

Laconia High Theatre Arts Students Produce CD

LACONIA: Nine students enrolled in the Laconia High School Theatre Arts Program recently finished “Viewpoints”, a year-long collaborative CD project with the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families. Viewpoints is a collection of anonymous personal statements gathered from teens in and around New Hampshire who have experienced recovery from alcohol addiction, either in their families or in their own lives. These statements were then recorded by selected LHS drama students.



Shown L-R are eight of the nine students as they appear on the front cover of the “Viewpoints” CD: Katie, Alicia, Charles, Nerissa, Kevin, Abby, Craig, and Judy. The ninth student, Teagan, was missing when photo was taken.

The participating students were coached by LHS Drama Director, Joy Armstrong, in how to use just the voice in presenting these stories to listeners. When the teens were ready, they recorded their messages in the Nassau Broadcasting Studios in Gilford who added a bed of

background music and ran them as Public Service Announcements during National Alcohol and Drug Addictions Recovery Month in September 2005.

Later in the school year, one of the nine students, Alicia who is a graduating senior,



Joy Armstrong, LHS Drama Director and Educator

worked with the Citizens Council to write an introduction and narration for the CD from the perspective of a teen. After rehearsing with Joy Armstrong, Alicia recorded this narration at the WEZS Radio Studio in Laconia. Alicia's comments offer listeners useful information on substance abuse and the process of recovery and set in context each of the nine anonymous statements. Station owner Gary Hammond, Alicia's father, compiled her narration and the nine previously recorded anonymous statements into the Viewpoints CD.

The concept for the art work and graphics for the CD were generated by the nine students. They suggested that the front cover of the CD be a photo of them together in a group and that the back cover be a mirror image of this photo but with their backs to the camera. These images help to establish that from a teen's point of view there are many ways to understand addictions and the process of recovery.

Copies of the Viewpoints CD have been distributed throughout the Lakes Region, New Hampshire, and through the Reclaiming Futures networks. Copies are still available from the Citizens Council.

Says Joy Armstrong, “This project brought us an opportunity to learn more about the craft of acting, especially how to use just one element, the voice. Viewpoints was a great match for us.”

LHS Principal, Jon Freeman, agrees. “We welcome projects of this nature especially when they are tied to learning goals and



Students as they appeared on the back cover of the “Viewpoints” CD

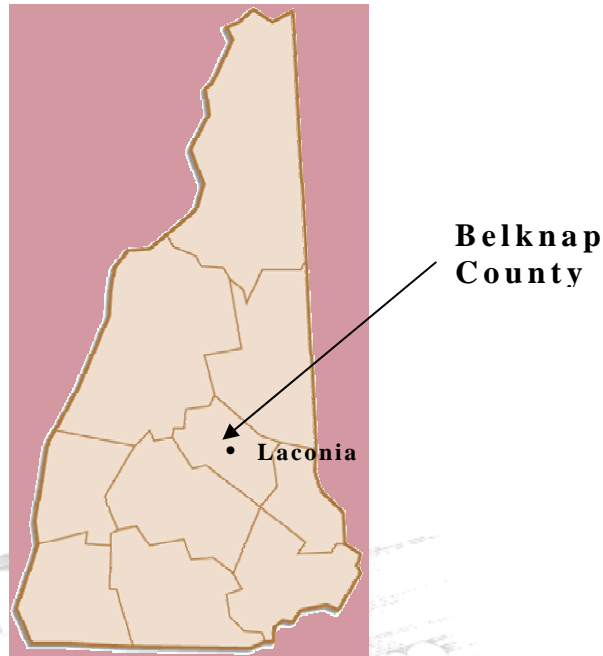
provide students with community service options.”

The Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families is a County department – “the only one of its kind in New Hampshire” notes Judith Buswell, Council Planning and Research Coordinator and the Viewpoints coordinator. “The Council is always searching for activities like this that share resources and help us to promote the principles of Community Justice in Belknap County.

Buswell notes that substance use disorders affect people from all walks of life and all ages, including children and youth, which “is why the Citizens Council is eager to find ways that

connect and reach youth. If just one listener is convinced that recovery from addictions is completely possible and then takes the necessary steps away from this problem, all our efforts

are well worth it!”



Laconia High School is located in Laconia, New Hampshire, the County seat and in the heart of the Lakes Region. Laconia High School is home to almost 800 students, grades 9-12. The Laconia High School Theatre Arts Program, one of the school’s many co-curricular



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activities, produces plays and special programs for the school and the community throughout the year.

LHS Theatre Arts stages three major projects during each school year, including a fall play, a one-act drama competition, and a district-wide spring musical. The drama students also participate in a variety of other community activities including theatre education workshops, improvisation groups, LHS Diversity Day presentation, and this *Viewpoints* CD project.

Students in the Laconia High Theatre Arts Program have won recognition on the local, regional, and state levels in the annual one-act competitions sponsored by the NH Educational Theatre Guild. In 2004, the LHS entry garnered the “Best Play Award” at the regional level as well as an acting award for Alicia, one of the *Viewpoints* participants.

Their 2006 entry in regional and state one-act competitions, “Property Rites”, was recognized for the ensemble work (Nerissa, Alicia, Charles, and Craig), for individual acting awards (Alicia, Abby), and for excellence in choreography (Teagan).



The “Viewpoints” project was recognized at the June 6, 2006 meeting of the Laconia School Board for its excellence and collaboration within the community. Shown L-R are seven of the participating students: Kevin, Charles, Alicia, Abby, Teagan, Katie, and Craig. In the pink blouse is LHS Drama Director, Joy Armstrong, Nancy Hood (red blouse), her assistant, and at the far right, Jon Freeman, LHS Principal.