

HUNGARIAN AMERICANS TOGETHER
CONFERENCE REPORT

Hosted By

Stephen J. Varga & Rev. Imre Bertalan

William Penn Association and the Bethlen Communities

June 26-27, 2008

Bethlen Communities

Ligonier, PA

Background

On April 18, 2008, the Hungarian American Coalition honored Prof. August J. Molnar, President of the American Hungarian Foundation, at a Gala dinner in Washington DC. When planning for this event the Coalition's Board decided to hold a half-day seminar entitled "Hungarian Americans Together" inviting many other organizations, and asking them to give a brief presentation on their activities, and time permitting, to exchange ideas on the future of Hungarian American organizations. During the seminar, given the number of presentations, there was not enough time to discuss this important issue. Therefore, the participants agreed to hold a follow-up meeting to discuss the future of Hungarian American organizations.

The William Penn Association and the Bethlen Communities agreed to organize a follow-up meeting, inviting the participants of the April 19th seminar and many other organizations across the United States.

The Coalition's published a special issue of the Newsletter to summarize the presentations made at the April 19th meeting which was distributed to all participants and also available at the Coalition's website. The follow-up meeting was held in Ligonier, PA, on June 26 and 27, 2008, hosted by the William Penn Association and the Bethlen Communities. The agenda and schedule of the conference was the following:

HUNGARIAN AMERICANS TOGETHER:

Conference II Agenda

Thursday, June 26th

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| 11:00 am | Picnic Lunch, Bethlen Communities |
| 12:00 pm | Welcome to the Meeting, Introductions, Purpose of the Gathering
Mr. Stephen Varga
Rev. Imre A. Bertalan |
| 12:30 pm | Update on Discussions Taking Place at the April 19th Meeting, Washington, DC
Mr. Max Teleki |
| 1:00 pm | Who Is Under the Umbrella?
Brief introductions from groups who did not participate in the Washington mtg. |
| 1:30 pm | Defining the Domestic Hungarian American Landscape and Its Needs (Small Groups)
Which historic organizations are functioning and what are their needs? What is the prognosis for the future? What are the challenges and issues we are facing? |
| 3:00 pm | The Will to Pass On
Ms. Andrea Lauer Rice presents Lauer Learning's "Pass It On..." white paper |

Is there a consensus as to the importance of passing on the American Hungarian legacy, heritage, language and tradition? If it is important, what is the domestic strategy? What are the goals? How can we better formulate a mutually supportive strategy to accomplish the goals emerging above?

5:30 pm Dinner
Darlington Inn (Hungarian Restaurant near Ligonier)

Evening free for further discussions, recreation or relaxation.

Friday, June 27th

8:30 am Breakfast Fare at Bethlen Communities

9:00 am Ecumenical Meditation (Ahitat)
Rev. Louis Medgyesi

9:20 am Continuation of The Will to Pass On Segment – Developing the Strategy

11:30 am Adjournment and Lunch

Participants

The participants of the conference were the following:

Mr. Stephen J. Varga, William Penn Association (WPA); Rev. Imre A. Bertalan, Bethlen Communities (BC) as hosts; and

Mr. Zoltan Bagdy	American Hungarian Federation (AHF)
Mr. Ron Balla	WPA
Mr. Jules Gyula Balogh	AHF
Mr. Anthony C. Beke	Hungarian Reformed Church in America (HRCA)
Mr. William Bero	WPA
Mr. Endre Csoman	WPA
Mr. George Dozsa	Hungarian American Coalition (HAC), BC, HRFA
Mr. Joseph Fabri	BC, Hungarian Reformed Federation of America (HRFA)
Mr. Csaba Fulop	Intern at HAC
Mr. Laszlo Hamos	Hungarian Human Rights Foundation, HRFA, HAC
Ms. Priscilla Hunyady	HRFA, BC
Mr. Charles Johns	WPA
Mr. Atilla Kocsis	AHF
Ms. Edith K. Lauer	HAC
Mr. Imre Lendvai-Lintner	Hungarian Scout Association in Exeteris, HAC
Rev. Louis Medgyesi	Calvin Synod Conference, United Church of Christ (CS)
Ms. Andrea Meszaros	Hungarian Heritage Museum of Cleveland
Dr. August J. Molnar	American Hungarian Foundation, HAC
Mr. John Morey	BC and HRFA

