



In 2008 growing numbers of recovery community organizations and recovery advocates across the nation engaged in activities to educate the public, opinion leaders, the media and policymakers about the reality of recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs as part of Faces & Voices of Recovery's nonpartisan Recovery Voices Count project.

Recovery Voices Count is one part of our national movement to make it possible for even more of our friends, neighbors and family members to experience long-term recovery from addiction by building recognition of the recovery community as a constituency of consequence. As recovery community organizations and recovery advocates registered voters, educated candidates for public office about key issues and turned out voters to the polls on Election Day, they had an even greater impact on the lives of people who still need help with their addiction, people in long-term recovery, their family members and communities. Faces & Voices of Recovery will be working with recovery community organizations to hold officials accountable now that they are elected.

Recovery community organizations around the country planned events and activities building up to the November elections, using our Civic Engagement Guide and other project materials and resources such as Five Questions for Candidates and a Candidates Pledge. We worked intensively in ten state-wide civic engagement campaigns and two large metropolitan areas. Each project developed a plan that included voter registration, voter education and voter participation goals.

The participating organizations were:

- Central Illinois Recovery Coalition (Springfield, Illinois)
- Connecticut Communities for Addiction Recovery (CCAR)
- FAVOR South Carolina (5 chapters)
- Missouri Recovery Network
- NCADA-Bay Area (San Francisco)
- NCADD-Maryland
- NCADD-New Jersey, FOAR NJ
- Ohio Citizen Advocates
- People Advocating Recovery (Kentucky)
- PRO-ACT (Pennsylvania)
- Recovery Voices Count Student Organization of University of Texas Austin
- The McShin Foundation (Richmond, Virginia)

### Voter Registration

Each project included voter registration activities. They set up voter registration tables at recovery community events and in the community, with trained volunteers. Many organizations enlisted the support of treatment providers to register clients upon discharge. In Cincinnati, Ohio Prospect House incorporated voter registration into their intake process. Registration activities at National Rally for Recovery! and Recovery Month events were also successful. In addition, Faces & Voices web site included an online voter registration tool.

There were obstacles to registering voters in some projects caused by misinformation about eligibility criteria, leading some people to refuse to register. State laws which bar felons from voting were also cited as a barrier. In many cases, due to the transient nature of people newly in recovery, instead of doing voter registration, organizations were doing change of address.

In San Francisco, voter registration was most successful at street fairs, which turned into entire days that allowed NCADCA to reach out to family members and friends of recovery with their engaging booths and recovery materials. In addition, NCADA did voter registration at metro stations.

### Voter Education

Four voter education strategies were used: asking questions to candidates, asking candidates to sign a pledge, hosting town hall meetings and producing voter guides with information about voting and candidate's positions on the issues. There were activities during the primary and general elections.

In New Hampshire during the Presidential Primary, a coalition of addiction treatment, prevention and recovery organizations brought together by Faces & Voices of Recovery organized the first-ever Recovery Voices Count Town Hall Meeting. The Town Hall Meeting was in Plaistow, New Hampshire and attracted nine Presidential campaigns. The moderator was Lisa Peakes, the morning voice of New Hampshire's NPR radio station and a person in long-term recovery.

Each candidate sent a high profile surrogate to discuss their position on addiction recovery issues. Faces & Voices developed the 5 questions to ask candidates and trained local recovery advocates to ask them. The Town Hall was a remarkable success and was a model for the other town halls that were held over the course of the project.

Faces & Voices of Recovery took advantage of the Presidential Primaries to train advocates on how to use the 5 questions at candidate rallies in Iowa, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, New Jersey & Kentucky. In South Carolina Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama were asked about their addiction recovery platforms and in New Jersey, advocates attended a rally for Senator John McCain. These were important opportunities to make one-on-one contact with the major presidential campaigns and to interact with candidates and their staffs. Recovery advocates wore the distinctive purple Recovery Voices Count t-shirts and lapel stickers and were recognized as an organized constituency.

During the General Election organizations carried out a number of voter education activities. Ohio Citizen Advocates (OCA) produced a voter's guide that was printed full-color and web-based and widely distributed via email. The guide was featured in an article in *Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Weekly* and included a full-page copy of The Recovery Bill of Rights in addition to voter education information. The organization had a toolkit on its website at <http://www.charityadvantage.com/oca/Election2008.asp> with voter information and candidate information.

Ohio's Department of Corrections agreed to include OCA's pamphlet and voter registration for any inmate reentering the community who was focusing on a substance abuse program as an inmate. 700 packages and voter registration forms were sent out and from now on, people reentering the community will receive this information thanks to the Recovery Voices Count project.

