

# Director's Report



## 4th Quarter 2008

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

### **WE'VE MOVED**

On December 27, 2008 the Citizens Council on Children and Families moved its offices to the County Complex at 36 County Drive in the North end of Laconia. We are sharing space with the University of New Hampshire's Belknop County Cooperative Extension Services. While we look forward to neighboring with the fine folks at the Cooperative Extension, we will miss our former colleagues at the Busiel Mill, home to the Citizens Council and its predecessor, the Belknop Juvenile Justice Initiative, since 1999. We invite all our friends and associates to visit us at our new digs. Our other contact information has changed as well. You can now phone us at 527-2432 or by fax us at 527-5477. We look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

### **RETIRING COMMISSIONER ONE OF THREE TO SIGN PROCLAMATION INCORPORATING THE COUNCIL**

Commissioner [Bud Daigneault](#) was one of the three County Commissioners who, after visiting Deschutes County, Oregon, returned to sign a proclamation and agreement, making the Belknop County Citizens Citizen a department of Belknop County. The Council was established to create a planning and coordinating arm of County government that would focus on prevention, balanced and restorative justice, and community development for issues impacting children and families in Belknop County. Seven years later, the Council is viewed by many within the county, the state, and other states as an innovative success that brings individuals, agencies and communities together to solve problems, leverage resources, and build on the strengths of children and families. In his parting remarks, Commissioner Daigneault highlighted the creation of the Citizens Council and the Restorative Justice Program as the "proudest moments" of his tenure. We thank Commissioner Daigneault for his support and foresight in establishing the Citizens Council and wish him well in his retirement.

### **COUNCIL BUDGET PROPOSED ~ DOWN 12%**

The proposed Council budget for CFY 2009 is less 12% from 2008. The County Commissioners approved and forwarded the Council budget to the County Convention who will have the opportunity to review line item requests during its upcoming budget deliberations. A subcommittee comprised of [Representatives Arsenault](#) (Chair), [Reever](#) and [Stuart](#) (Laconia), [Peter Bolster](#), (Alton), and [Miller](#) (Meredith) have scheduled a Council budget review for January 19 at 10:00 AM and will make its recommendations to the full convention before the end of March. The Council is pleased to be able to submit a budget that conserves taxpayer investment to this degree. Of great concern however is the future of the Council beyond December, 2009. The County Commission has indicated that beyond this next year, the Citizens Council will cease to be a County Department as originally developed under an agreement with the [Schmitt Foundation](#) and [County Commissioners](#) in 2001, when the Council was established. Citing the Citizens Council as being outside the legislated obligations of the County to provide, the Commissioners do not see the Council as a County department in 2010. This next year will be a challenge to the Council, not only for the major initiatives it has underway but for its own continuance. We would be very interested to hear from our readers as to your thoughts, ideas and concerns about the future of the Citizens Council. We encourage you all to visit our website at [www.bccj.org](http://www.bccj.org) and review our many accomplishments over the past seven years. Let us know what you think. Send us your thoughts at [ajrobich@bccj.org](mailto:ajrobich@bccj.org). We would like to hear from you. Be watching the papers for the scheduled Convention subcommittee meeting on the Council's 2009 budget.

### **COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP UPDATES**

*Founding Members Take The Reins* ~ As with the often quoted adage, "What goes around, comes around", Council leadership gains from its own history. At its annual meeting on elected [Andre Paquette](#) (Laconia) and [Gil Schohan](#) respectively. Andre and Gil were founding members active leaders in the Belknop Juvenile Justice Council development. Over the years, in addition to served as Chairman of the Juvenile [Justice Advisory Restorative Justice Work Group](#) and the [Data](#) previous terms has Council Chairman and has led the and, most recently chairs the [Communications and](#)



Andre Paquette with Sarah Fox

December 19, 2008, the Council (Belmont) Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council back in 2001 and Initiative in the years preceding being a Council member. Andre has [Council](#), the [Balanced and Committee](#). Gil served two Council's effort in [Victim Services Outreach Committee](#). Collectively,

Andre and Gil bring nearly 18 years of service to Belknap County juvenile justice services and the Citizens Council. We are pleased to welcome back these fine individuals to Council leadership positions and thank them for their many years of commitment to our county's children and families.

