’s list to advertise what is happening at the

Center

- Public Service Announcements to advertise free event (102.7 was mentioned)
- Swimming lessons/transportation to aquatic center (may be able to partner with Bethel, Salvation Army or other places for transportation)
- Gymnastics
- Organized sports and sports teams
- Martial arts
- Art lessons and activities
- Advertising for volunteers
- Music program
- Dance program
- Anti drug campaign
- Dance teams/skip roping, etc.
- Jazzercise – exercise programs
- Need computer access for adults and children  
Note: homeless mom said that she and her children are unable to access the computers at the library because they are ineligible for a library card. You must have a permanent physical address and proof such as a utility bill in your name.
- Computer classes for adults
- Reading aloud to kids

Question #3 – How could the Center staff help your child(ren) do better in school?

- Offering more tutoring like by Simpson/National students
- More field trips
- Good tutoring for math and reading – make it fun – have a reading club/math club
- Take children to the library
- Have a summer education program that combines academics and activities

Question #4 – What other programs/services would you be interested in for your family? For example parenting class, cooking class, family night, and gardening.

- Be a Community Center and coordinate with other organizations to build a summer program
- Have a work book for every child
- Coordinate outreach in the Community and train parent volunteers
- Serve younger children (preschool)
- Sewing, cooking, gardening, nutrition, budgeting classes
- Tax assistance
- Have movies in the park
- Grow a garden as a science project
- In the summer use MLK as a cooling center. “We can’t afford to turn on our air conditioner. It would be nice to be able to come over to MLK in the afternoon to cool off on hot days.”
- Have a calendar of events so that the community knows what is going on
- Have chess games and competitions
- Assistance completing forms such as child care, medical, food stamps
- Get involved in the “Armstrong Program” Schwarzenegger program
- Neighborhood watch program

- Make the Center a gathering place – needs a more inviting environment
- Amber alert training for children & parents
- Make sure MLK is a safe place – perhaps more police drive by or security guards

Question #5 – What are your hours of need between 3-6 p.m.?

- The foster parent needs care from 9a.m – 6 p.m. She owns a business and understands that care may not be available all those hours so will take what she is able to get. She feels MLK has been a good place for her foster child.
- Majority of parent felts noon to 5 p.m. would meet their needs, particularly in the summer. A lunch and snack would be appreciated
- Parents were complimentary about the staff

**MLK Advisory Board Focus Group (held April 21, 2009)**

**4 Board Members in attendance**

Question #1 What purpose do you think the Center provides the youth and families who use the Center?

- Tutoring
- Stability (a place to count on)
- A safe place to hang out
- Provides nutritious food for kids
- Provides activities for kids
- A positive place for children when they don't have another place to go

Question #2 Are there programs and services that you are aware of that you would like to see at the Center?

- Teen programs, for example sports
- Drug free zone/Neighborhood Watch
- Girls Circle/Boys Council (drug prevention programs)
- Sweethearts club
- Parent/family programs (family night)
- Dance (stepping/hip hop, etc)
- Computer education for adults
- Computer repair program to help with future job skills
- Monthly social night (movie nights for families, etc.)
- Gardening/off site gardening
- Martial arts
- Talent show
- Music instruction (recommend Sylvia Hill)
- Partnership with churches, Eagles Soar, etc.
- Cooking program
- Need a process to know how many to expect each day

Question #3 Have you or your family used the services and programs at the Center? If so, what were the strengths? What needed to be strengthened?

- Top notch coordinator needed
- Qualified staff

- Higher level supervision (staff able to handle challenging children)
- Trained volunteers that are screened
- May want to require parents to volunteer (not necessarily with children but perhaps other ways to volunteer)
- Jan Lopez indicated that (time available) she has knowledge and interest in volunteering to help with gardening or cooking or grant writing

Question #4 What are some ways we can demonstrate that the Center/Board are reflective of the community?

- Board membership needs to be more diverse
- Celebration of diversity is a core purpose of the Center
- Board needs to manage business meetings better so that Board Members can focus on programs and services
- Board could invite ethnic/cultural groups or organizations to Board Meetings to share what they are doing in the community
- Look at current facility use (including the library) and make it more user friendly
- A facility use/physical improvement review
- Make facility inviting for all ethnic/cultural groups

### **COMMON THEMES**

The following are common messages from the focus groups:

1. Increase the number of family programs and events.
2. Repair the computers and have appropriate computer training.
3. More activities/lessons, for example, sports, art, cpr/first aid, gardening, cooking, music, swimming, dance, etc.
4. Increase volunteerism and train volunteers and staff.
5. More programs and services for adults and seniors.
6. Increase the number of cultural activities to reflect the diversity of the community at large.
7. Increase the nutrition program.
8. The indoor environment needs to be more inviting and reflective of different cultures.
9. More field trips and experiences away from the Center.
10. Homework time/tutoring are valuable.
11. More collaboration with other organizations to provide programs and services, including transportation.
12. Keep cost down (parents prefer free).
13. Someone to coordinate volunteers, supervise staff and organize activities, classes and events.
14. Consider a more formal application process for individuals using programs and services.