



AMERICAN HUNGARIAN MUSEUM, Passaic

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American Hungarians Together Conference, Passaic Area SUMMARY OF FIRST MEETING

11/28/2008

BACKGROUND:

A modest Grant for the Passaic County Cultural and Heritage Commission, History Projects made possible to organize and bring together leaders from the Northern New Jersey Hungarian Community, which is centered around the historic Hungarian enclave in Passaic, neighboring the two foundations of the community the Roman Catholic and the Reformed churches. The meeting was very appropriate for the following reasons:

1. In the last few years, the community has undergone significant changes and it has a new pastor for the Roman Catholic Church. Some new persons and organizations emerged and some of the older community leaders are not active in our community any longer.
2. The members of the community, as a general rule, got older and the young are not yet active in the Community - this offers a challenge of survival for many groups within the enclave.
3. Coordination is lacking in the community, although a few years ago it was tried, it is not functioning any longer. This often creates conflicts in scheduling events and this weakens the spirit of the Community.

We have identifies 19 active organization in our area which are associated with Hungarian programs and are integral part of our Community. [See attached list] We invited their leaders and identified the purpose of the conference. [See attached letter of October 23, 2008]. Subsequently we also issued an Agenda for the meeting. [See attached].

ATTENDEES:

The following persons attended the meeting representing, 16 persons representing 15 organizations. Three could not attend but wanted to get all the information about the meeting and want to support the activity in the future.

| LNAME | FNAME | TEL | EMAIL | ORGANIZATION |
|---------------------|-------------|------------------|--|--|
| Balogh | Gyula | 973 216 6440 | igbalogh@aol.com | American Hungarian Federation |
| Banyai | Bibor | 862 686 8073 | bibor16@hotmail.com | Hungarian Scouts Troupes and Hungarian Scout Home |
| Bartucz | Lajos | 973 627 5904 | lajosjbartucz@att.net | American Hungarian Federation |
| Kerekes [Dr.] | Judit | 973 591 1351 | kerekes.judit@gmail.com | American Hungarian Collegium |
| Kerkay | Emese | 973 478 5926 | kerkay@verizon.net | American Hungarian Museum, Passaic |
| Kerkay | Laszlo | 973 478 5926 | kerkay@verizon.net | American Hungarian Museum, Passaic |
| Koller | Levent e | 973 398 7630 | levkoller@optonline.com | MBK - Hungarian Communion of Friends |
| Kormann | Frigyes | 973-471- 7514 | | St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Magyar Church and Hungarian Library |
| Kovacs | Robert | 732 476 7121 | robi@kovacscsalad.com | Hungarian Reformed Federation of America |
| Magyar | Kalman | 201 836 4869 | magyar@magyar.org | American Hungarian Museum, Passaic and American Hungarian Folklore Centrum |
| Mozer Jr. | Ernest | 973 492 8184 | emozerjr@hotmail.com | William Penn Association Branch |
| Papp | Imre | 201 704 0356 | pappimre08@yahoo.com | American Hungarian Citizens' League |
| Papp | Livia | | | American Hungarian Citizens' League |
| Vasarhelyi | Maria | 973 778 1019 | vasarhel@optonline.net | Hungarian Reformed Church and Hungarian Reformed Federation of America |
| Zsedely | Mikky | 212 920 7622 | mikkyzs@aol.com | Transartarea Organization and 10 Thousand Steps Hungarian Bookstore |
| Zsedely | Timea | 212 920 7623 | sztimea@aol.com | Transartarea Organization and 10 Thousand Steps Hungarian Bookstore |
| Could not attend | | | | |
| Vas, Father | Laszlo | 973-779- 0332 | vaslaci@hotmail.com | St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Magyar Church |
| Vasarhelyi, Rev. | Jozsef | 973 778 1019 | vasarhel@optonline.net | Hungarian Reformed Church |
| Not present | | | | |
| Micheller | Attila | 908-687- 1545 | michellersonhyd@aol.com | Linden Hungarian Social Club |

INTRODUCTIONS

Ms Emese Kerkay, the Curator of our Museum, briefly reviewed the history of our community especially focusing on its two foundations, the Roman Catholic and the Reformed churches. She pointed out also that the attrition of the membership of our community puts a strains on all our organizations. However, it is good news that our Saturday Hungarian School has increased in membership, there are 101 children

attending the school, especially the youngest preschool groups are the most successful programs.

Each organization briefly introduced its purpose and stated the most acute problems they are facing with.