*Outgoing Leadership Acknowledged* ~ The Council expresses its thanks for the many contributions made by outgoing Chair, Sarah Fox (Sanbornton) and Vice-Chair, Emily Clement (Laconia) who have provided leadership this past year. Sarah was presented an engraved plate recognizing her past two years as Council Chair. Through her work with the Administrative Office of the Courts, Sarah has been instrumental in helping the Council understand the interplay of multiple agencies when a youth comes before the justice system. She has provided invaluable training and assistance to judges in the family court arena, helping to infuse the principles of community justices aligned with the Council's mission. Emily, as Christian Education Director of the Laconia Congregational Church, helped the Council to access the faith community around issues of the role they play in ways to promote aspirations in our youth such that the lives of children and families and community resources are leveraged in churches, synagogues and the like. Sarah and Emily are excellent examples of young leaders making a difference in their communities and we are grateful for their many contributions to improving the lives of children and families in their chosen professions as well as through their work on the Citizens Council. (Picture from left to right: Gil Schohan, Andre Paquette, Sarah Fox, Emily Clement, Deb Rosato).



instrumental in helping the Council understand the youth comes before the justice system. She has assistance to judges in the family court arena, community justices aligned with the Council's Director of the Laconia Congregational Church, community around issues of the role they play in ways to promote aspirations in our youth such that ways not typically considered by communities, Sarah and Emily are excellent examples of young communities and we are grateful for their many contributions to improving the lives of children and families in their chosen professions as well as through their work on the Citizens Council. (Picture from left to right: Gil Schohan, Andre Paquette, Sarah Fox, Emily Clement, Deb Rosato).

*Renewed Commitment* ~Extended terms were approved for Micheline Roy (Laconia), Laurie Belanger (Gilford) and Emily Clement (Laconia) as they committed to serving second terms through 2011. Similar to the above mentioned members, Micheline and Laurie contribute many hours of service through their community outreach, education and connections to their fields of expertise. Micheline has led the Council's prevention efforts for the past two years and expends great energy on getting the Council's message out into the communities of Belknap County. Laurie has assisted us with victims' services and school safety issues during her tenure. Together with Ruth O'Hara (Laconia), Micheline and Laurie are leading the Council's consumer impact effort on effectiveness of services received by children, youth and families.

*New Member Welcomed* ~ The Council is fortunate to welcome Deb Rosato (Gilford) as it newest member. Many of our readers will remember Deb as the Coordinator of Community Partners for Children and leading the Lakes Region effort in School Readiness and the Born Learning initiative. Recently Deb was hired as the Director of the Prescott Farms Audubon Center in Laconia where she continues her commitment to the education of children and strengthening of families. Welcome Deb. It's great to have you on board.

**SERVICE INTEGRATION INITIATIVE ~ LINK TO SYSTEM OF CARE GRANT**

The Council continues its lead in systems change through its service integration initiative. Council members Rich Moed (Gilford) and Betty Anson (Laconia) have assumed the leadership of this important project. Examining all facets of programs, policies, and procedures associated with child protection, juvenile justice, mental health, education, the courts and others impacting children and families, Rich and Betty have been instrumental in coordinating this multi-agency initiative and have enlisted other key agency leaders in facilitating various aspects of the project. Sandy Loomis of FamilyStrength and Pam Kuczowski of Laconia Savings Bank and the Citizens Council (New Hampton), are spearheading the Data Management and Analysis Committee. Lisa Morris, Executive Director of Lakes Region Partnership for Public Health is co-chairing the Resource Inventory and Assessment Committee with Jack Terrill, Executive Director of the Lakes Region United Way and Maggie Pritchard, Executive Director of Genesis Behavioral Health has agreed to serve as Chair of the Legal and Policy Committee. This initiative came about as the result of the Council's Issue Brief entitled: Perspectives on Child Maltreatment, CHINS and Juvenile Delinquency in Belknap County released in January 2008 and a symposium conducted in June, 2008. The committees are continuing to develop timeframes for accomplishing their outcomes and are targeting June 30 for completion of the initial research and analysis phase of this project.

