



“Community Together ~ Building Our Future”
**BELKNAP COUNTY CONVOCATION
 ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**



January 11, 2005

A collaborative effort presented by:

- *UpStream*
- *Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families*
- *Belknap County Family Violence Prevention Council*
- *Governor’s Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Duplicate copy of this release along with a digital photo sent via email on 12/28/04)

DATE: December 28, 2004

CONTACT: Judith Buswell, 528-3185

Multi-Event Convocation Honors Children and Families in Belknap County

LACONIA: The second Belknap County Convocation on Children and Families is scheduled for the afternoon and evening of Tuesday, January 11th at the Winnepesaukee Exposition Center in Lakeport. A multi-event conference that honors children and families in Belknap County by focusing on their accomplishments as well as their needs and challenges, this 2005 Convocation is open to anyone interested in creating a positive environment for families in the Lakes Region.

The Convocation begins at 3:30pm with an Exhibitors Showcase featuring 50 agencies and organizations that provide services for children and families in Belknap County. Convocation activities continue through 8:30pm with presentations of Individual Recognition Awards, consecutive Annual Meetings of three organizations, a catered dinner with a keynote address by Russ Thibeault, and the presentation of the Annette Schmitt UnSung Hero Award. The evening concludes with a

dessert buffet and the Lakes Region Area NH Drug Czars Forum, an opportunity for citizens to talk with state leaders about the impact of drugs and alcohol in central New Hampshire.

“This year’s event celebrates the power and potential of youth,” says Convocation Planning Chair, Judy Buswell, “We have them squarely in the center of our planning and implementation efforts.” She explains that middle and high school youth from throughout Belknap County will be greeters and ushers and will even “stand on the podium behind the mike to introduce guests and manage the flow of the evening”. Youth will provide entertainment during the Convocation and artwork from local students will be on display.

The featured keynote address will be presented by nationally recognized economic consultant, Russ Thibeault, a longtime resident of Laconia. Thibeault, who holds a Master’s Degree from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is the President of Applied Economic Research, an economic and real estate consulting firm he founded in Laconia in 1976. The firm offers economic consulting, real estate market research, financial feasibility, appraisal and general real estate counseling services to government agencies, financial institutions, developers, and investors across the country.

Thibeault, a respected inter-national economic consultant, is a frequent commentator on Marketplace, the Savvy Traveler, and Living on Earth, which all air on public radio stations across America. His opinions and expertise are sought after by Forbes, the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, and the Washington Post. He has been a guest on CNN, ABC Nightline, the MacNeil Lehrer News Hour, ABC News, as well as Irish Television, Japanese Public Television, and the BBC World Television Service. His topic for this January 11th Convocation, “Families in Stress...an Economic Perspective”, will include his assessment of the economic well-being of families in Belknap County.

The NH Drug Czars Forum, the final event of the 2005 Convocation, is one in a series of nine forums held throughout the state. Sponsored by the Governor’s Commission on Alcohol and Drug

Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment, these Forums seek the opinions of citizens, policy makers, treatment and prevention providers on alcohol and drug issues facing New Hampshire residents and communities.

This is “a packed schedule, with one event quickly following on the heels of the other”, says Buswell. “We urge Belknap County residents and interested others to attend as many components of this 2005 Convocation as possible.”

Dinner reservations, at \$12.00 for adults and \$6.00 for youth, are required. Registrations for all Convocation events are highly encouraged. All reservations can be made by contacting Trudy Bantle at NH Catholic Charities at 528-3035, Ext 12, or by completing and submitting the Reservation Form available on the Citizens Council website at www.bccj.org. As in previous years, some scholarships are available by calling the Citizens Council at 528-3185.

- 30 -