In Richmond, VA, the McShin Foundation held a Town Hall meeting on October 26 at the *Richmond Times Dispatch* building. Over 250 people attended the meeting, which featured three prominent Virginia Sheriffs – C.T. Woody from Richmond County, Dennis Proffitt from Chesterfield County and Michael Wade from Henrico County. The Recovery Bill of Rights was introduced to the community as part of a presentation on how to help people who have been incarcerated as they prepare to reenter society. A Richmond City Councilwoman also attended and spoke about her family's personal experiences.

The organization attracted US Congressman Eric Cantor, US Senate candidate Jim Gilmore, Richmond Mayoral candidate Lawrence Williams, and State Delegate Jimmy Massey, and Sheriffs Wade, Prophet and CT Woody to their September Recovery Fest.

The Missouri Recovery Network developed a website guide developed with the names of candidates, responses to the 5 questions, and also a list of candidates that signed the pledge, and a section on voter eligibility.

In Illinois, there were a number of rallies and other activities. In Springfield a rally and speaking program in front of the State Capitol was followed by a march down the main street and into a park where festivities continued with live music and civic engagement opportunities for participants. In Chicago, recovery advocates partnered with Congressman Danny Davis for a march around the west side of Chicago followed by a rally where hundreds of people took part in voter registration activities, pledging to vote and endorsing the Recovery Bill of Rights.

NCADD-New Jersey produced a voter guide, building on an existing effort. It was distributed at the annual Governors Council of Alcohol and Drug Addiction (350 hard copies were produced) as well as at a day-long state house event. The guide was distributed through email links to a 3000 person action alert, and sent out to 11,000 people through an electronic e-communications link. Multiple emails with that link were distributed throughout the course of the campaign and it was featured in *Join Together* and *Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Weekly*.

People Advocating Recovery (KY) held a town hall meeting in Lexington KY on October

25. PAR registered over 50 voters with over 200 attendees at the town hall. The format was to go over the 5 questions with candidates. The theme was centered on introducing the community to The Recovery Bill of Rights, restoration of voter rights, and Recovery Voices Count. The panel discussion was about why the Bill of Rights and voting are important. Each panelist addressed both issues. The panelists were Justice Mary C Noble, Judge Lucinda Masterton of the family court 5th division, Assistant County Attorney Duane Osborne, and Assistant Chief of Police Mike Bosse. Mike Barry was the moderator for the event, which was covered by the *Lexington Herald Leader*.

#### Voter Participation (Get Out The Vote)

Organizations developed and maintained databases with voter contact information to keep track of who they registered to vote and educated on the issues. There were a number of ways that groups did their Get Out the Vote activities: phone banks to call voters 2-4 times before Election Day; post cards; emails and text messages reminding those in their database to vote.

At the University of Texas in Austin, students did Get Out the Vote for the first time on campus, in addition to holding their first ever Rally for Recovery. Students Evan Luther and Keith Diaz made a documentary film about their experiences that is on the Faces & Voices web site.

In South Carolina, all five chapters of FAVOR – South Carolina planned Rally for Recovery events which incorporated Recovery Voices Count as their main theme. Advocacy Action areas at each of the rallies provided places for participants to register to vote and endorse the Recovery Bill of Rights. In Greenville, South Carolina they used the celebrity status of folk singer Livingston Taylor to attract members of the community to their rally.

#### Partnerships

New and important partnerships were formed with allied organizations. These included treatment Providers (Clients/Alumni/Employees), Medication-Assisted Recovery Groups, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) affiliates, Recovery Houses, Community Anti-Drug Coalition (CADCA) and/or other prevention coalitions, Student Groups, Local and State Alcohol and Drug Agencies, Drug Court (participants, staff and graduates), Criminal Justice Reform advocates, League of Women Voters, League of Young Voters, medical professionals, health care workers, social workers, parent/family organizations, LGBT community organizations, faith-based organizations, organized labor and other community-based organizations with whom organizations had relationships. The project gave organizations the opportunity to work with new partners and build mutually beneficial relationships that will last beyond November 2008.

Recovery Voices Count was designed to be woven into existing events and activities that recovery community organizations were already working on and strengthen their sustainability and opportunities for success after the project ended. Organizations recruited volunteers to help staff the project, trained them, and will be engaging them in future activities. Relationships were built and strengthened with local and state-wide media outlets. Participants prominently featured Recovery Voices Count at their Rally

for Recovery events, used public access television shows and Recovery Community Centers to get the word out. Invaluable relationships were built with elected officials, opinion leaders and public policy makers.

Faces & Voices National Field Director Tom Coderre and Field Organizer Aaron Kucharski staffed the Recovery Voices Count Project. Faces & Voices of Recovery is grateful to Reckitt Benckiser and our members for their support of Recovery Voices Count.