At the Leadership Executive Committee meeting in November, Egon Jensen of the Division of Community Based Care Services, announced that the State (Department of Health & Humans Services) would be applying for a major System of Care grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and indicated the state was desirous of having Belknap County serve as the pilot region for the grant. This multi-year grant, if approved, would bring substantial resources to bear on developing a system of care model targeting youth with severe emotional disorders involved in the juvenile justice system. Further, there would be provisions for developing culturally responsive services for our refugee and immigrant population here in Belknap County. The Endowment for Health has commissioned the Institute on Disability to write the grant which will be submitted to SAMHSA by January 15, 2009. In his remarks to the Leadership Executive Committee, Egon stated that while many communities would see themselves as willing to serve as a pilot site for this grant, he viewed Belknap County as a "ready community" with good prospects for success as a result of the collaboration of agencies

around the table. This is a tribute to the coordination and leadership role of the [Citizens Council](#) and the collaborative spirit of our service providers throughout Belknap County. Participation in this effort is a natural and critical step, building on the ground-laying work of the service integration initiative. It exemplifies the importance of having an agency, such as the Citizens Council, serving as a facilitator and organizer for change by leveraging the capacities among service providers, communities and governmental entities to collaborate for systemic change. Final word on a successful application should be known by late spring or early summer with an implementation date projected as October 1, 2009.

**PREVENTION WORK GROUP WRAPS UP FOCUS GROUP SERIES –ISSUE BRIEF DUE OUT IN JANUARY**

The Council's [Prevention Work Group](#) completed a four session focus group series to explore community capacity (i.e. willingness and ability) for supporting student aspirations. In previous reports, we expressed interest in [Follow the Child](#), an educational initiative of the [NH Department of Education](#) in which the whole child is taken into account when implementing educational plans. The Council was curious to see how the community could, and should play a part in fostering aspirations in our youth. If we truly wish to create safe communities in which children and families can live with dignity and respect, we must examine and access all assets, wherever they exist, for all children and their parents. In 2008, the Council commissioned the [Appalachian Mountain Teen Project](#) to conduct a series of focus groups with the following community sectors: [Early Childhood Education](#); [Faith Community](#); [Financial, Insurance and Real Estate](#); and [Forestry and Agriculture](#). The results of these focus groups are the subject of a Council Issue Brief due to be released by the end of January. Too numerous to mention here, the Council expresses its deepest appreciation to all of the community members who participated in the discussions and for sharing their creative ideas with us. This effort not only raised our hope and confirmed our belief that communities are a treasure chest of youth opportunities waiting to be opened, but once again proved that creative ideas and better use of resources come about through the simple exchange of ideas among people who too infrequently come together to discuss similar interests. Many ideas and interests were revealed among participants and we applaud them for their creativity, innovation and interest in lending their support to the futures of our youth. It is with special appreciation to [Dan Kusch](#) ([Appalachian Mountain Teen Project](#)), [Micheline Roy](#) (Committee Chair and Council members from Laconia), [Emily Clement](#) (Council member/Laconia) and [Deb Rosato](#) (now a Council member from Gilford) that we thank them for their facilitation and coordination of these groups. Look for the Issue Brief on our website later this month.

