

Director's Report



4th Quarter 2006

"Promoting Community Justice in Belknap County so that children and families can live with dignity and respect."

HALLMARK OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

With the end of 2006, we celebrate the completion of five years of the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families. Our attention is recalled to the signing of the Proclamation by the County Commissioners on November 18, 2001, to the induction of our first appointed Council members on January 15, 2002. We acknowledge the County Commission and Convention for their trust and support and we thank the many Council members who have been with us throughout our existence. We also pay special tribute to Judge "Bud" Martin for his vision and support in reordering the social and political landscape thus paving the way for Belknap County to become the first in New Hampshire to establish a Citizens Council, a Restorative Justice program, and a corps of volunteers who have made significant change in how services are provided to juveniles caught up in the justice system. Additional thanks are given to the Annette P. Schmitt Foundation for its sustained financial investment in the restorative community practices making Belknap County a leader in Community Justice. In five years the foundation has contributed close to \$1M to the establishment and operations of the Citizens Council, the Restorative Justice Program and other services and programs supporting children and families in Belknap County. To each and all, we give our sincerest thanks.

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

The Council's December meeting served as its Annual meeting and a potluck dinner for Council members was held at the Taylor Community. Retiring Chair, Sue Smith thanked Council members for their dedication to the mission of the Council and to children and families throughout Belknap County. In quoting Woody Allen, "Ninety percentage of life is showing up", Sue said, "You all show up and because you show up, things get done!"

Following an election of officers, the Council welcomed Sarah Fox (Sanbornton) as their new Chair and Ruth Castonguay (Laconia) as their new Vice-Chair. Several business items await the Council in the new year including recruitment for new members. Should anyone be interested in learning more about becoming a Council member, they may call the Council office (528-3185) or visit our website www.bccj.org.

The Council also expresses its heartfelt thanks to retiring Council members who have given unselfishly of their time, talent and resources to promote Community Justice throughout Belknap County. They are Dick Wallace (Alton), Rep. Jim Pilliod (Belmont) and Kevin Washburn (Tilton). Gentlemen, we thank you and look forward to the many wonderful contributions you will go on to make within your communities and on behalf of children and families.

COUNCIL AWARDED DATA DEVELOPMENT GRANT

The *State Advisory Group on Juvenile Justice* (SAG) has awarded the Citizens Council a grant to develop and expand its data collection, analysis and program evaluation capacities among juvenile justice providers throughout Belknap County. Over the next year, the *Council Data Committee* and providers will work with a consultant to improve performance outcomes on key reporting indicators. This will inform future reports to the community on the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system. The consultant chosen for this project is Halter, McDonald, Meyer Consulting of Plymouth, New Hampshire. They were selected, following a long awaited grant, from a field of four proposals. A contract was signed on December 28, 2006 and goes through September 30, 2007. The primary point of contact for the consultant will be the Council's Data Committee.

The Council wishes to thank John Cook (consultant from Tuftonboro), and Carol Schonfeld (Belknap County Human Services Administrator), for their collaboration and consolidation of data, relative to juveniles. Their ability to pull together information from CHINS, delinquency, and abuse and neglect partitions, has been invaluable and provides the basis on which the new consultants will begin their work. Data kept by Carol's office has proven to be a most comprehensive and reliable source of information on Belknap County youth in the juvenile system.

BUDGET HEARINGS UNDERWAY

The first public viewing of the 2007 County Budget was held on December 11, 2006. At the Public Hearing, Commission Chairman Bud Daigneault presented the overall budget to the County Convention. With no particular questions regarding the Council's budget at that time, the next phase of oversight occurs through Convention subcommittees which will look intensively at each department's line items. While we await the schedule of these meetings, the committee appointed to examine the Council's budget includes the following members: Rep. Clark (Chair), Rep. Millham, Rep. Reeve, and Rep. Arsenaault. We look forward to meeting with our committee and addressing any questions they may have.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

A number of activities and events continued to push for elevated awareness of alcohol tobacco and other drugs during the past quarter. On November 9, the Council, in collaboration with the CoRe Coalition and New Futures, co-sponsored an advanced Community Leadership Initiative (CLI) at the NH Community Technical College. Over 40 individuals representing a fairly broad range of community members, convened for a four hour, intense session looking specifically for actions to be taken in reducing alcohol consumption by adolescents. The approach used was to look at what "environmental changes need to be made that can and must involve all members of the community. Over-reliance on programs and services to do this work has led others (e.g. parents, neighbors, businesses, faith communities) to become disengaged in this chronic problem that catches so many of our youth in health, legal and educational dilemmas contributing to life-long stigma, addiction and demands for services.

