

Citizens Council Welcomes Three New Members

LACONIA: Three residents of Belknap County were recently appointed by the County Commissioners as members of the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families. The Citizens Council was created via a Proclamation from the Commissioners in early 2002 to



New members of the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families are (L-R) Betty Anson of Laconia, Amy Hall of Belmont, and Katie Brandt of Barnstead.

involve county residents in seeking innovative solutions for the maze of challenges facing many families in the County. It is the only such County Department in New Hampshire.

Council appointees include Betty Anson from Laconia, Katie Brandt from Center Barnstead, and Amy Hall from Belmont. All three have moved to Belknap County within the last several years.

According to Council Chair, Sarah Fox, “These three women have impressive professional and educational credentials, but more importantly, they also have the skills, passions, and willingness to use their talents to help their communities support children and families.”

Betty Anson is currently a family therapist who has also had extensive senior executive experience in human resources for healthcare and financial institutions. She says, “First and foremost, I am a mother! I think my experience as a mother, wife, business executive, family therapist, and volunteer may be useful to the Council and in turn to the community.”

Anson explains that she recently made a major career shift from Human Resources to Family Therapy, something she had “wanted to do for awhile.” To prepare for this new employment, she returned to graduate school and earned a second Masters degree in Marriage and Family Therapy in 2006. She is now employed as a Family Therapist in the Manchester area.

Betty has also always been an active volunteer in every community where she has lived. Her previous volunteer work included facilitating parenting programs in Maine and Connecticut; fundraising, marketing, and program development for the Huntington, N.Y. YMCA; and as member of a citizens committee helping the Huntington school system and superintendent “pass a budget that was satisfactory to all contingencies in the district.”

New Council member, Katie Brandt of Barnstead says, “My husband and I are new residents in this town and I want to become more involved in the community where we live. I would like to learn about (Barnstead) and give back in a meaningful way. Because my husband and I do not yet have children of our own, I fear that it would be too easy to become busy with work and house projects and never become engaged in our own community.....One way to become engaged is to learn about the issues, and the way to learn about the issues is to develop relationships.”

Currently employed with the NH Children's Trust Fund in Concord as the Family Support Outcomes Director, Katie is also a volunteer mentor with The Friends Program and a volunteer member of the NH Interagency Coordinating Council. She is the recipient of two awards for community service. In 2000, she was named the "Manchester Salvation Army College Volunteer of the Year" and in 2002, as a senior at Saint Anselm College, she received the Paul S Coleman Senior Service Award for her "outstanding commitment and dedication to community service." Katie earned her Masters in Non-Profit Management from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University.

Ms Brandt brings skills and experience in child abuse prevention, data evaluation, grant writing, and public relations.

The third new member of the Citizens Council, Amy Hall of Belmont, is a Field Coordinator for the NH Healthy Kids program in Concord. A graduate of Keene State College with a BA in English, Amy has more than five years experience in customer service and network management in the area of healthcare insurance.

Amy says," As a Field Coordinator for the NH Healthy Kids program, I (can) better appreciate and understand issues facing families in Belknap County.

"I believe that building sustainable community resources while expanding partnerships with businesses and local agencies will always have a positive outcome in any community. I've been able to create successful marketing campaigns that have increased the number of applications to the NH Healthy Kids program. As a member of the Citizens Council, I would share this knowledge and hopefully make an impact as it relates to Community Justice."

Ms Hall brings knowledge of the financing component in the NH health care industry; an understanding of successful strategies for matching children and families with appropriate healthcare insurance benefits; an ability to forge partnerships with schools, hospitals, and other organizations that work with children and families; and an understanding of public policy issues. Co-workers and peers describe Amy as someone with "a positive attitude and high energy."

“While these three women have impressive résumés,” says Sarah Fox, Council Chair, “it is important to know that the Citizens Council accepts applicants from all walks of life.” She explains that the key “credential” for Council membership is “a willingness to use one’s talents, skills, and passions on behalf of children and families in Belknap County.

“As we are all only an injury, accident, or illness away from being homeless, unemployed, or losing someone or something we love, anyone with passion can be an effective Council member,” she adds.

Alan Robichaud, Council Executive Director, strongly agrees. “Council members are people who care that others are cared for.” Robichaud encourages those with the desire to participate actively in their communities to consider applying for Council membership.

The Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families is a county-level initiative that matches tax dollars with charitable contributions and grants to generate collaborative efforts among citizens, consumers, and professionals that promote the well being of children and families in Belknap County. The Council has work groups and task forces focused on each of the three principles of Community Justice that guide the work of the Council: Balanced and Restorative Justice, Prevention, and Strength-based Community Development.

Member applications are welcome at any time. For more information about The Citizens Council, Council membership, or to schedule a presentation for your organization or business, one may visit the Council’s website at www.bccj.org or call Council offices at 528-3185.