



Belknap County CITIZEN UPDATE



OCTOBER 2009

A PUBLICATION OF THE BELKNAP COUNTY CITIZENS COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
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Families Count in Belknap County

The activities of the Belknap County Citizens Council have been driven by the principles of Community Justice. Throughout its eight-year history:

- The Council has stimulated growth and development across service systems and among community institutions that promote prevention, restorative justice and community development so that children and families can live safely with dignity and respect.
- Our citizen volunteers have contributed thousands of hours and have leveraged substantial additional resources to fulfill our mission.
- Our history of successfully acquiring resources and building community around youth at-risk has been no less than remarkable.
- Our work has been recognized, envied and applauded by others across the state and across the country as a model for citizen engagement in the lives of youth and families in need of support.



This fourth report card highlights some of the latest initiatives and accomplishments of the Citizens Council and its many partnerships developed over the past eight years.

"Let the work of the Council become a part of our everyday lives as we create the future of what our communities are to become."

Please join us in recognition of these efforts and consider ways to become involved in enriching the lives of all children, youth and families. Let the work of the Council become a part of our everyday lives as we create the future of what our communities are to become.

On behalf of the all past and present Council members, I want to thank all who have made this effort the best it could be. It has been a pleasure and an honor to serve the citizens of Belknap County.

Alan Robichaud, Executive Director

Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families

When I decided to become involved in the Belknap County Juvenile Justice Initiative back in early 2000, I did so because a good friend of mine, Bud Martin asked me to do something for kids and families. I have been heavily involved ever since serving as chairman of different committees over the years, attending planning and policy level meetings, and contributing whatever I have in terms of time and expertise. This initiative led to the creation of the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families in early 2002.



For over seven years, the Citizens Council has promoted the principles of Community Justice with a goal of making Belknap County a safe community where children and families can live with dignity and respect. Council members have worked together with agencies and organizations to insure accountabilities among those serving our children, youth and families. The Council has generated outcomes and data to assure that taxpayer dollars are well invested.

This Report Card to the citizens of Belknap County is a result of the Council's examination of needs, implementation of programs and services, acquisition of over \$3 million dollars in outside revenue sources, and

an in-depth analysis of data.

It is clear that progress has been made and even clearer in today's ever-changing landscape, that we must insist on continued outcomes and performance measures that assure our interventions keep kids out of placement and in their homes, schools and communities whenever in their best interests.

We hope that the work of the Citizens Council becomes the work of the community. Find out how you can help. Call us today.

André Paquette, Chair

Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families

"It is clear that progress has been made... We hope that the work of the Citizens Council becomes the work of the community."

What is Community Justice?

The Citizens Council promotes the principles of Community Justice in Belknap County so that children and families can live safely with dignity and respect. Community Justice builds strong and united neighborhoods and communities by:

- Emphasizing the values of *Balanced and Restorative Justice* in the management of wrong-doings that occur
- Acting early to *prevent problems* before they happen
- Focusing on the *specific strengths* and resources that are unique to each neighborhood and community.

What is Balanced and Restorative Justice?

This is an approach to crime that insures the following:

- The needs of the victim are met.
- The community feels safe.
- The offender is held accountable and has opportunities to become a productive member of society.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

- BETTY ANSON.....LACONIA
- LAURIE BELANGER.....GILFORD
- EMILY CLEMENT.....LACONIA
- SARAH FOX.....SANBORNTON
- RASIM GUSINAC.....GILFORD
- PAMELA KUCZKOWSKI.....MOULTONBORO
- SANDY MCLAUGHLIN.....GILFORD
- RICH MOED.....GILFORD
- RUTH O'HARA.....LACONIA
- ANDRE PAQUETTE.....LACONIA (CHAIR)
- REP JAMES PILLIOD.....BELMONT
- NANCY POROSKY.....GILMANTON
- DEBORAH ROSATO.....GILFORD
- MICHELINE ROY.....LACONIA
- GIL SCHOHAN.....BELMONT (VICE CHAIR)