Four theme areas arose from this session and, while those who work in systems related to these issues will remain as resources to others, the key was to place the onus of responsibility on individuals to speak out and take action locally. Only when people except this issue as their own will they take action and change society's perception of the dangers involved with substance abuse. The Council acknowledges the facilitation that Linda King, Jennifer Weirwille-Norton and Aviva Meyer of New Futures provided during and preceding this forum. Much of the local organizing was performed by Shannon Swett (CoRe Coalition) and we wish to also recognize the terrific support of the New Hampshire Community Technical College through the efforts of Don Morrissey, retiring Provost and Vice-President of Corporate and Community Affairs.

Continuing with CoRe Coalition updates, the CoRe Executive Committee concluded its search for a new Director of the CoRe Coalition. At this writing, an announcement of the new director is imminent. This individual will replace Renee Rockwell who served as Director from CoRe's inception until June of 2006. The Council wishes to thank Shannon Swett for her continuous dedication and commitment to prevention and maintaining the course of CoRe as Interim Director during this time. Not only has CoRe maintained its commitments to its granting authorities, Shannon has made many additional contributions to the prevention opportunities now available in Belknap County. Most notable among her accomplishments were the planning and coordination of the CLI program above; the acquisition of grants for the Prime For Life education program at Prospect Mountain High School in Alton; and the continued leadership in preparing Belknap County for submitting a joint proposal with Carroll County to the state's Strategic Prevention Frameworks initiative due in early 2007.

The Council moderated a Drug Forum for parents at the Prospect Mountain High School on November 15. A terrific panel of professionals, parents, and former addict made the evening an enlightening experience for the nearly 40 individuals in attendance. It was agreed by all that these types of forums need to be more frequent and we need to continue to find ways of reaching more parents. Prospect Mountain High School has continued to open its doors to community services in order that their parents and students have access to all existing services and information available to address their needs. The Council expresses its thanks to Principal Russ Holden for his continued diligence and promotion of youth living in drug-free environments.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Council reaffirmed its mission "*to promote Community Justice so that Belknap County is a safe community where children and families can live with dignity and respect*", at its annual meeting. Challenges continue to arise that will test our ability to move the philosophies and practice of community justice forward. As we begin a new year, we will remain dependent on funding from the Belknap County taxpayer base. We must continue to assure, through evidence of performance, consumer satisfaction and public perception, that our service to communities is effective, efficient and is contributing to improving the lives of children and families.

We will be challenged by threats, both real and perceived, in reductions in state and federal funds upon which our providers in juvenile justice, substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence depend. We will see greater

challenges to sustaining a core of services and volunteers that prevent juvenile delinquency, child abuse and neglect as state and national budgets continue to respond to shifting priorities, fluctuating ideologies, and growing deficits.

Finally, our efforts to attract, develop, and retain leadership within the Council poses a risk to our own future and the values we hold true. We must find a way to develop depth and leadership on an ongoing basis as the Council, its philosophy and vision, is what sets our model of Community Justice apart from the traditional social services system and is the fulcrum needed in a balanced system of juvenile justice.

We look forward to these challenges and to developing new and renewed relationships with our communities so that Belknap County becomes and remains a safe community in which children and families live with dignity and respect.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Negotiating and Communicating to Get Your Needs Met
Featuring Howard Muscott, Ed D.
Saturday, January 20, 2007
8:30 AM – 3:30 PM
New Hampshire Community Technical College ~ Laconia

Teen Institute Open Space Forum ~ School Dropouts
Saturday, January 27, 2007
All Day – Time Approximate: 8:30 Am to 4:00 PM
New Hampshire Community Technical College ~ Laconia

Convocation on Children and Families
Tuesday, January 23, 2007
3:30 PM to 7:30 PM
The Conference Center at Opechee Inn and spa (formerly the Winnepesaukee Expo Center)

WORDS TO LIVE BY:

"A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both." – Dwight David Eisenhower

Respectfully,
Alan Robichaud
Executive Director

For more information on the activities, events and initiatives of the Citizens Council, visit our website at
www.bccj.org