

Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families

Quarterly Report

1st Quarter FY - 2003

As the Citizens Council entered its second year of operation, many exciting new initiatives were well under way. This abbreviated format for the quarterly Council update will allow you quick reference to the Council's role and outreach as it continues to develop support for community justice principles throughout Belknap. Council staff and members continue to participate in a myriad of activities with local partners as part of promoting the three principles of Community Justice (Prevention, Balanced and Restorative Justice and Community Development). As a means of orienting the reader to these principals, in the context of our work, each initiative will be coded as follows: P = Prevention, BRJ = Balanced & Restorative Justice, and CD = Community Development. For more information about the Council and its activities, please call 528-3185 or visit our web site at www.bccj.org.

Administration and Operations

The Council conducted its first **Annual Meeting** on January 21, 2002. Over 70 people joined in celebration of joint involvement in a growing number of Council activities. **New Council members** were installed from Barnstead (Kim Campbell), New Hampton (Beth Bascom), Gilmanston (Nancy Porosky), and Sanbornton (Katy Kanally-DeCarteret). If interested in becoming a member of the Council, visit our web site.

The County Convention passed the **Council Budget** for FY 2003 which this year consists of a \$100,000 line item for grant initiatives, a "pass-through" account that allows the council to receive grants for program initiatives throughout the county. Already this year, this account has received over \$38,000 to begin a Mediation program (see Program Development below) and another \$5,000 grant is pending.

Council committees are engaged in numerous issues and welcome community participation at any and all of its meetings. Call the Council office for time and place of committee meetings and agendas.

Program Development

The Council recently received notification of approval for \$38,659 to begin a mediation program for youngsters experiencing truancy issues. The grant is through the US Department of Justice, through the NH Division of Juvenile Justice Services, Department of Health and Human Services. The Council chose to partner with Youth Services Bureau who will implement the **Belknap County Mediation Program** (P, BRJ) around the first of May. Individuals interested in becoming a mediator for the program should contact Youth Services Bureau at 524-9457.

Maureen McConnon of **NHFuture** (P, BRJ, CD) has accompanied Council staff to meetings at the Lakes Region Corrections facility and Youth Development Center for presentations on how her employment program might benefit individuals in adult and youth correctional facilities as they prepare to reenter their communities. Maureen's program is a statewide, industry-supported orientation and training for employment opportunities and skill development. While the program is designed primarily for high school juniors and seniors, Maureen was interested in its applicability to incarcerated youth and young adults. We appreciate her efforts to include our youth in her services.

New Hampshire District Court System was recently invited to apply for full participation in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's **Reclaiming Futures Project** (P, BRJ) for substance abusing youth. If approved, New Hampshire will change its status with the foundation from simply receiving training and technical assistance to full program model implementation. This could mean an additional \$1M for New Hampshire over the next 4 years. The Citizens Council has been a pilot site for the project since its inception last year. One of the activities of the project is a current study for existing **mentoring** (P) programs throughout Belknap County. Early predictions are that while there are many splinter efforts for peer mentoring programs, there are few if any adult to child programs in the county. Stay tuned and let us know if you either know of a program in your community or if you wish to volunteer as a mentor for a child.

The Citizens Council initiated, along with several other agencies and organizations, an **Addiction Task Force** (P, BRJ). The first meeting occurred on March 31 and set the direction for setting up a county response to the lack of prevention and treatment services available to substance abusing youth and adults throughout Belknap County. For more information, call the Council office (528-3185).

Community Outreach

Staff has continued their involvement with multi-agency committees functioning as fact-finding, training, and coordination groups to maximize use of existing resources throughout Belknap County. For more information on what each of these groups do, who is involved and how to become involved, please contact the Council (528-3185).