COUNCIL ASSOCIATES

- JIM CARROLL.....LACONIA
- RUTH CASTONGUAY.....LACONIA
- CHRISTIE CORRIGAN.....NEW HAMPTON
- PETER MICHAUD.....CENTER HARBOR
- REP KATE MILLER.....MEREDITH
- REP AUDA MILLHAM.....GILFORD
- LEO SANFACON.....GILFORD
- SUSAN SMITH.....GILFORD
- DICK WALLACE.....ALTON

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Belknap County

TELLING A STORY WITH DATA

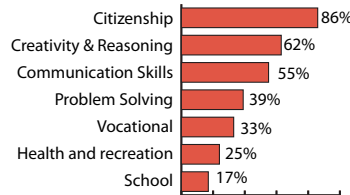
Data from the 2008 juvenile offender Case Closing Forms show that juveniles in Belknap County and their providers are doing very well by many measures, but can improve in others. These Case Closing forms were completed for 117 of the juveniles managed by all four providers of juvenile services in Belknap County during 2008. This information was then organized and analyzed for the Citizens Council by PSU professor, Stephanie Halter, PhD, through a grant from the NH Department of Juvenile Justice Services.

THUMBS UP!

Community Service is Strong

Restorative Contracts for juvenile offenders usually include community service requirements. For the fourth consecutive year in 2008, juvenile offenders in Belknap County completed more of these hours of community service than was required. In 2008, a total of 2,393 hours of community service was ordered, yet the juveniles actually completed 2,490 hours.

Key Competencies Youth Worked on in Community Service, 2008



Community service activities are designed to develop specific skills and interests in the juvenile offender and to provide him or her with meaningful and positive connections within the community. When juveniles acquire these



Juveniles stack wood for elderly couple as part of their community service requirements.

skills they are more likely to live as productive members of society.

Restitution Payments From All But One

In 2008, 32 juvenile offenders were asked to pay back the losses they caused their victims, for a total of \$9,775.36. All but one youth made their share of these payments.

AREAS TO IMPROVE

Involving Victims Seventy-five percent of the juvenile offenses described in the 2008 Case Closing Forms involved victims. Typical offenses were assault, vandalism, and other property crimes.

Best practices across the country stress that victims need to be involved and a part of the restoration process. Victims who are given current information on the progress of their cases and an opportunity to participate are usually more satisfied with the outcomes.

A Victim Can:

- Submit a *Victim Impact Statement* that describes how the offense has interrupted his/her life. This statement is given to the juvenile offender to read and understand.
- Provide the "victim perspective" as a *member of Restorative Panels*. Restorative Panels include community members who develop individualized restorative contracts for each juvenile offender.
- Participate in a *facilitated conversation* with the juvenile offender.
- Help evaluate the restoration process by completing a *Victim Satisfaction Survey*.

Belknap County providers and members of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (JJAC) are reviewing this 2008 Case Closing data.

They have agreed to work together to improve their communication and involvement with victims of juvenile crime.

Says Alicia Morey, Director of the Youth Services Bureau that operates a Court

"We can do a much better job. It is possible for all of us to make at least preliminary contact with every victim."

Alicia Morey, Director
Youth Services Bureau

Diversion Program for Belknap County youth, "We (providers) can do a much better job. It is possible for all of us to make at least preliminary contact with every victim."

JJAC members are considering strategies such as professional development opportunities for staff and developing peer support for victims.

MERGER PLANS UNDERWAY

On February 22, 2009, the Youth Services Bureau and Belknap County Restorative Justice agreed to work together through a Memo of Understanding. This MOU was signed by members of both agencies as well as Belknap County Commissioner Christopher Boothby. The goal is to merge the two agencies by January 2010 into one called Belknap County Youth Services. The Citizens Council asked Alicia Morey, Director of Youth Services Bureau, and Brian Loanes, Director of the Restorative Justice program, to update us on their efforts.

Q: How and why did you get started on this idea?

AM We started thinking this way about two years ago when funding became an issue. The timing was right.

BL It was time to pull our two programs together. We can do a better job for kids and families by sharing and working more closely together.

Q: Tell us about your two programs.