REPORT OF ORGANIZATIONS

1. HUNGARIAN SCOUTS TROUPES AND THE SCOUT HOME - Bibor Banyai:

The mission of the Hungarian Scout organization is to emphasize the maintenance of the Hungarian language and heritage in the new generation of American Hungarians. They are experiencing an adjustment with their membership and there seem to be a difference in the Hungarian identity of the second and third generation Hungarians and those who recently arrived to this country. She also spoke about the fact that it seems to be difficult to keep the older scouts interested, and they tend to discontinue participation at a “ripe” age, when they could really contribute to the organization effort of the troupe. They are trying to change this by modifying their programming for older scouts.

They have no financial problems, but they wish for a tighter better organized community. They have many activities and it is important that community programs be coordinated.

2. SATURDAY HUNGARIAN SCHOOL - Bibor Banyai

The Saturday Hungarian School is doing exceptionally well. As noted above they have 101 children enrolled. They are now functioning at the premises of the Hungarian Reformed Church. One of the preschool program: “Pici Maci” is the most popular at the school.

It is interesting to note that there was always Hungarian School in our community from the turn of the 20th Century in some format.

3. AMERICAN HUNGARIAN COLLEGIUM - Dr. Judit Kerekes

Dr. Kerekes is one of the founders of a new Summer university course, which was held in Pennsylvania in 2008. It appeared to be a successful undertaking and attracted interest from young and also older Hungarians from North America. It included excellent lecturers from Hungary and the USA. The topics of the Collegium were history, sociology, politics and art [folk art]. They hope to increase the attendance in future years. They received support from the William Penn Association, a Hungarian fraternal insurance company. The date for next years event will be August 18-26, 2009.

They expressed a need for additional funding to allow them to offer scholarships to students and requested help for advertising for their program with larger intensity.

Mr Mozer of the William Penn Association offered his 300+ member mailing list as an initial support.

4. HUNGARIAN COMMUNION OF FRIENDS [MBK] – Levente Koller

Mr. Koller is a solid member of our community and a director of the MBK. He discussed the National organization, which was founded some 40 years ago by Hungarian intellectuals who lived in geographically distant locations and wanted to keep in contact with each other to share their interest in Hungarian culture and politics. They organize a conference every year in the Summer, where they hold meaningful lectures and discussions while enjoying their vacation. They publish an Almanac every year and have an email list.

The most significant problems he mentioned were that the average age of their membership get older and it creates problems in financing their activities as well as attracting additional members. They are working on resolving these challenges and Mr. Koller may establish a New Jersey Chapter of the organization to recruit new members.

5. TRANSARTAREA ORGANIZATION AND 10 THOUSAND STEPS HUNGARIAN BOOKSTORE - Timea and Mikky Zsedely

The Zsedelys has recently started these two organizations. The bookstore is in Passaic and plans to support the Hungarian community's cultural needs. They also hope to increase their business via email orders. The *Transartarea* project is a non-profit cultural management organization which plans to organize tours of Hungarian artists. Both of the undertakings are welcome additions to our geographic area and sure to become an important part of our community life. They also hope bring English language Hungarian programs to our area, may popular to the general public.

They both expressed interest to establish a working relationships with all organizations in the Hungarian enclave and develop programs to identify interested audiences for their excellent projects. They need financial support, mailing lists and advertising resources. However, programs, which allow networking are very important and are needed in their opinion.

6. HUNGARIAN REFORMED FEDERATION OF AMERICA [HRFA] – Robert Kovacs

Mr. Kovacs, who is the National Sales Manager for the Fraternal Life Insurance Society, which was established in 1896, presented a new initiative to assist local organizations in obtaining funding resources. It is called "Sustaining Membership" and the HRFA will manage donations from the community and forward those to the specific community organizations preferred by the donor. This program may develop into a good funding resource to local groups. Mr. Kovacs also reviewed the importance of the local groups to support HRFA since it is one of the most important organizations to support programs related to American Hungarian heritage.

Mr. Kovacs will continue to develop this program and will keep contact with us.

7. WILLIAM PENN ASSOCIATION BRANCH [WPA] – Ernest Mozer Jr.

Mr. Mozer is the Branch Director of the WPA, the largest Hungarian Fraternal Life Insurance Company in the USA, which was founded in 1886. They have a significant membership in the Passaic area, but the members are getting older and it is not easy to attract new policy holders. Although the WPA is ready to support Hungarian programs financially they need to be better connected to the community activities and need to generate new members. Continued networking should help to achieve these needs and goals. The policies, which are offered by the Company are competitive on the market and part of the income is channel back to the membership for fraternal activities.

Mr. Mozer promised to keep the community informed and send us contact information about WPA agents. He agreed that continued networking can benefit his organizational goals.

8. HUNGARIAN LIBRARY AT ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH – Frigyes Kormann

Mr. Kormann, who is a volunteer at the Library described the establishment, which was opened in April of 2008. Although it is a new establishment for the community it has several thousand books in Hungarian, many of them are rare. The Library needs funding and advertising as well as volunteers to fully develop.