Ms. Gabriella Nadas	Hungarian Scout Fund, The Hungarian Association, The Calvin Synod School Fund
Mr. Roger Nagy	WPA
Ms. Reka Pipis	Intern at HAC
Mr. George Pogan	HAC and BC
Rev. Dr. Joseph Posta	HRFA and BC
Ms. Andrea Lauer Rice	Lauer Learning, HAC
Mr. Balazs Somogyi	HAC, HCSC
Ms. Edith Szep	BC
Mr. Maximilian Teleki	HAC
Mr. Richard Toth	WPA
Ms. Magdalene J. Ujvagi	BC
Mr. Al Vargo	WPA

Minutes

Following is a brief summary of the proceedings based on notes taken by Csaba Fulop, Andrea Lauer Rice, Attila Kocsi, Reka Pipis.

Thursday, June 26th

1. Welcome to the meeting

Mr. Stephen Varga welcomed the guests. He mentioned that the aim of this conference is to have an open discussion on the problems facing the Hungarian American community and possible solutions. Mr. Varga stressed that the reason for convening this meeting is not to create another organization. The meeting is just a continuation of the meeting held on April 19th, and hopefully someone else will later follow up and organize another meeting at another part of the country.

Rev. Imre Bertalan also welcomed the guests in Ligonier, and he said in his opening remarks that this meeting is not to exclude any other organizations. We have to find each other and begin to work together on those problems that the Hungarian American community faces.

2. Update on discussions taking place at the April 19th meeting, Washington, DC

Maximilian Teleki, President of the Hungarian American Coalition updated the participants on the April meeting. That conference was the beginning of working together. He summarized the essence of the conference by the following sentences: „There is a number of at-risk elements in our community. Some of them are identified, some of them are not. The “Pass it On” model is an organic model and can change. We have to figure out how to move forward, together.” He also stressed that the aim of these meetings is not to exclude anyone, and expressed his hope that at the 3rd and 4th meetings, more and more representatives of organizations will be present.

3. Who is under the umbrella? – Brief introductions from groups who did not participate in the Washington meeting

Andrea Meszaros, Cleveland Hungarian Heritage Society

They are a non-profit organization. Their aim is to preserve the history of the Hungarian American community. They support education, culture, language, and to that end they support a museum in downtown Cleveland. They also have a library, over 4500 volumes, in English and Hungarian languages. They serve the second, third and fourth generation of Hungarians.

Gabriella Nadas, Hungarian Association & Hungarian Scout Fund

The association was first organized in Austria in the late 1940s. Right now, the organization is in a transition between the younger generations and the over 80-90 years old people. They are able to fill this gap and survive. They organize exhibits and various cultural-educational-social events. She invited the participants to join their thanksgiving event, which will be posted on the TheGulyasPot website.

The Hungarian Scout Fund's aim is to maintain the international networking of international Hungarians.

Rev. Louis Medgyesi, Calvin Synod

Their primary mission is to support the high school in Kolozsvár, especially its students. Since 1990, they invested and supported a lot. It is a testament to what we can achieve through North-America. Unfortunately, many of their members and supporters are dying out, so they don't know what the future will be. The community experiences a decrease of population.

One of the most important things is to identify the audience, to find the answer for the question: Who do you serve? Firstly, they serve Hungarian-speaking older Hungarians. Secondly, the younger ones who don't speak Hungarian. The church's function and role is not only to serve the spiritual needs of people but also to be some help for various organizations.

Dr. Gabor Tarjan, American Hungarian Collegium, Hungarian University of Fine Art Budapest

American and Hungarian University professors established the American Hungarian Collegium (AHC) in order to the study Hungarian language, society and culture at University level and to create a new format to make the study of Hungarian culture possible. The program will start with a one week long Summer University in Penn Scenic View, Pennsylvania, in August. The participant professors are members of well-known American and Hungarian Universities.

Anthony C. Beke, Hungarian Reformed Church

They have 39 congregations. They are experiencing the Americanization of this Hungarian religious group. They have two categories of churches. Those that are recent immigrants, Hungarian is their first language and their activities are conducted in Hungarian. The other category is the group of those, whose ancestors came here around the first half of the 1900s.

