

# Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families Quarterly Report

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter FY – 2002

## Introduction

The Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families has completed its nine-month milestone. As we approach the end of our first year, we can feel proud, but never complacent, of our achievements. We have dedicated and compassionate leadership on our Council. We have a committed staff. We have excellent providers and state liaisons. We have a growing number of advocates who are beginning to understand the systems change needed in the juvenile justice system. We have determination but we also have needs. The needs rest in the areas of policy support for our efforts; community and service system response to children and families; and accountability for assuring we are investing our resources in the best results possible so 'investors' continue to support our efforts. We will continue to resolve these and other issues as the Council moves forward in the months ahead.

## Council Organizing Activities

*Retreat* ~ The Council conducted a retreat on July 12 utilizing the consulting services of Deborah White of Helms & Co., Inc. Deborah conducted a number of activities leading up to and during the retreat including interviewing Council members, meeting with the Executive Director and reviewing documents. The retreat was conducted at the Belknap Mill. Based on discussion and interpretation of material reviewed and discussed at the retreat, the Council has adopted the following Mission Statement:

*"The mission of the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families is to promote Community Justice so Belknap County is a safe place where children and families can live with dignity and respect."*

The Council also developed values statements that will advise its work into the future and allow the Council to measure its performances against guideposts as it contemplates its work with each community throughout the county.

*Web site* ~ In working with consultant David Stamps, Council staff reorganized both content and format of the Council's web site. Its new look is both appealing and instructive in assisting visitors to attain updated information on Council activities and connection to a host of additional resources through links to other web sites and agency listings. A "Notices" box welcomes the visitor to the web site and allows the Council to post updates of important changes in the juvenile justice system, upcoming events and similar information. Through the web site, the Council is able to inform and elicit involvement of the public, human service organizations, and others of its activities and allows them to play a continuous role in defining the direction community justice needs to go in the future. The Council would like to acknowledge the work of David Stamps and Judy Buswell in the redesign of the web site.

*Professional Provider Advisory Committee (PPAC)* ~ Several meetings between the Council and various community groups resulted in the recent development of a Professional Providers Advisory Committee that will work in conjunction with the Council to improve the juvenile justice system. Modeled after the Deschutes County, Oregon concept of Community Justice, the PPAC was formed based on current characteristics of Belknap County. We have long considered ourselves fortunate in having a well-connected community where citizens devote endless energy to their community and neighbors through high levels of volunteerism. We also see this permeated throughout the formal service systems as there is comparable participation among agency professionals in collaborative activities achieving greater results through coordinated efforts. In such an environment, and being relatively new to the scene, it was important that the Council not duplicate or corrupt this pattern of partnership. In developing yet one more coalition among already collaborative partners, as well as provide opportunities for others to participate, the Council proceeded slowly and deliberately in determining a strategy for the PPAC.

Essentially there are three legs to the Community Justice stool: Prevention, Balanced and Restorative Justice, and Community Development. Upstream, the longest running coalition of non-profit organizations in the state, is a well-respected and effective voice for primary prevention issues throughout the Lakes Region. It made perfect sense to examine what role Upstream could play in the PPAC. Secondly, the Belknap Juvenile Justice Initiative, precursor to the Citizens Council, had developed a grant to establish the

first Restorative Justice program in the county. Through its work and in conjunction with numerous other aspects of community organizations serving juveniles, the Citizens Council has developed a partnership with the Restorative Justice program and collaborates through the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, a multi-agency structure that consolidates several task force/advisory committee mandates of their separate grant authorities. Third, the Community Development aspect of the PPAC recognizes the ongoing efforts of the Community Benefits group that has been meeting over the past year and a half. Affiliating with this group prevents duplication of effort and places the Council at a participatory level of community based interaction and resolution through joint planning, resource sharing and synergistic program development.

The Council had also distributed a survey of interest to numerous entities and individual professionals throughout the county. With the assistance of Upstream, an extensive mailing list was accessed and as a result, over 70 responses from interested parties have been returned. Through the combined aforementioned groups and the survey, the Council selected a cross-representation of over twenty individuals to serve on the PPAC. These individuals were then invited to an orientation on the functions of the PPAC and a presentation by a representative of the Deschutes County, Oregon, Commission on Children and Families. Due to the relatively small turnout for these events (resulting from conflicting schedules) the Council will now proceed to make individual contacts with perspective PPAC members.