AM Youth Services Bureau was formed thirty years ago in 1979 to help youth in Belknap County. We offer *Level 1 Court Diversion* for first-time offenders or younger youth where we work with these kids for 3 to 6 months. We have other programs like *UpSwing*. The goal there is to keep kids and families from getting court-ordered CHINS petitions. Our other programs include *Prime For Life* and the *Challenge Course*, which are substance abuse intervention and harm reduction programs, *Anger Management*, and *Family Mediation*.

BL Our Restorative Justice Program was created in 2001 by the County Commissioners as a Level Two Court Diversion for second-time offenders, older youth, and those who commit more serious offenses. As second level diversion, we have longer and stronger expectations and work with youth for up to a year.

Q: Youth Services Bureau has a variety of programs and services. Restorative Justice has success in bringing the victims into the process. How will you both work together?

AM We will all be under one roof making it easier for us to share our resources and strengths. And, with less staff, less combined overhead, and a reduced budget.

BL Being under the same roof will also help the police departments. Sending referrals won't be as confusing for

WHERE DO JUVENILES DO THEIR COMMUNITY SERVICE? (A SAMPLING)

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Alton Central School | • Gilford Community Church | • "Make a Difference Day" | • Special Olympics |
| • Alton Senior Center | • Gilman Library, Alton | • Marine Corps League | • St Vincent de Paul |
| • Barnstead Food Serve | • Goodwill Industries | • Meredith Community Center | • Timberman Triathlon |
| • Belknap County Citizens Council | • Holderness Fire Department | • Meredith Parks & Recreation | • Towns of Alton, Barnstead, Belmont |
| • Belknap County Master Gardeners | • Laconia Humane Society | • Mooseman Triathlon | • Woodland Heights School, Laconia |
| • Belknap County Superior Court | • Laconia Parks & Recreation | • Ozanam Place | • And homes of disabled and elderly |
| • Big Lake Triathlon | • Laconia Rotary Park | • Robbie Mills Athletic Field | |
| • Catholic Charities | • Laconia School District | • Salvation Army | |

Restorative Justice

them. Even though we both are still in separate offices, we have already begun a coordinated referral and intake process. Referrals of youth all come to one telephone number. Our combined intake process now includes the GAIN-SS, a screening tool for substance abuse and mental health issues.

Q: If this all happens as you plan and you are one office, where will you be located and how will you be funded?

AM We will be a county department and will be located in one suite of offices at the County Courthouse. What is significant is that this merger allows us to reduce what was a combined staff of seven to three or four positions.

BL We submitted a plan and budget to the County Commissioners and will continue to work with them to find a solution that allows us to do the best job we can for the youth in Belknap County.



Alicia Morey and Brian Loanes hold logo.

Q: You both have an impressive number of volunteers. How will you work with this combined group?

AM We will combine our volunteers, which at this point number about 70 people. We are now finding out who wants to remain active. The primary role of our volunteers has been as members of the Restorative Panels to develop the contracts for each youth. But we would like to use these dedicated people in other capacities also, such as mentors and as links to community resources.

BL We have already met with all our volunteers to explain this planned merger. Many of them gave us excellent ideas on how they would like to volunteer and what they need for support.

Q: Anything else you wish to add?

AM Yes! We appreciate the forum JJAC (Juvenile Justice Advisory Council) provides. The ability to get together every month with people who also work with youth helps us all to understand the whole picture and makes what we do more efficient and collaborative.

BL People ask why this merger takes so long. What we are doing is trying to put together two separate organizations, one county-funded and the other a non-profit with 30 years of history. This is combining two very different processes. But we are very optimistic; the pieces are coming together nicely.

This publication was prepared and distributed to residents of Belknap County by the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families.

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CHANGING THE LENS: COUNCIL LEADS PROBLEM-SOLVING PARTNERSHIP

Many youth caught up in the juvenile justice system are there because of what life has handed them. Often they have been part of unstable families struggling with economic, mental health, and substance abuse issues, all factors that can lead to child abuse and neglect. These children and youth are vulnerable and often act out in ways that move them into the juvenile justice system.

Over the past year more has been learned about this population of abused and neglected children in Belknap County through the work of the Citizens Council Systems Integration Initiative (SII). SII participants, numbering over 20 state, county, and local

“Estimates show that one of every six youth (16%) that enters the juvenile justice system in Belknap County has an earlier substantiated history of abuse or neglect.”

agency administrators and professional providers, have been working together under a Memorandum of Understanding signed by numerous state, county, and local partners. Belknap County data has been assembled. Current practices have been researched and available resources have been identified.