Hungarian is not their first language. Nearly all of them cannot speak. There seems to be some interest in maintaining contact in the Hungarian activities, but they do not have the same attitude as the 1st generation had after coming to 1956. There is a huge dilemma of 2-3-4th generation Hungarian Americans.

Rev. Imre Bertalan, Bethlen Communities

He spoke about the past and present of the Bethlen Communities. Now, their Hungarian residents are just around 10% of the whole Bethlen Communities. The question to which we should find answers regarding their organization is: is this a place that our larger community will continue to value, hold important and come to in the next years?

4. Defining the Domestic Hungarian American Landscape and Its Needs (discussion) & the Will to Pass (Andrea Lauer-Rice's "Pass It On..." presentation)

Andrea Lauer Rice, CEO of Lauer Learning, discussed, in-depth, the topic: "The Will to Pass On". Her "Pass it on..." strategy, first developed in 2007, centers on the development of multimedia educational tools for children of all ages, to teach about culture, history and language, while, at the same time, finding ways to engage so-called "at risk" elements within our community. One concept to reach the youth and gain their interest is through technology (video games, websites, social networking tools, graphic novels, etc.). Additionally, Andrea introduced the GulyasPot website, which could serve as the major clearing house and communication tool for the Hungarian American community.

(To download: http://www.lauerlearning.com/download/Pass_it_on_WhitePaper.pdf)

Max Teleki opened the discussion with the main questions of this section. Who are we in the 21st century, what are the issues and problems that the Hungarian American community faces, what possible solutions can we find?

Dr. Molnar mentioned two individuals who were extremely important. The first one, Rudy Vecoli (his book is entitled '*People of New Jersey*') did research and found out that the immigrants were not going to do what they were supposed to do, to lose their cultural baggage. He proved that the expression 'melting pot' was not really right. Another author cited by Dr. Molnár was Julianna Puskas' book entitled: '*Ties that bind, ties that divide*'

The Bethlen Community did an in depth study before they began its physical expansion – to see what is expected by the American Hungarian community in the future. The participants asked them to make it available. (Deliverable – Any organization that has research on needs or make-up of Hungarian American community should share it with the group.)

The most important questions according to Dr. Molnar are: How does one serve that community in the future? How can we serve them in the most efficient way? What are the needs of the community to serve? Time and money are also important! We volunteer, but we have to pay people to do things more efficiently. In order to have professionalism in our communities, we have to pay people. We also have to maintain buildings, etc. The funding is not infinite, it is limited. Our energy is limited. It is a tremendous challenge that we face.

The next part of the discussion was about the challenges that the Hungarian American community faces. The major problems identified were the following:

- The community is getting younger, and the majority of the next generation is not interested at this time in their heritage. How can we attract them, with American eyes?
- We have to speak their language, meet their needs, as they are our constituents. We have to find a method of growing our constituency.
- Relevance is the key, the organizations should always be relevant. There are needs, and the people organize themselves to fulfill them. The community has to pay attention to these processes.
- The new expression: 'New Hungarians/Old Hungarians'. We have to reach out and find the 'New Hungarians' and everybody, and in order to achieve this, we need coordination and a network.
- The group of Hungarian Americans has a lot of subsections, not just the children and youth. We need to influence the parents to get the children involved until a certain age. (Deliverable - Lauer Learning to immediately begin work on Kis Majom DVD series as a language and cultural learning tool for infants and toddlers as well as their parents)
- There is no network for the youth, interns who were here, etc
- Strengthening the communication within the community. (network needed) (Deliverable - All organizations register at www.TheGulyasPot.com and inform their membership about this tool, also designate someone within organization to regularly input upcoming events on site)
- Using technology efficiently.
- Certain studies should be developed and carried on, about the Hungarian American community. Via these studies, we would be able to identify the domestic needs and thus, it would enable us to build tools and to develop solutions to fulfill these needs.
- There is a tendency that is good for us and strengthens the organizations that they have a right to operate and they will survive. This tendency shows that young people turn to their heritage, begin to search for and understand their roots.
- Many of the youth are not just Hungarians. They came from a mixed background. How can we create an environment for them? They also have other interests, other groups.
- There was a discussion about churches and organizations regarding the question of how to bring people into the church, into organizations. The youth has different needs, different language, different society and conception of the world.
- This is why we always have to observe and review ourselves – whether the needs are still the same since we were founded, or have they changed.
- Problems of the American Universities – there are only two that deal with Hungarian studies, and both of them lack funds (Univ. Indiana Bloomington and Rutgers, in New Brunswick, NJ).
- All ethnic communities face the same problems. Perhaps we can study from them, regarding how they involve and inspire the youth.