Suggestion was made to search out if funding from governmental sources may be available.

9. AMERICAN HUNGARIAN FEDERATION [AMSZ] – Gyula Balogh

Mr Gyula Balogh introduced the organizations which was founded in 1906. It is mainly an umbrella federation acting as a political lobby group for Hungarian causes. Mr. Balogh is a Governing Board Member and the Economic Committee Chairman. He expressed interest to develop a stronger local presence in the Passaic area. He wished to participate in future programs and he will count on Mr. Lajos Bartucz, who is also a member of our community, to assist him in establishing AMSZ support form our community base.

10. HUNGARIAN REFORMED CHURCH [PASSAIC] – Maria Vasarhelyi

Rev.Jozsef Vasarhelyi was out of the country therefore his wife Ms. Maria Vasarhelyi represented the Church. The Church is facing the same problems as other establishment in the community. The average age of its members is increasing and it is difficult to attract younger parishioners. However there are good signs which appeared recently. The local Hungarian Saturday School is using their facilities and there are 100 children attending. This should bring new and younger members. The societies associated with the Church seem to be active and are perpetuating the life around the Church. There are Lady's Society [Lorantffy Zsuzsanna], Calvin Friendship Circle, a Choir and an English language Sunday School are the basic supportive organizations.

The congregation needs new members, more networking and volunteers to assist them. Also financial support would be welcome.

11. GARFIELD AMERICAN HUNGARIAN CITIZENS LEAGUE: Imre Papp

Mr. Papp, one the directors, reported about the problems facing the Club. The organization was established in 1954, but was the favorite meeting place for the %956+ Hungarian emigrants. In recent years it has also suffered from the similar problem as other groups. The membership is getting older and the programs and activities slowed down. They are not able to attract new member and cultural program are not as effective as in the past. They hold regular weekly social gatherings and once a month dinner dance.

They need assistance in advertising, younger members and a less confrontational director-body, which may result in a new memberships.

12. AMERICAN HUNGARIAN FOLKLORE CENTRUM [AHFC] – Kalman Magyar

Mr. Magyar briefly described the mission of the AHFC, which is to propagate Hungarian culture in the public and scholarly life of North America. The organization presents performing groups to the communities and organizes events and conferences which focus on Hungarian traditional art. Although the organization is not specific to the Passaic area, its leaders are from this community and depend on the support drawn from the community base.

Networking and additional volunteer support was identified as a desirable to achieve future goals for AHFC.

13. AMERICAN HUNGARIAN MUSEUM, PASSAIC – Emese Kerkay

The work of the Museum was well known to all members in attendance. It is one of the cultural entities for the Hungarian community regularly presenting cultural events and exhibitions. The Museum directors offered assistance to all the organizations in suggesting funding resources and has taken up the task of organizing the current and future coordination meetings of the attending and other target organizations.

It was felt that the Museum will surely benefit from the networking which future meeting may offer.

14. ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC MAGYAR CHURCH – Ft. Laszlo Vas

Ft. Vas was not able to attend the meeting due to previous engagement, but he was completely in support of our gathering. In fact, the meeting was held in the Church basement meeting room. However, most attendees are members of the Church, and know about the problems facing the parish. These are mostly similar to the above-mentioned facts, that the population is getting older and the younger people are less likely to stay in their parish, which may be a distant drive from their home.

We feel that networking and special programming may help the church community.

15. LINDEN HUNGARIAN SOCIAL CLUB – Attila Micheler

Mr. Micheler, president of the club, was delayed on his business trip and was not able to attend; but he expressed interest to be part of future meetings. We know his club is

facing the same difficulties as the organizations above. These are diminishing numbers in memberships and volunteers, aging membership and fewer young people getting involved in club life.

We feel that networking and offering additional help will in promotion will also help his Club. We will certainly keep him involved in all out future activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The attendees agreed to the following conclusions and recommendations for the future:

1. Meeting such as this one, with representatives from all the organizations from the Passaic area will be useful in the future. We should hold our next meeting in the beginning of January 2009.
2. We should coordinate the programs as much as possible and make a calendar available to minimize programming conflicts, although we realize these are sometimes inevitable.
3. We should identify funding resources for all organizations in our community. We should utilize the help offered by the William Penn Association and Hungarian Reformed Federation of America as the first step.
4. We need to develop programs with more networking possibilities. This will strengthen our organization and may result in mutual support for their programming.
5. We should develop a program which would help to bring back people to our community base . especially those who left our enclave.
6. We should focus on implementing programs in English, which would interest the general public.
7. We need to see how we can develop a computer based communication system, either with IWIW or Facebook or Yahoo.
8. We should develop a Passaic area email mailing list to publicize or events easier and better.

Note:

This is the first, draft copy of the meeting, comments are welcome.

Submitted by:

Kalman Magyar