- Lakes Region Community Development Clearinghouse (CD)
- New Hampshire Rural Development Council (CD)
- NH Community Technical College System Board of Trustees and
Laconia Campus Human Services Advisory Committee (P, BRJ, CD)
- Dropout Prevention Task Force (P, BRJ)
- Domestic Violence Advisory Committee (P, BRJ)
- Rotary (CD)
- UpStream (P)
- Best Schools Leadership Initiative (P, BRJ)
- Human Relations Committee (P, BRJ, CD)
- BCEDC Annual Meeting (CD)

Additional **community outreach activities** include continuation of the community forums. With new Council members from those communities yet to conduct forums, we hope to see some activity in those areas in the next few weeks. Follow-up actions are occurring in **Alton** and **Gilford** as a result of initiatives by Council members Dick Wallace and Alida Millham, respectively. Dick continues to rally support for his Community Youth Activity programs and involves a number of youth and adults in planning future events and development of a youth center. Dick, along with Selectwoman Pat Fuller, Principal Russ Holden and Parks and Recreation Director, Kellie Troendle, made a presentation of priorities from their forum to the Alton Selectmen on March 3. The response was most favorable toward the activities on which the group hopes to follow-up.

Alida Millham and a group of as many as ten other residents are following up on Communication Issues as an identified priority of the forum. Several meetings have occurred over the past weeks and a communication forum is planned for mid-April to pursue a couple of goals around community newsletters and newspapers.

Mark Condodemetrakey also recently convened a recognition ceremony for assistance by the Belmont Explorers at the November **Belmont forum**. Also recognized for their efforts were Tom Carroll, Greta Olson-Wilder, and Pleasant Oberhauser for their participation on the Steering Committee.

Special thanks goes to Kalene Coulombe of the Community Technical College for her outstanding contribution in creating a **database** of the surveys returned from the community forums. Thanks to Kalene, we now have responses from all forums tallied and rank-ordered according to issues. These results will be reported in the Council's plan in the near future.

System Coordination

Major service gaps continue in areas of **mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence** (P, BRJ, CD). While each of these areas are complex in and of themselves, the solution to meeting needs in these areas will require the willingness of many to work to on solutions. The Council continues to make headway with our partners in collaboration. To this end, the Council assisted in the submission by Genesis Behavioral Health, of a *Youth Violence Prevention* grant to respond to the growing need for coordinated services for youth with mental illness. Because of the prevalence of substance abuse issues involved in domestic violence incidents and the lack of programs that intervene with batterers, the Council has been asked by New Beginnings, to facilitate a workshop on **batterers' intervention** (P) for law enforcement,

healthcare professionals and court and legal personnel. This event is scheduled, by invitation, on April 25. It is the first in what is anticipated to be a series of workshops on domestic violence issues sponsored by a comprehensive array of agencies.

Three Council members have been appointed to serve on the **Belknap County Restorative Justice Program Advisory Committee** (BRJ) and oversee and assist the program in its early evaluative processes. They are Leo Sanfacon (Gilford), Gil Schohan (Belmont) and Andre Paquette (Laconia). Assisting the Council in this and other evaluative processes is John Cook of Center Tufonboro, who has volunteered his time and expertise in strengthening this function for the Council. Thanks and welcome John.

The **Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee** (P, BRJ) continues to attract numerous partners to the table in our attempt to define the current system and plan for future reform of the juvenile justice system in Belknap County. Recent additions to the JJAC include Rep. Omer Ahearn (Belknap County Convention), Dan Kusch (Appalachian Mountain Teen Project), and Jack Collins (Familystrength). The group is led by Andre Paquette who is conducting a “system walk-through”, a process recommended by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The JJAC membership is hovering around 30 representatives from the full array of juvenile justice services. The group meets the 4th Friday of each month.

In recent passage by the House, the State Capital Budget was amendment to include a \$250,000 line item for the **Laconia District Courthouse** (BRJ, CD). Much needed repairs and architectural and engineering studies can now be performed anticipating long term use of the courthouse facility as the county’s district court seat. Facilitating a local group of members representing the court, the MainStreet Program, the City of Laconia, representatives of the NH Administrative Office of the Courts, the Department of Administrative Services, and others, the Citizens Council is pleased to see this amendment to the budget. This has been a unique partnership and we thank all participants for their continued involvement. It will be necessary as the project continues. Special thanks to the Honorable Edwin Kelly, Administrative Judge for the NH District Court System.

