

## A New Local Initiative to Establish a Citizens' Organizing Round Table by Bill Woods for StreetVibes

An initiative moves forward to establish a Citizens' Organizing Round Table in Cincinnati. The purpose of the Round Table is to enhance citizen organizing in this area. Supported by a grant from the Murray and Agnes Seasongood Good Government Foundation, Applied Information Resources will plan and administer this initiative.

This initiative is an outgrowth of an all-day forum sponsored by the Seasongood Foundation in February. The event, "The Power of Organizing - Finding Your Community Voice," highlighted a variety of diverse organizing efforts. It featured panels and discussion groups on everything from basic neighborhood organizing to building coalitions in order to pass ballot initiatives.



The theme of the forum and also the Round Table initiative is that without effective organizing

average citizens are often overlooked in public decision making in Cincinnati, Columbus, and Washington, D.C. The growing power of "big money" in politics in recent decades has made it harder and harder for citizens to compete with lobbyists and powerful institutions in shaping policies and legislation that often impact their lives and neighborhoods. The goal of the Round



Table will be strengthening the citizen voice through organizing.

AIR's first task will be to put together an informal coalition of citizen organizers that will meet regularly to discuss local community organizing needs. By creating an entity comprised of people who represent diverse local citizens' organizing initiatives, AIR envisions a group that shares information, assists

various community organizing activities, assesses the health of citizen involvement, and collaborates on issues when appropriate.

A number of people who fit this description were involved in the February forum, and AIR will seek to include them as members of the Round Table. Initial organizations that will be asked to participate include the Peaslee Neighborhood Center, the Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition, Invest in Neighborhoods, the Sierra Club, CUFA, the Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center, the Woman's City Club, Community Shares, the League of Women Voters, Bold New

Democracy, and Project AMOS. AIR hopes that the Round Table will begin informal meetings by late summer.

At the start of its existence, the Round Table will be asked: "What can the group do to strengthen citizen involvement in public decision making and in addressing critical community issues? An important second question is: "How can the Round Table reach out to citizens and grassroots groups that need organizing assistance? For further information about this initiative, call AIR at 381-4994.