The final selection process considered representation from the three key constituent groups (i.e. Upstream, Juvenile Justice providers, and Community Benefits Group) as well as eight interest sector groups (i.e. family violence, family support, juvenile crime, substance abuse, education, vocational, health and mental health). The Council will complete its final selection and begin to activate the PPAC in the next few weeks.

*Council Management and Administration* ~ Council committees have been active in determining their roles and responsibilities within the emerging community justice system. The *Legislative and Advocacy* Committee has reviewed and recommended an affiliation with the New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network, a state wide child advocacy network centered in Concord. Developing a policy agenda for children and developing collaborative training and planning are key concerns of this organization. Also, the committee has developed a policy regarding Council members' roles and responsibilities pertaining to public testimony. This policy will be reviewed and voted on by the Council at its October meeting.

The *Planning Committee* has been busy undertaking the process for conducting the community forums slated to occur in October and November. They have reviewed plans with Judy Bush of UNH Cooperative Extension Services who, along with other associates, will provide the facilitation at each of the eleven forums. Currently, the Planning Committee is supporting the development of Steering Committees comprised of local citizens who will be responsible for coordinating the logistics of the forums.

The committee has also begun work on the creation of the Council organizational plan. Draft goals and objectives have been issued by the Planning Committee to each of the other committees. A plan for amending the draft and developing the overall organizational plan is under development.

Finally, the Council, through the Planning Committee, recognized the outstanding work of former Laconia Police Chief Bill Baker at its meeting of August 5, 2002. Bill received a framed certificate acknowledging his efforts on behalf of all citizens of Laconia.

The *Public Relations and Awareness Committee* is in the process of developing a Council brochure for use in the upcoming forums and community events (e.g. Diversity Day). Also, work is progressing on a communication plan for the Council which will lay out various activities and timeframes for the conductance of targeted public relations materials through media, websites and other channels of communication throughout the region and state.

The *Executive Committee* will activate its recruitment process to fill vacancies which have occurred on the Council this year. Due to term expirations and increased demands on personal time, four slots have opened that will demand attention. Public notices will be placed in local papers and other media and social outlets to recruit from the communities of Barnstead and Gilmanton, Alton, New Hampton, Meredith, Tilton and Sanbornton; and we shall seek involvement from folks representing our culturally and ethnically diverse communities of Belknap County.

Also in October, the Council will initiate its Officer Nomination process for FY 2003. Candidates eligible for either Chair or Vice-Chair must be a member in good standing and shall have served on the Council for at least one year.

The *Finance & Grants Committee* reviewed and approved a preliminary budget submission for FY 2003. In its review, the Council added new line items to more adequately reflect operations and to account for anticipated revenues and expenses acquired through the receipt of grants the Council hopes to pursue.

The committee also reconciled expenses from the Schmitt Fund that coincided with the late start-up of the Citizens Council. Expenses paid out during the first three months of Council operations were deducted from the final transfer of funds to the Citizens Council from the Schmitt fund.

### **Community Outreach**

The Council will conduct *Community Planning Forums* between mid-October and mid-November in communities throughout Belknap County. These forums will be conducted by facilitators of the UNH Cooperative Extension Services. Steering Committees led by local residents of respective communities will assume responsibility for all of the logistics and invitations. Lead Council members will serve as liaisons between the Council and the Steering Committee Chairs. Council staff will attend each forum but will be there as active listeners not as facilitators of the forums. These forums will serve as key indicators of assets and needs within each community from which the Council will form its own priorities in the year ahead.

The Council continues to facilitate the *Courthouse Exploratory Committee*. While progress is measurable, there remain key barriers separating the City of Laconia and the State of New Hampshire regarding long term lease/purchase agreements and renovation/restoration costs. Key constituents involved with this project include the Laconia District Court, the City of Laconia, the State of New Hampshire, the Citizens Council, the Main Street Project and the numerous users of the court house including juvenile and adult offenders, JPPOs, families, and prosecutors and defense attorneys. Through the work of Fred Urtz of a Manchester based architectural firm, it has been determined that the current courthouse structure could be renovated to meet the current and future court needs of Belknap County. Now comes the matter of reaching a settlement between the City and the State as to whom shall control the long term assets of the building itself. Council staff will continue to facilitate the group until a final decision is reached on the project. The next steps will include framing the issue of collaborative community need and willingness to support keeping a vibrant courthouse operation in the downtown area.