The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) conducted a focus group on **Child Abuse** (P) that was attended by the Council and several other agencies throughout the county. Key issues were identified and collated with other focus group responses around the state to comprise an agenda by which we may all work to prevention child abuse.

A **neighborhood reclamation project** (P, BRJ, CD) is underway in Lakeport. The Restorative Justice Program, the Laconia Police Department and the Citizens Council are working with Councilman Bob Luther and neighborhood organizers to restore the Sanborn Park area of Lakeport. This area has been the site of repeated vandalism and misuse for many years. The Council will facilitate a community discussion on April 24th at the Leavitt Park House in Lakeport.

The **Center for Civic Engagement** (P) is an emerging partnership among the Citizens Council, the Community Technical College, Lakes Region Healthcare, Lakes Region Community Services Council, Laconia Adult Education, and others, to establish a response to community leadership development, student service learning and enhanced civic engagement of citizens throughout Belknap County. In its early stages of development, the Center will address and support collaborative efforts in the areas of professional development, volunteerism and college/community partnerships.

Training and Technical Assistance

Thanks to Lakes Region General Healthcare, the Council has two new additions to its growing video library. Norma Phillips has been kind enough to download two **teleconferences** on Mentoring and Education, Juvenile Justice and Disability. Council member Leo Sanfacon is our loyal audience at these teleconferences and assures that our library remains updated with current resources.

Presentations were made to the following groups this past quarter: Regional Guidance Counselors, New Hampshire District Court Judges Conferences, and Leadership Lakes Region.

In preparation and anticipation of getting a consultant to present to representatives of the eleven communities of Belknap County, members of a local coalition met with Don Jutton of Municipal Resources, Inc. to discuss projects of interest in the Littleton, NH area. As a result of community forums, the Council is seeking expertise in **community planning and design** (CD). A small grant has been submitted to the NH Charitable Foundation with which to seek outside expertise in this area. If approved, the Council would anticipate a forum being held in the fall of 2003. This is in response to requests by community forum participants that the Council access expertise on the design of community centers.

Need Areas

The Council is concerned about the recent withdrawal of funds to the Governor's Task Force on Alcohol and Drug Prevention, Intervention and Treatment. With the advent of the Addiction Task Force in Belknap County, this important resource has been removed just as we are becoming to formulate concerted efforts to identify and develop much needed services. Additionally, there increasingly needs to be development in the areas of foster care, shelter beds, and short term detention, vocational training and other services that support youth remaining in their home communities as well as a response to rapidly increasing incidents of domestic violence, lack of parental accountability and access to needed family counseling services.

Concluding Remarks

With continued budget cuts at the state level, increased responsibility for funding needed services continues to fall to county and town offices for sustenance. At a time when the county has introduced new initiatives with which to reform juvenile justice services, maximize efforts among service providers and develop a structure of graduated sanctions that will keep Belknap County youth in Belknap County, we must now contend with diminishing resources that erode the base upon which such services must be built. We must continue to seek legislative support for the development and maintenance of a comprehensive community justice system. We will do so through the constant promotion of prevention, balanced and restorative justice and community development initiatives with our community partners, policy makers and private citizens.

Thoughts to Ponder

In reviewing a book I had read a few years ago, I came across the following statistics that were applicable in 1988. I wonder what these figures would be today?

“Biases favoring war-making over human development (Waring, 1998)

The cost of a single nuclear submarine equals the annual education budget of 23 developing countries with 160 million school-aged children.

For every 100,000 people in the world, there are 556 soldiers and 85 doctors.

For every soldier, the average world military expenditure is \$22,000. For every school-aged child, the average public expenditure for education is \$380.”

Someone recently said: “The best way to prevent terrorism is to mentor a child.”

Respectfully submitted,

Alan J. Robichaud

Executive Director