- We should offer something to the young people to come to our organizations. They like to be involved, not to be outsiders but insiders in the community. They are needed in the leadership of our organizations; their new ideas are welcome, etc.
- Another tool for involving the youth could be the scholarships. But there is a problem with them – there is no obligation of the recipients (e.g. work somewhere after the program or go home and work there in a company etc.) We should redesign these programs in order to make sure that the scholarships are investments to the community and not just to the individual person who receives it. (Deliverable - All organizations who have scholarship programs send in information and a downloadable application form to Gulyas Pot to begin building a listing / network of these resources / opportunity)

As a result of the discussion, the participants developed a list of important needs of the Hungarian American community and discussed the tools and vehicles by which these can be fulfilled.

Community needs	Tools
Educational	Youth networking Scouting
Cultural	Mutli-generational Tools & Programming Museums Language learning
Social	Dance groups Choirs Hungarian Clubs / Houses Central community website – www.TheGulyasPot.com
Fraternal / Charitable	Maintain institutions, museums insurance, safety
Advocacy	
Business community	Networking of professionals
Language	
Development	Fundraising needed for development
Virtual	Websites Computer literacy www.TheGulyasPot.com central site for community – social, historical, educational, etc
Archival capabilities	Museums and Archives Virtual, computerized archival

After the discussion, dinner was provided in the Darlington Inn, a Hungarian Restaurant near Ligonier.

Friday, June 27th

Breakfast Fare at Bethlen Communities

Ecumenical Meditation (Ahitat) – The Rev. Louis Medgyesi

Continuation of The Will to Pass On Segment – Developing the Strategy: Based on Thursday's discussion, the participants developed a list of issues, tools, solutions, next steps. (See the chart on the following pages. This was done by Atilla Kocsis, Csaba Fulop, Andrea Lauer, Reka Pipis, and Max Teleki) The participants agreed that a 3rd follow-up meeting should be held to continue the discussion, strengthen the ties, involve more groups and organizations and make progress in certain areas.

Deliverables - 1) Set date and venue for next meeting in October (Somogyi, Molnar, will circulate a proposal ASAP)...and...2) Work to expand list of potential participants and keep as many organizations informed of the "Hungarian Americans Together" meetings and provide them with the reports. Determine those with the greatest need, who would potentially travel from the west coast or other regions to ensure their future participation (as suggested by Zoltan Bagdy). Identify potential funding sources

The group also agreed that they will use and promote the GulyasPot website as a major communication tool, and they will create groups on social networking sites. (Deliverable – TheGulyasPot.com community outreach - Lauer Rice to coordinate with Atilla Kocsis, Digital Phenom on podcasts, and with Laszlo Hamos, HHRF, on map functionality)

They will develop and circulate a survey among the Hungarian American organizations about the details of the Hungarian American Heritage Month, which will be used as a hook to involve more and more people and organizations. (Deliverable - Hungarian American Heritage Month (Lauer Rice to poll community leaders to decide on exact month, Teleki to research next steps on how to officially designate month to be HAHM by US government)

Adjournment and Lunch

At 12:00, the meeting was adjourned.

