

**Faces & Voices of Recovery**  
**Rally for Recovery Conference Call Notes**  
**Thursday May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

In case you missed the last Rally for Recovery (formerly known as the Organizing Network) call last Thursday, May 29<sup>th</sup> - you can listen to the entire call, as well as past calls here:

[http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/about/trainings\\_events/2008\\_teleconference.php#orgnet](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/about/trainings_events/2008_teleconference.php#orgnet)

We had great attendance and participation as we invited guest speakers on the call to talk about successful voter education campaigns from around the country and how to make this an integral part of your Rally for Recovery. This, combined with other Recovery Voices Count strategies, can be used to show that the recovery community is involved and engaged as a constituency of consequence!

We heard from Tom Coderre, the National Field Director of Faces and Voices of Recovery, Aaron Kucharski, the Field Organizer for the Recovery Voices Count Project as well as Dave Noble, who is the director of public policy and government affairs for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington D.C. Dave has a long resume of Voter Engagement Projects from Moveon.org as well as The League of Independent Voters. Please check out the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force site here:

[www.thetaskforce.org](http://www.thetaskforce.org)

We can learn a lot from people involved in civil rights campaigns over the years as well as similar movements by the environmental movement, women rights, and voter rights, to see how effective building a constituency of consequence can be! Thanks to hard working groups and strong individuals public policy makers now look for support from groups like the environmentalists and LGBT advocates, as well as work their issues into their own platforms to tell voters where they stand on their issues.

Dave spoke about how the development of PRIDE events was critical to bring attention to the LGBT cause and break down negative public attitudes (sound familiar?!). Rally for Recovery events are similar to PRIDE events in that they are celebrations which bring people together. PRIDE events use the excitement they generate to engage the community in advocacy work. Setting up specific tables/tents and sending volunteers into the crowds to encourage them to take action is critical.

Over 30,500 people celebrated recovery during last year's September Recovery events. Last year the recovery community put together a strong effort to educate themselves and public policy makers to end insurance discrimination. This helped make strides towards insurance parity and helped raise National Attention for the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act.

Many Recovery Organizations this year are using the theme Recovery Voices Count to highlight the important issues faced by the recovery community. From now until November, many candidates running for office on the local, state, and even national level will be talking to voters, and we should all take advantage of town hall meetings, debates, and public appearances and rallies that candidates attend.

**“We do matter, and our issues matter!”**

Your 2008 Rally for Recovery will also be a great opportunity to invite candidates to speak, and work to have a discussion on issues important to you. Here are some ways we have educated voters and public policy makers in the past.

**Create an Advocacy Tent or an action center at your Rally. This strategy was done at the National Hub Event at Liberty State Park, worked together by FOAR New Jersey and Faces and Voices of Recovery. A copy of the Advocacy Tent Proposal is also attached to this email.**

By creating a strong atmosphere around action we can draw large amount of people to help the causes we advocate for. Some suggestions were made that volunteers at the Rally should carry clipboards and engage the rally crowd and encourage them to get involved with the action center or advocacy tent.

Some suggestions for the advocacy tent around voter education

- Each state usually puts together a voter guide for new voters. We can pass this information along to make sure each voter is informed before they go to the polls. We can also put together information on any statewide issues that might be on the ballot. These handouts should be short and simple. It is also important to know who is eligible to vote in the state. Please email Aaron Kucharski if you're having difficulty finding information about who is eligible in your state. [aaronkucharski@yahoo.com](mailto:aaronkucharski@yahoo.com)
- Provide Sample Ballots if available
- Work to organize a letter writing campaign to local and national policy makers. This can be done electronically on a wireless laptop computer on site, or sample letters can also be provided to the recovery community to use as a guide to write a hand written letter, which can be very effective.
- Supply the candidate pledges to the public or ask any candidates running for office one of the five questions suggested here: [http://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/02.22.2008\\_call\\_to\\_action.pdf](http://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/pdf/02.22.2008_call_to_action.pdf)
- Have petitions signed by constituents for a cause. This was done for the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act last year, and was instrumental as thousands of names were collected in support of the National Bill.
- Have a sign-up sheet for people who would like to stay informed about the election so you can conduct a Get out the Vote Drive and build a lasting relationship with the recovery community in your state. This list can consist of people who are already registered to vote, as well as newly registered voters.

It was suggested that for each of the activities people in the rally take part in you can provide some sort of reward for taking action.

For example, if an attendee of the Rally registers to vote, writes a letter to congress, and signs a petition maybe they could be entered into a raffle to win a prize. This encourages people to do as much as they can to advocate at the rally. It was suggested that for each activity completed, people would receive a sticker of some sort to show they participated in that activity. This also helps the volunteers working at the action center to differentiate who has helped out already and who needs to be approached.

**You and your volunteers will be the most credible messenger to our target audience to give them all the information they need to go out and make a decision at the polls!**

**Next Call.**

**Please join us on our next Rally for Recovery Call June 26<sup>th</sup> 3pm Eastern Time.** The topic was originally going to be: How to put together an effective Get out the Vote Strategy, however, we've decided to use the call to talk about the new Recovery Advocacy Toolkit and Recovery Bill of Rights which is being released in early July. See you on the call!