*One on one interviews* continue to apprise the Council of efforts to collaborate and build partnerships with individuals, agencies and organizations throughout the county. This quarter interviews included the following contacts:

- Michael Coughlin, Executive Director, Genesis Behavioral Health
- Jim Sawyer, Prosecutor, City of Laconia
- Judge Martin (re: system review)
- Shari Landry, Vice President, Child and Family Services of NH
- Kathy Keller and Nancy Carver, New Beginnings
- Sue Caldon (Nathan Brody Chemical Dependency Program)
- Joe DeNauw, Teen Center
- Karen Jensen – Belmont School Health Educator
- Kim and David Tucker w/Linda Brewer – Parents of recently deceased teenaged son

*Additional Outreach Activities* consisted of the following efforts:

- NH Rural Development Council, Board of Directors
- Weekly Rotary meetings
- Lakes Region Community Development Clearinghouse
- Community Technical College System, Board of Trustees
- Firesetter Intervention Team
- Gubernatorial Candidates Forum on Higher Education
- Chief Chip Sawyer and Bob Rovella re: New Hampton Community Forum
- Mary Alice, Andy Fallen, et. al. re: Center Harbor Community Forum & Citizens Council

Best Schools Initiative Leadership group, Laconia High School 9/5 & 9/23  
Domestic Violence Advisory Committee, New Beginnings 9/17  
Upstream Leadership Team re: Professional Providers Advisory Committee  
“Doin’ the Right” – Play at Woodland Heights Elementary School  
Belmont Community Forum Steering Committee 9/30

## **Program Development**

Council involvement with grant procurement continues to generate interest among local providers. During the third quarter, Council staff has provided direct writing involvement, editing/review, or letters of support for grants submitted to outside funding sources.

*Model Community Grant* ~ Submitted by Lakes Region Community Services Council on behalf of a community of providers including the Citizens Council, Lakes Region United Way, Main Street Project, Human Relations Committee-City of Laconia, Genesis and others. The proposal was turned down but with continued interest of the funding source to seek out other sources of support and to apply other unencumbered funds. This \$90K/year grant will be reviewed and future funding will be sought in other funding announcements.

*Mediation* ~ There continues to be a great deal of interest and commitment on the part of local citizens to participate in a rejuvenated mediation/conflict resolution program for the county. The Youth Services Bureau has committed to providing administrative oversight for this program and is uniquely positioned, with its constant coverage and cadre of volunteers, to provide the structural supports required to make the program successful. Holly DeWald of the Youth Service Bureau has been diligently pursuing support for the program and has scheduled a mediator refresher training session for former mediators ready to commit to meeting with youth and their families while we seek additional funding for recruiting and training new mediators. Holly met with Council staff and a representative of the Division of Juvenile Justice Services to explore Title V (Delinquency Prevention) funds for the mediation program. If applicable, up to \$50K a year for three years may be available to start the program this winter. This effort was discussed and supported at a recent meeting of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee of the Citizens Council at which a host of providers are represented.

*Batterers and Chemical Dependence – Horizons* ~ The Council submitted a letter of support for Horizons Counseling Center and the Nathan Brody Chemical Dependency program of Lakes Region General Healthcare. This project builds on the service capacity to intervene with children and adults involved in substance abuse and domestic violence issues and begins to address a complex network of relationships targeting a growing population of families in the County.

*Juvenile Crime Enforcement Plan (JOLT)* ~ The Council submitted the required Juvenile Crime Enforcement Plan to the Division of Juvenile Justice Services in compliance with the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG) and the Juvenile Offender Locator Team (JOLT) grant. Initial reports indicate that the JOLT program has met with very favorable results. The collaboration among the Juvenile Probation and Parole Office, the Sheriff’s Department and local police departments have already generated talk among the juvenile population of the county that accountability is expected and will be enforced. The Council will continue to monitor and support this program through its grant-writing efforts.

*Evolving Community Justice* ~ At this writing, the Council has successfully completed four sessions of the fifteen week series on community justice through the Community Technical College in Laconia. As recalled from previous reporting, this series represents a major public awareness campaign of the Citizens Council and a majority of providers throughout the county. The following sessions have been presented to date:

*Session 1: Historical Overview of the Juvenile Justice System, Judge Willard Martin;*  
*Session 2: Citizens Council, Gil Schohan, Leo Sanfacon, Mark Condodemetrazy, Sue Smith;*  
*Session 3: Schools, Business and Law Enforcement, Rick Batstone, Deb Guyer, Paul Clauson;*  
*Session 4: NH State Law and Service System. Egon Jensen*

While initial efforts failed to secure funding for this series through the New Hampshire Charitable Fund, the course has ended up paying for itself through tuition paying students and workshop attendees.

*Alton Youth Activity* – Through the efforts of Citizen Council member Dick Wallace, Alton held its first weekend dance for middle-schoolers on August 2, 2002. In the true spirit of community volunteerism, Dick mustered a group of fellow citizens who procured the site, entertainment, promotion and refreshments for the dance. This effort was modeled in part by the PACT and Teen Center program in Laconia which Dick had consulted with prior to the planning for the dance.

*Foster Family Care* ~ One major deterrent to keeping kids safe and in their community is the lack of foster care for teens. Working with the Probation and Parole officials and the Division of Children, Youth and Families, Council staff hosted a meeting of key foster care providers from around the state to discuss ways to recruit specialized homes targeting teenagers. The DCYF foster care recruiter is committed to targeting recruitment specifically for those youth identified by JPPOs as needing an alternative to their current home situation. The Foster Care providers will identify staff within their respective organizations who will participate in an ongoing coalition of home providers in Belknap County.

*School retention* ~ Discussions were held with administrators of local schools and revealed a commitment to work closely with JPPOs to keep kids in school. Increasing numbers of youth are finding it difficult to remain in the daytime school environment. Whether due to distractive learning styles, stressful social and economic factors, or other reasons, some students need an alternative setting in order to succeed in school. Bob Champlin (Superintendent, SAU 30) and Jim McCollum (Assistance Principal, Laconia High School) have committed to work closely with JPPOs to seek alternative means to keep and educate kids in their local schools. If successful, this will prevent a number of costly out-of-school placements. Jay Apicelli and the JPPOs have pledged their full support to the schools and will be available “on demand” should a student need intervention. This kind of commitment and willingness to do “whatever it takes” speaks to the excellent collaboration we have in Belknap County. Only through this type of relationship will it be possible to reinvest resources locally and keep our kids home.

In addition, conversations between the District Court (Judge Martin) and Laconia High School (Jim McCollum) met with an agreement to speed up the petitions of youth suspended from school because of drug possession/use. Judge Martin agreed that if a petition reaches his desk on a Friday, the youth would appear in his court by the following Wednesday. Heretofore, some students were waiting an inordinate amount of time for their cases to be heard and were falling behind in their school work.

## **System Coordination**

The Citizens Council continues to facilitate a number of efforts in an attempt to provide efficient operations and collaboration across agency boundaries. There has been willingness among providers and others to work toward developing a system that meets the needs of Belknap County youth and families.

*Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC)* ~ The Council has consolidated many separate groups that have been meeting to discuss barriers and needs within the juvenile justice system. Through the JJAC structure, monthly meetings are conducted with providers across the county in a ways that allow collective systems approach to issues. While not all providers attend regularly, the JJAC is open to all and it is here that the need to establish coalitions for seeking grants, examining data, conducting asset assessments, and joint problem-solution takes place. Redundancy is addressed through open communications among providers and the Council can extract information in order to inform other activities such as policy, planning and funding issues which are identified as impediments to successful service delivery.

*Juvenile Integrated Information System (JIIS)* ~ The Council began looking into the need for a consolidated data system that collected, collated and reported on data among juvenile justice providers. Initially, two large, heavily invested systems were examined; Bridges, the Health and Human Services client tracking system and J-1, the Department of Safety’s data system involving the Departments of Safety, Corrections and Adult Probation and Parole. Neither of these systems currently assists the local provider networks. Both are highly technical and each is extremely costly making use of highly qualified experts to design and test system operations. While each system holds promise for the future, we need data now. In making proposals for funding to the county or to grant sources, we need an ability to understand what is going on with our local services. Only recently has the local JPPO district office been given allowance to write its own reports from the very data it puts in. We will continue to work though the JJAC to identify, analyze and plan with

local data. While rudimentary at best, we feel we the need to act in the absence of the larger systems developing a local capacity to serve our data needs.

*Letters of Support* ~ The Council has worked closely with, and in some cases in-depth assistance has been given to, local efforts to secure outside funding. A batterers invention proposal was submitted by Horizons Counseling Service and the Nathan Brody Chemical Dependency Program of Lakes Region General Healthcare. The intent is to also work closely with other providers (e.g. Familystrength, County Attorney's Office) to provide intervention and treatment service through a grant submitted to the Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment.

A second grant in which Council staff provided greater assistance, was a replication model of mentoring currently provided through Parents and Children Together (PACT). If approved, this grant will reach throughout each community of the county on a requested basis so that local capacity to sustain mentoring to youth, over time, is developed by each community.