One in Six Youth Information gathered from two divisions of the NH Dept of Health and Human Services: (1) Children, Youth and Families and (2) Juvenile Justice Services estimates that possibly as many as one of every six (16%) youth that enters the juvenile justice system in Belknap County has an earlier substantiated history of abuse or neglect.

According to SII consultant, John Tuell, “This Belknap County data makes it imperative that the state develops an improved, multi-system (approach) that can improve outcomes and cost-efficiencies for these most disadvantaged youth and their families.”

This is exactly the goal of the Systems Integration Initiative. The Citizens Council believes that when appropriate resources,

connections, and community supports are in place, the headlong pitch of abused and neglected children into court proceedings and endless interactions with law enforcement can be interrupted.

Other Initiative Activities SII members have spent this past year:

- Studying statutes, policies, and protocols that mandate how services to youth and their families are delivered
- Compiling an inventory of related resources and best practices used in Belknap County with children, youth, and families
- Creating “Process Maps” that visualize on paper how different agencies assist these children, youth and families.

National Consultant With grant support from the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention, the Citizens Council has contracted with John Tuell of the Child Welfare League of America, the national organization that has been leading similar initiatives across the country.

Tuell, the Director for the CWLA Child Welfare-Juvenile Justice Systems Integration Initiative, meets with SII members on a regular basis and participates in networked telephone conferences.



John Tuell Leads a Discussion

Wrap-Up The SII project will end in December with a written summary of findings and recommendations for future systems change initiatives.

COURT DIVERSION IS WORTH THE INVESTMENT!

An Excellent Program Evidence across the country shows that community-based court diversion for juvenile offenders is:

- Cost effective
- Produces good outcomes for youth
- Helps to restore community well-being and safety
- Not appropriate for all juvenile offenders
- Far less cumbersome than the formal court-ordered process

Is Court Diversion a good use of taxpayer funds in Belknap County? To answer this question the Citizens Council asked consultants, STEPHANIE HALTER, PhD and SCOTT MEYER, PhD to compare the costs of court diversion in Belknap County with the more formal court process of managing juvenile offenders.

Professors Halter and Meyer:

- Are affiliated with Plymouth State University and have been consultants to the Citizens Council Data Project (2006-2009);
- Interviewed numerous juvenile justice professionals from court diversion programs, Family Court, local police officers etc.; and
- Reviewed cost data for more than 300 Belknap County juveniles served in County and State Fiscal Year 2008

Significant Finding! The Halter-Meyer report indicates that costs for just “enrolling” a juvenile into the formal court system can be 3 to 3 1/2 times more expensive than sending a

“The formal court system can be 3 to 3 1/2 times more expensive than sending a youth through a court diversion program.”

“A Cost Comparison of Diversion vs. Formal Juvenile Court Processing in Belknap County, NH, 2008” Halter & Meyer

youth through a program that diverts juveniles from the court system.

Another Consideration: Recent NH Legislation (HB 2: 2007) also influences funding responsibilities. The law states:

- Court-ordered, juvenile justice services are now paid by the State rather than the counties. In exchange, the counties assume the costs of elder care services;
- However, the State does not pay for the costs of court diversion or local court processing costs because neither is court-ordered. Instead, these costs are borne by local and/or county taxpayers.

To Think About:

- This information should motivate policymakers and taxpayers to work together and find ways to reduce juvenile spending without compromising public safety.
- Regardless of who pays the bills (town, county, state, federal) the funds still come from the taxpayer.
- It is up to citizen voters to identify the most efficient use of public monies.
- NH HB 342 established a study committee that will look at NH Juvenile Court Diversion Law this fall.

Prevention Stories

**"Look both ways before crossing the street."
"Eat your carrots; then you can have dessert!"
"Stay away from the hot stove."**

These words of caution come from caring adults wanting to keep their children healthy and safe. Said simply, this is Prevention!

Prevention-oriented programs identify the causes of problems, teach ways to avoid what could be harmful, and suggest how to make better choices.

