



# Great Falls Inter-Faith Association

May 23rd, 2013

## Opportunities Inc. –Resource Center

Ray opened the meeting with a verse from Leviticus and a prayer. He asked that we all introduce ourselves and give any updates we had.

Joan said there is a summit in Bozeman in September on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> on the College Campus to address childhood hunger. They will show a movie called “Coming to the Table”. She has brochures coming next month and said that registration will be about \$60-75 per person and that they are reserving blocks of rooms and local hotels.

Ray introduced our special guest this month Tammy Lacey. She is the incoming Superintendent of the Great Falls Public Schools. She is from Great Falls and has attended school at Sacajewea, North Middle School and CMR. She attended College and got her teaching degree and came back to Great Falls to teach school. Her first assignment was at Valley View School, she then went on to be the first Teacher on Assignment. This position is instructional coaches that support classroom teachers. She then went on to be the K-8 principal in Fairfield and still lives there. She became the principal at Loy Elementary and then 6 years ago was appointed to be the Human Resources Director so she could learn the business side. She attends the UCC Church in Great Falls and Fairfield.

She said the challenges facing the public schools are Kids that are homeless, hungry, moving, poverty, and dealing with drug and alcohol addictions. Lee Houle said that presently 218 students are homeless. It has been as high as 276. The district has provided the following to homeless students; 13 families supplied with Food from the Food Bank, 1 family has a hotel room paid until June 4<sup>th</sup>, referrals for 4 students with substance abuse issues, gave out school supplies, clothes and back packs. The Sunrise Lions Club pays for glasses for homeless students. Lee said he even took supplies to a family living in a van. The school district pays for transportation to students who move away from their primary school so the student can continue attending that school. An average of 360 backpacks of food goes home with students every week.

Tammy said that their Assessment Data is exceeding the statewide averages. The C/T scores exceed state averages. Our district also has the highest rate in the state for free and reduced lunch at 50%. She said the districts goal over the next few years will be student achievement. They are working on customized learning to ensure they graduate and go on to be successful. The district is asking the public to support a mill levy of \$981,748 to address the student’s individual needs. This will address overloaded classrooms, provide specialized learning activities to challenge gifted students, hire a specialist to provide occupational therapy for kids with special physical needs, add 2 drug counselors or social workers to address substance abuse, preparing teachers to deliver instruction and assess learning effectively, to update technology, and equipment and software licenses to provide up to date learning experiences. These are just a few examples of where the money will be utilized. They are also looking at improving the safety and security of our community’s schools.

Ray said that we will continue our meetings through the summer so we can continue to work on the homeless issues to help them move forward. We would like to have a community forum in August to inform the public of where we are and where we are heading. The task force would like to have homeless remedies in place by October.

Janet with the YWCA said the October Perez bill passed and it will help to protect the vulnerable. The law states that if you are aware of abuse you must report it, it is mandatory or you can be prosecuted as well as the abuser. She said she is working with Shelley and the University of Great Falls on a program called the Power of Sisterhood. They are trying to end generational violence and poverty. They will “walk” those girls through their high school years through mentoring and they will have two textbooks. “How to be a Lady” and “How to be a Gentleman”.

Jim said the Mission is getting ready to move their office into the new building they acquired, which will literally double their capacity at the mission. He said they are getting ready for their summer camp. At Camp Light, the children will start Wednesday June 12<sup>th</sup>; it is a 6 week camp for children who have finished Kindergarten through age 15. Camp includes breakfast and lunch daily. At Camp Life Light children can look forward to six and ½ weeks of songs, games, crafts, and field trips and most importantly learning about Jesus. Registration is \$35-\$40 for a single child, \$63-\$73 for two children and \$84 and \$99 for three or more. Full and partial scholarships are also available.

Our next meeting date will be June 27<sup>th</sup> at noon at Opportunities.

Ray adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted.