

Basic Dignity Event May 22 Echoes Grand Jury Homeless Report for More Bathrooms Downtown

By Girls Think Tank - Basic Dignity Coalition

Dated: May 21, 2010

Just days after a grand jury report finds that more outdoor toilets are needed in downtown San Diego, the Basic Dignity Coalition kicks off a campaign with the same goal: May 22, 2010, 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. in Balboa Park (6th Avenue & Laurel Street).

Basic Dignity Campaign Launches May 22

Goal of More Bathrooms Downtown Echoed by New Grand Jury Report

Nonprofit, labor, and faith-based leaders call for Basic Dignity in America's Finest City.

Basic Dignity Coalition says, "bring the Portland Loo to San Diego".

SAN DIEGO, CA (May 21, 2010) - Just days after a grand jury report issued by San Diego County finds that more outdoor toilets are needed in downtown San Diego, the Basic Dignity Coalition kicks off its long-planned campaign with the same goal. Basic Dignity: Thirst for Solutions, Quest for Relief launches May 22, 2010, 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. in Balboa Park (6th Avenue & Laurel Street).

"We are gratified that the grand jury has made official what our coalition has been stating. To meet public health standards, as well as to respect the basic dignity due to all people, San Diego must take responsibility and increase the number of public bathrooms open 24 hours a day. The need is particularly acute in the East Village, an area with many homeless services and a large homeless population," said Rachel Jensen, a downtown attorney, President of the Girls Think Tank and a co-director of the Basic Dignity Coalition along with longtime homeless advocate David Ross. Ross is set to receive an award at the event.

This week, a San Diego County grand jury released a report entitled Homeless in San Diego, concluding that homelessness has reached the "tipping point" and "not only is the problem a blight on our community, it is a blight on our humanity." The report says that the City of San Diego could be liable for an "outbreak of illness caused by unsanitary conditions" and that additional toilets would "reduce fecal deposits and urine odors" downtown. Ross says that his two temporary "porta-potty" locations downtown have been used some 300,000 times since their placement in 2008.

Ross added, "Several years ago, another grand jury on homelessness in San Diego came to similar conclusions. San Diego needs to finally take decisive action - then we can proudly call ourselves residents of America's Finest City."

The Basic Dignity event raises awareness and funds to support temporary toilets and long-term solutions and brings the community together for food, fun, live music, and speakers including Lorena Gonzalez, head of the San Diego & Imperial Counties Labor Council; Reverend Madison Shockley of Pilgrim United Church of Christ; Scott Silverman of Second Chance; and San Diego City Council Member Marti Emerald. Radio host Jon Elliott is the master of ceremonies. A \$15 suggested donation provides lunch for the donor and for a person experiencing homelessness. Over 5,000 petition signatures affirming a universal right to water and bathrooms will be unveiled at the event and presented later to the San Diego City Council, along with a request for San Diego to consider acquiring the Portland Loo, a self-contained stainless-steel, solar-powered public bathroom pioneered by Portland, Oregon, and available for less than \$110,000 each including installation, compared to an estimated cost of \$900,000 for the construction of a conventional bathroom.

The Basic Dignity Coalition formed last year, spearheaded by Girls Think Tank (GTT) and David Ross. Organizations and individuals are invited to consider joining the Basic Dignity Coalition. Meetings are held at 6 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month at 655 West Broadway, 19th floor. Girls Think Tank is a 501(c)(3)-nonprofit organization that inspires and organizes its members and the public to advance basic human dignity. David Ross is known as The Water Man for his work distributing water and providing portable toilets on the streets of San Diego. Ross, along with Gerry Limpic and Bill Sharp founded The Isaiah Project to support Ross's efforts. For more information, visit helptthewaterman.com.

Corporate sponsors of the Basic Dignity campaign launch event include Nika Water, Centerplate Catering at the San Diego Convention Center, Terra restaurant, Suzie's Farm, and Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd LLP. Nonprofit sponsors include the American Civil Liberties Union of San Diego & Imperial Counties, Center on Policy Initiatives, Common Cause - San Diego, Empower San Diego, Feeding America San Diego, Home Again/Plan To End Chronic Homelessness, National Lawyers Guild - San Diego Chapter, Regional Task Force on the Homeless, San Diego Coalition for the Homeless, San Diego Rescue Mission, and The AMIKAS Project.

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Category	Non-profit, Homeless, Activism
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