Compiled by Reka Pipis, Intern at Hungarian American Coalition,
From notes taken by: Csaba Fulop, Andrea Lauer Rice, Attila Kocsis, and Reka Pipis
July 2, 2008

Issues	Solutions	Tools	Next Steps	Suggestions / comments
Identify needs of various constituents -> develop strategy how to reach them (Hungarian/English-language, different age groups, socio-economic groups)	Hungarian Americans Together Conference series, sociological and other surveys (HRFA, Bethlen Home...)		circulate surveys	next meeting in Chicago or NJ?
Coordination and communication across community	www.TheGulyasPot.com , Hungarian American Heritage Month		have all conference participants register organization, add events to calendar, communicate with members about site (populate, publicize), designate member to post events to calendar	use and promote thegulyaspot at our own meetings, too
Reaching out to the next generation to make sure our organizations and community is sustainable	Engage the youth in learning about their heritage	Summer camp and summer programs for teaching about language and cultural exposure (ex: `WPA culinary wknd`), Hungarian language schools, clubs, museums, Scouts, websites, “Grand” program, multi-generational educational tools (Lauer Learning)	Organize, populate and publicize these programs	ask visiting students to help in camps, events, etc.
Find lost members of the Hungarian American community and keep them connected (including the “new” Hungarians and “at risk groups” - 2nd and 3rd generation Hungarian Americans and spouses)	Link Gulyas Pot to social networking tools (Facebook, MySpace, Linked In) to reach out to the community	Scouts, schools, etc...Hungarian American Heritage Month, theGulyasPot.com, Lauer Learning multi-generational learning tools	Create groups on social networking sites, Lauer Learning beginning immediate work on Kis Majom DVD project for infants and toddlers	
Community has limited resources, so we need to make better use of what already exists	linkage to radio & TV programs, museum exhibits, provide access to Hungarian movies (list)	Central website for community – TheGulyasPot.com, links, podcasts (audio listened to on PC / portable music player), “exhibit in a box” idea; netflix list of Hungarian movies and traveling film program	Create linkages on Gulyas Pot	

Issues	Solutions	Tools	Next Steps	Suggestions / comments
Professionalism in not-for-profit community	Management training	Max's contact in NY		
No central clearinghouse listing scholarship opportunities nationwide	"Laszlo's List" – network of job opportunities for Hungarian American students, list of Hungarian professionals; create a Hungarian version of Craigslist.com	www.thegulyaspot.com	Have every organization send information on scholarships and a downloadable application to Gulyas Pot	
No alumni network of scholarship recipients (ex: WPA)	Creation of alumni networks	Internet		ask visiting students to help in camps, events, etc.
We as a community are losing our language skills	Internet-based Hungarian language teaching tool for Scouts		language camp offered by WPA, language learning tools, multi-generational tools	
Computer literacy – old organizations	Help them, search for them, reach out	HAC's list of 400 H-A organizations		
Increase representation. Certain territories (e.g. midwest) is under-represented / not here at all	find them, contact them, keep their interest	HAC's list of 400 H-A organizations, conference. IF they see that this is working, they'll join	contact 'regional centers', create, share and update a list	go home and tell everyone that we are not dying out. :) using old magazines as PR
Lack of youth Get everybody engaged, all organizations	Hungarian Heritage Month as a hook, in 2009. Question: when should this be?	In Hu, professional team to put together a list of organizations - share it when it is available	follow up with a sociological survey about the organizations and the community, relating to the HHM. Suggestion: we should make sure that to the next meeting, they bring at least one young person from that community	Hungarian Association has tried to do programs for young people 'Who are you to organize this for me?' -> speak in their language -> internet-based way of thinking
Rome wasn't built in a day, this is a long process	work, continuously	meetings, conferences		

Deliverables (DUE BY END OF AUGUST, 2008)

- 1) All organizations register at www.TheGulyasPot.com and inform their membership about this tool, also designate someone within organization to regularly input upcoming events on site
- 2) TheGulyasPot.com community outreach - Lauer Rice to coordinate with Atilla Kocsis, Digital Phenom on podcasts, and with Laszlo Hamos, HHRF, on map functionality
- 3) All organizations who have scholarship programs send in information and a downloadable application form to Gulyas Pot to begin building a listing / network of these resources / opportunity
- 4) Hungarian American Heritage Month (Lauer Rice to poll community leaders to decide on exact month, Teleki to research next steps on how to officially designate month to be HAHM by US government)
- 5) Set date and venue for next meeting in October (Somogyi, Molnar, will circulate a proposal ASAP)
- 6) Work to expand list of potential participants and keep as many organizations informed of the "Hungarian Americans Together" meetings and provide them with the reports. Determine those with the greatest need, who would potentially travel from the west coast or other regions to ensure their future participation (as suggested by Zoltan Bagdy). Identify potential funding sources.