*Grant Participants* ~ The Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families has been named a pilot site in two very significant grants. The *Reclaiming Futures* systems change grant of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, through the NH District Court System, seeks to develop integrated approaches to substance abuse treatment for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. *Reentry*, a grant recently received by the NH Department of Corrections, seeks similar levels of care for youth offenders who are returning to their communities from placement facilities. Each of these grants will bring additional planning, training and technical assistance resources to the county and assist in developing appropriate responses to substance abusing youth.

*Restorative Justice Advisory Committee* ~ A requirement of the Byrnes grant which funds the Belknap County Restorative Justice Program, is that there be an Advisory Committee. As mentioned above under JJAC, this is another example of potential duplication and redundancy of inviting some of the same individuals to participate on sub-committees. Through the collaborative intent of JJAC, we have been exploring the advisory committee function of the Restorative Justice Program falling under the auspices of JJAC.

*Community Benefits - Website coordinating group* ~ Council staff has been participating in planning for the development of a local website where citizens and providers alike can access information about services. When completed, this resource will make up for some of the gap in information and referral services in Belknap County.

*Prevention Forum* ~ The Council sponsored a discussion on Prevention featuring Julie Lyche, Prevention Coordinator of Deschutes County Commission on Children and Families, Bend, Oregon. Over thirty people representing a wide array of interests attended this session and will be called on to assist the Council's prevention efforts.

## **Training and Technical Assistance**

Council members and staff attended the following training/technical assistance sessions this past quarter:

*DADAPR Bidders Conference* ~ The Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Recovery convened a bidders conference for purposes of submitting proposals to the Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Substance abuse Prevention, Intervention and treatment. This conference led to the submission by Horizons and the Nathan Brody program mentioned above.

*Riley Regan, Director of Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Recovery* ~ The Council sponsored a workshop with Director Regan at the County Complex and invited providers from across the county to meet him, discuss their concerns for resources, to understand the vision and direction Riley is setting for the Division, and what part local efforts can play in a redesigned service delivery system. The session was attended by about a dozen individuals.

*ABCD – Mike Green* ~ Mike Green of the Asset Based Community Development Institute (ABCD), Northwestern University, was hosted by the Lakes Region Community Services Council. This is a

continuous consultation with ABCD Institute in an attempt to focus local efforts on asset based development in human services and has a great deal of relevance to community justice issues.

*UNH Cooperative Extension – Consultation for Forums* ~ Judy Bush of the UNH Cooperative Extension Services, has been enlisted to serve as facilitator of the Council’s Community Planning Forums most of which will occur between mid-October and mid-November. Judy provided a training session to the Council and volunteer Steering Committee Chairs of communities throughout the county. Plans are well under way for the forums and community members are taking a very active part in the preparation of the forums.

*Video-conferencing – Cooperative Extension demonstration* ~ Staff attended a demonstration at the Cooperative Extension Office on video conferencing. This modality has great possibilities for distance learning and conference participation and it is hoped that ways can be found to utilize this training technology for the future.

*ADHD – Genesis* ~ Staff attended a workshop sponsored by Genesis on Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. The newly hired child psychiatrist for Genesis provided an overview of the disorder and ways to achieve success when working with children who have been given this label.

### **Concluding Remarks**

While the Citizens Council has experienced many successful outcomes in a rapidly changing environment, much work remains to be done. We would be remiss not to mention the dedication and care endlessly expressed by a very committed core of service providers. What we lack in quantity, we make up for in quality. Helping such a core of advocates and experts to succeed in their endeavor in the face of diminishing resources will be a key objective of our efforts. Along with that, we must continue to hold ourselves and others accountable for the stewardship of public funds all the while advocating for needed resources through public and private sources.

Conveyance of key measures to assure support for this community justice effort will not lie in the measure of “saved” dollars. It will depend instead on the measure of how such investments keep kids in school, off drugs and as valued, contributing members of our communities. This effort is not about saving money. It is about saving lives. Families need to raise healthy kids. Kids need to grow up in supportive communities and become productive adults. Communities need to rely on skilled workers and entrepreneurs in order to maintain a vibrant economic environment. This is the work of all of us and it is the work of the Council to facilitate processes that achieve the success we, a community of people, need to sustain our communities. We all (as individuals, as business people, as politicians, as teachers) have a role in this vision. If we can see it...we can achieve it.

*“The best way to predict the future... is to create it!”*

The Citizens Council looks forward to your participation in affecting the vision that “Belknap County is a safe community where children and families can live with dignity and respect.”

Respectfully,

*Alan J. Robichaud*

Executive Director