The Belknap County Citizens Council places a high priority on the principles of prevention, especially as they relate to the safety, well-being, and dignity of children and families. Prevention messages are the most influential when shared regularly and respectfully within community settings by a variety of people.

Prevention is one of the three parts of Community Justice, a philosophy that is promoted by the Citizens Council. The other two parts are Restorative Justice and strength-based Community Development.

This year the Council salutes six prevention efforts of its partners and associates:

1. ANNETTE P SCHMITT UNSUNG HERO AWARD



Matt Tetreault (Laconia) is a building custodian at Laconia High School and has been a role model and friend to many students.



John and Jane Provencal (Gilmanton) provide care and support for many Gilmanton children and neighbors.

The CITIZENS COUNCIL has partnered with the ANNETTE P SCHMITT TRUST FUND to honor residents of Belknap County who have worked quietly behind the scenes to bring meaningful and positive change in the lives of children, youth, and families. Since 2002, 14 adults have been honored with the Schmitt UnSung Hero Award.

Celebrating the compassion and kindness of others changes community norms and motivates others.

2. STEPPING STONES TO PARENTHOOD FOR TEENAGERS



Ruth O'Hara, a Citizens Council member and the Director of OB Services at LRGHealthcare, holds a baby manikin. This tiny model has a transparent skull that can show harmful changes to the brain from excessive use of alcohol during pregnancy or being shaken as an infant.

Effective collaboration between LRGHEALTHCARE and the BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF THE LAKES REGION is providing a safe and non-judgmental learning environment for pregnant teens. Information, support, and connection to local services are offered these young people to help them become the best parents they can be.

Sharing information in a personal and respectful manner increases the likelihood that the information will be heard and used.

3. PATHWAYS: APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN TEEN PROJECT (A.M.T.P.)

Youth on a week-long overnight canoe trip as the final event in the AMTP Pathways Program. Teens choose one of three paths for the year: Outdoor Adventure, Community Service, or a combination. Those completing their "Paths" are invited on the Canoe Trip.



A.M.T.P. works collaboratively with youth, parents, and educators to strengthen self-esteem, foster resilience, enrich opportunities,

"When I came back from the 6-day canoe trip I thought, if I did that, I can do anything!"
Teen Participant

and develop stable, secure relationships in the lives of young people who face difficult life circumstances. A.M.T.P. connects with teens and families through activity-based mentoring. In 2008, A.M.T.P. began the Pathways Program where teens agreed to participate in at least five activities in their chosen "path".

Positive youth development is Prevention!

4. HISTORY OF TOBACCO LIES



C.O.O.L youth present tobacco information for inmates at the Lakes Region Facility on November 20, 2008. Photo: Daryl Carlson, The Citizen

The BELKNAP COUNTY CORE COALITION, an active partner with the Citizens Council, joined with the NH Tobacco Prevention and Control Program and the NH State Prison to host a health fair where the dangers of tobacco use were highlighted. The presentation included the long history of the tobacco industry and the impact of media advertising.

Understanding the influence of the media improves the lifestyle choices we make each day.

5. COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

PARTNERS IN PREVENTION (P.I.P) is a regional community coalition created to address underage drinking and young adult binge drinking in Belknap and Carroll Counties. As alcohol abuse threatens the stability of families, the Citizens Council has been active in developing and maintaining this coalition. In turn, PIP remains a close partner with Council activities.



In February 2008, the PIP Community Coalition completed a regional assessment and a regional strategic plan. By talking with each other they identified specific goals for their region.

Bottom-up planning where many in the community are involved brings better results than plans imposed by others who are not affected by the outcomes.

6. PRIORITIZING PARENTING EDUCATION

Representatives from numerous agencies and organizations come together to plan educational programs that help parents and caregivers. Moms, dads and other caregivers can learn about child development, positive communication, discipline strategies, and how to reduce conflict and stress in their families.



Three members of the LAKES REGION UNITED WAY UPSTREAM PARENTING TEAM, (L-R) Mary Beshta and Tammy Emery of Lakes Region Community Services and Sue Cagle of Belknap County-UNH Cooperative Extension, were presenters in the 2008-09 Parent Education Series.

Helping parents helps their children and their communities.