

"Belknap County is a safe community where children and families can live with dignity and respect."

Director's Report #14...02/01/03 – 02/28/03

Looking Back ~

The Council continues its busy schedule of monthly committee meetings and advancing toward completion of community forums throughout the county. Should you have any questions regarding any items in this report or the work of the Council, please do not hesitate to contact us at 528-3185 or visit our web site at www.bccj.org.

Administration

Mediation Grant – A proposal to begin a Belknap County Mediation Program for pre-adjudicated and adjudicated youth, was submitted to the Division of Juvenile Justice Services on February 7. While the County would be the grantee if approved, this program will be contracted through the Youth Services Bureau. Should anyone be interested in learning more about the program, please contact Youth Services Bureau at 524-9457. We should hear whether the grant was approved any day now.

Community Forum Updates – A series of follow-up forums have been conducted and planned in Gilford with Council member and staff facilitation. About 15 people attended a follow-up session on February 19 at the Gilford Elementary School. They chose to move forward with a town newsletter and perhaps a Gilford section in the Gilmanton Gazette. Other interests expressed included Erika and Bill Johnson's initiative to begin a "welcoming" process for newcomers to Gilford. This was a great meeting and example of community citizens feeling empowered.

Alton has had a couple of sessions since their forum and they will meet with their town's Selectmen on March 3 to present an update on their efforts and recognize members of the community who participated in the forum.

New Hampton and Gilmanton Forum Steering Committees are well underway and plans for conducting forums in these communities are moving quickly. Council liaisons to these communities are Beth Bascom and Bob Rovella in New Hampton and Nancy Porosky in Gilmanton. Barnstead's forum development is being led by Kim Campbell. It's great to witness the energy of these steering committees as the Council moves to complete forums for each of the communities on Belknap County.

Juvenile Justice Reform Plan – The Citizens Council approved the reform plan submitted by the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC). At its February 14 meeting, Andre Paquette introduced the beliefs and goals of the reform effort. The proposal will now become part of the Council's ongoing organizational plan with the recognition that a collaborative, composed of the various service providers, remains a critical piece to the reform effort. JJAC meetings are held at 8:00 AM on the 4th Friday of each month. Contact the Citizens Council (528-3185) for further information .

Outreach

Committees and Advisory Councils - Staff have attended a series of routine committee and advisory council meetings of organizations throughout the region including: Best Schools Leadership Initiative (Laconia School District), Main Street Focus Group, Domestic Violence Advisory Committee, Reclaiming Futures State Advisory Council, Drop-out Prevention Committee, Newfound Area Prevention Committee, Birth-5 Subcommittee of the 21st Century Project, Regional Community Technical College Board of Trustees and others. Through these relationships we are able to interest other entities in the initiatives of the Council as well as build partnerships that better ensure the success of our efforts. The Lakes Region area is rich in this regard. There is tremendous effort and willingness among providers representing all sectors of the community to leverage the synergy of working together to meet local needs.

Belknap County is also fortunate to have the educational leadership that has evolved in the last few years. There is an obvious trend toward opening schools up to communities, developing innovated responses to the drop out issue and planning, long term, with community partners to increase utilization of schools as community resources that will assist in strengthening parent-school relations, juvenile delinquency prevention and all-around healthy communities. Just as one slight example of the collaboration includes SAU #30 inviting Council staff to an evening of discussion with families and young teens who are experiencing academic difficulties. This led to a referral of the school to outside consultants with Southern New Hampshire University (Center for Community Economic Development and Disability) and Project RENEW of the Institute on Disability, University of New Hampshire. Through these dialogues, new resources and initiatives materialize to support our schools, our youth and our communities.

Human Relations Committee – As more and more immigrants and refugees locate in the Lakes Region, the diversity of our community becomes enriched by the culture and values introduced by our new neighbors. The Council must be a partner in creating a welcoming environment and develop our own culture of competence to support their membership in our community.

Mentoring Telecast – On February 7, Lakes Region General Healthcare teleconferencing facilities were again made available to the community justice initiatives of the county. This time a national teleconference on Mentoring was viewed by interested Lakes Region members. Video copies of the telecast are available through the Council. Tom Clairmont, CEO, LRGH recently accepted a Community Partner Award at the Council's Annual Meeting and Norma Phillips, LRGH was recipient of a Community Associate Award for their assistance in allowing access to this valuable service. Another fine example of sharing resources and enhancing successes!

Neighborhood Association Project – As word comes in from our associate agencies and community partners, we identify needs that will require coordinated responses and interventions to assist neighborhoods to reclaim their safety and self-determination. The Council is interested in supporting neighborhood reclamation efforts. When residents effect the change they wish to see in their community, they identify ways to support one another in making their neighborhood a safe place for children and where they come to one another's aid in times of need. There are a couple of possible areas where this notion may play out in the near future and if others are aware of needs or successes of where neighborhood associations have developed, both formal and informal, please let us know.

Presentations – Presentations this past month were made to the following groups: Regional Guidance Counselors affiliated with the Oliver Huot Region 8 Vocational Center (Panel Discussion – Drop-out issues); State Juvenile and Family Court Judges Conference (Judicial Summit on Youth Substance Abuse); and Leadership Lakes Region.

Looking Ahead ~

Community Forums – As we move into Spring (you know...the absence of snow!), we will conclude the community forums in the Barnstead, Gilmanton and New Hampton. Steering Committees are being formed and schedules are being set up to complete these within the next couple of months. Visit the Council web site www.bccj.org for updates on scheduling.

Forum Follow-ups - Likewise, we will continue to urge communities to follow-up on their priorities. The Council has collated the findings of the forums thus far conducted and we will be incorporating information from the upcoming forums into our planning process. For contact information and status of community follow-up to their forums, contact the Council.

Domestic Violence Workshop – As a member of the Domestic Violence Advisory Committee, I have been asked to facilitate a workshop on Batterers Intervention Standards targeting professionals in Belknap County, on April 25th. A planning committee is currently devising the agenda and making facility

arrangements for the workshop. With Domestic Violence statistics on the rise, we will need to assure there are appropriate responses to protect all victims of this crime.

New England Community-Police Partnerships- Through discussion and referral with Chief Tom Oetinger (Laconia Police Department), I have been invited to present a workshop on community development to the New England Community –Police Partnership Association conference in June. The conference will be held in Manchester.

Addiction Task Force – Plans are shaping up to convene an Addiction Task Force for Belknap County. At the urging of Riley Regan, Director of the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Recovery, we will convene a Task Force to examine issues and present recommendations to his office regarding strategies to reduce use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs in Belknap County. An organizational meeting of this group is scheduled for March 6.

Center for Civic Engagement – Preliminary discussions have been held to float an idea for creating a Center for Civic Engagement. The concept behind the Center is one of collaboration, professional and community leadership development, volunteer clearinghouse and an opportunity for service learning for students. The potential impact on leveraging resources among area wide entities is great and the Center could be an opportunity to incubate various community responses to enhanced civic engagement. Preliminary discussions have occurred among the Citizens Council, the Community Technical College, LRGHealthcare, Lakes Region Community Services Council and the New Hampshire Rural Development Council. This effort is perceived as an extension of the many collaborative efforts that have occurred in the Lakes Region over the past many years and a potential way to engender greater public participation in the issues confronting our citizens and their communities. Stay tuned!

Thought to Ponder

"Children have never been very good about listening to their elders but they have never failed to imitate them."

James Baldwin

Respectfully,

Alan

"The Mission of the Citizens Council is to promote Community Justice in Belknap County so children and families can live safely with dignity and respect."