**BELKNAP COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE AT A CROSSROADS**

Much has happened this past year to impact the juvenile justice system in Belknap County. At the local level, communities began the trend of reducing their annual support to court diversion (first-time offender) programs. At the state level, [House Bill 2](#) (NH Budget trailer bill in the 2007 legislative session) rewrote which governmental entity (County or State) would assume responsibility for funding youth services. Entering the 2009 budgeting session, Belknap County Commissioners signaled the end of its support for the [Restorative Justice Program](#) and the [Citizens Council on Children and Families](#). There has been much confusion and concern over this series of events and the Council has been actively getting information out to taxpayers and other concerned parties through a multitude of forums over the past several months.

There is much misunderstanding and lack of appreciation for the impact that will result by the loss of delinquency prevention and early intervention services. There are unintended consequences that have occurred as a result of changing the billing processes affected by the passage of HB2. There is risk of loss of the types of multi-agency collaboration resource leveraging described above under the System of Care and Service Integration Initiatives if services performed by the Citizens Council go unfunded. It is estimated that one youth placed at the [Sununu Youth Services Center](#) (SYSC) for one year equals the cost of a court diversion program serving 45 to 50 youths over that same period of time. Two youths at SYSC for one year equals the cost of a court diversion program and the Belknap County Restorative Justice Program. Without these programs serving Belknap County youth, providers anticipate that two-thirds of those served in community programs will not be held accountable through counsel and release by local law enforcement while the other one-third will be found going through the court system where court and high-cost placements will exacerbate the cost to taxpayers. When the Restorative Justice Program was introduced, local caseloads of the [Juvenile Probation and Parole Officers](#) were reduced by half signifying that diversion type programs can meet the needs of many youth previously sanctioned through the courts, at much less cost.

*[Belknap County Juvenile Justice at a Crossroads](#)* examines the history of juvenile justice services in Belknap County and provides specific recommendations for reorganizing those services in light of the fluctuating economic and political climates in which our communities find themselves. This Issue Brief is also slated for release later in January 2009.

**COMMUNITY PREVENTION COALITION**

If you or your agency hasn't yet become involved in the [Community Prevention Coalition](#) (CPC), make a New Year resolution to do so. The CPC, representing Belknap and Carroll Counties is focused on reducing underage-drinking and reducing youth adult binge drinking. A recently completed strategic plan lays out goals and strategies for addressing these targeted areas. With the help of everyone in communities throughout these counties, we will have a greater chance to succeed in ameliorating this

pervasive societal problem. Alcohol use and binge drinking among our young people remain our greatest risks to health and safety in our state. To find out more and become involved, contact our new CPC Coordinator, [Jessica Blais](#) at 528-2145. Jessica joined the CPC team in late December and is anxious to meet with current members and those interested in becoming members of the coalition. Give Jessica a call today!

**NEW WEB POSTINGS**

If you haven't visited our website in a while, please do so. In addition to reading the above Issue Briefs mentioned in this report, you will be able to keep up with the Service Integration Initiative and other Council happenings as all of our committee agendas and minutes are posted there. You will also soon find a recap of the Council's accomplishments of the past seven years. This comprehensive listing will give you a snapshot of the many projects, initiatives, and successes performed on behalf of children and families in Belknap County. We see these activities well in line with the charge given to the Council by the County Commission – activities that have generated over \$3.5 million in additional resources benefitting our mission of *promoting community juvenile through the principles of Prevention, Balanced and Restorative Justice and Community Development*. We wish to remind our readers that all Council activities, events and meetings are open to the public for observation and/or participation. Meetings are held on the third Friday of each month at the Busiel Mill in downtown Laconia, from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM. For further information, please call 527-2432.

**THOUGHT TO PONDER**

"Somebody's got to do something. It's just incredibly pathetic that it has to be us!"  
Jerry Garcia

Respectfully,  
*Alan Robichaud*  
Executive Director

For more information on the activities, events and initiatives of the Citizens Council, or to apply to become a member of the Citizens Council, please visit our website at [www.bccj.org](http://www.bccj.org) or call us at 527-2432. New fax number too...527-5477.