

MEETING SUMMARY

COMMITTEE: Citizens Council

DATE: Friday, June 13, 2003

TIME BEGAN: 8:05am **TIME ENDED:** 10am **FACILITATED BY:** Alida Millham **SUMMARY BY:** Judy Buswell

PRESENT: Jim Pilliod, Katy Kannaly-DeCarteret, Andre Paquette, Sue Smith, Nancy Porosky, Rob Rovella, Peter Michaud, Leo Sanfacon, Mary Alice Warner, Dick Wallace, Kevin Washburn, Jim Carroll (left early), Alida Millham **STAFF:** Alan Robichaud, Judy Buswell **GUEST:** Nancy McLaren, The Loving Well Project, Boston University

- 1. Approval of Minutes (May 9, 2003):** Motion to approve by Jim Pilliod; second by Andre Paquette. Motion carried
- 2. Additions to the Agenda** Alan urged Council members to attend the John McKnight presentation, Tuesday, June 17th 2-4pm at the Belknap Mill in Laconia. McKnight, a national luminary in asset-based community development, is in the Lakes Region as part of residency sponsored by LR Community Services Council and the Center for Civic Engagement.
- 3. Presentation by Nancy McLaren** Jim Pilliod introduced Ms McLaren. Nancy McLaren is a specialist in curriculum development and is affiliated with the Loving Well Project at Boston University, school of Education. Ms. McLaren, who taught English during the 1960's – 1970's, became interested in exploring Character Education as a component of teaching English. She and others felt that such values as honesty, responsibility, persistence, kindness, fairness, courage, love of Country etc could be successfully interwoven in the teaching of literature. Working under a 2-year Federal grant, she and others found that character traits are hard to define and isolate as one trait most usually overlaps others.

The Federal grant they were working under was extended another 3 years, which allowed them to refine the English curriculum "The Art of Loving Well". More than 10,000 students, 100 teachers, in three states, Massachusetts, Maine, and one of the Carolinas have been actively involved with this curriculum. As the statistical results were very positive, as determined through an outside, independent evaluator (Boston College), the project was re-funded. Some of this statistical evidence includes a study of sexual activity among 8th and 9th graders. Following the use of the "Loving Well" curriculum, 8% of the students in the Experimental/Study Group reported continued sexual activity while 28% of students in the Control Group (those that did not use curriculum), reported ongoing sexual activity.

The "Loving Well", curriculum, admittedly a controversial title according to Ms McLaren, embraces three concepts: (1) It is the responsibility of adults, schools, and communities to educate students to be happy, informed, and contributing citizens; (2) "Emotional Intelligence⁶", as described in the seminal work of Daniel Goldman, shows that social and emotional skills contribute much more to a person's long term success than does one's IQ score. (3) Literature is a very appropriate vehicle to teach relationship skills. "Loving Well" uses a number of pieces of literature, especially appealing to teens, to teach them the art of building relationships. Teens, in their effort to achieve independence, are not constitutionally wired to appropriate adult wisdom delivered via lectures. "The Art of Loving Well" is "teaching without preaching" as the stories are able to "get through a teenager's anti-message radar".

The qualities of relationships impact the quality of lives far more than one's economic status or IQ score, yet these "relationship skills" are not taught in schools. One's "Emotional Intelligence" includes an acute self-awareness, the ability to be empathetic, and a sense of social responsibility.

The characteristics of all selected stories in "Loving Well" can be described with 3 "V's": Vivid (written using all the aspects of good short story writing), Vexing (they present problems to resolve), and Vicarious

(realistic enough to evoke situations pertinent in the lives of teens). The array of stories used in “Loving Well” embrace all genre of literature, including poetry, drama, non-fiction etc. Other criteria used in selecting stories are: (1) evidence of its excellent literary merit, (2) short enough to include in its entirety, (3) ability to pass the watchful scrutiny of censors, and (4) ethnically diverse to reflect the reality of American citizens. Each of the 41 selected stories has an array of suggested teaching/learning activities along with the suggestion that teachers explore several in great depth with students.

The “Loving Well” curriculum has three major sections: (1) Early Loves and Losses (family, friends, siblings etc); (2) Romance; (3) Commitment and Marriage (crafting a vision of what is possible)

At this point in the presentation, Ms McLaren read one story from the “Commitment and Marriage” section called “Appointment With Love” and then invited questions and comments from Council members. According to Ms. McLaren, this curriculum is also valuable in non-school settings and in engaging intergenerational dialogue. These stories provide opportunities to express depth of thought and to understand that in most situations, there is no one single best answer, reinforcing the concept that we all have choices in how we conduct our lives.

Ms. McLaren noted that there is Federal grant money available for Marriage Education. Other discussion points included:

- NH does mandate Character Education, yet there seems to be a certain “uncertainty” about how to do this.
- Broaching schools about using this curriculum needs to be done in a considered manner. Some points of entrée include Family and Consumer Science curricula, Health Education, Guidance. One starts by understanding what the mandates of the State are.
- The only place in NH that consistently uses this curriculum is Bishop Brady High School, a non-public school.
- While it could be used as independent reading, the greatest value in the curriculum is “in the discussion and in kids participating in the exchange of opinions”.
- It may be more appropriate to first bring this information to a parent group rather than directly into the schools.
- The Council needs more time to sort through these ideas and see if, and how it could fit into Council activities or advocacy plans.
- The website www.bu.edu/education/lovingwell offers a wealth of additional information.

Contact information is: **Nancy McLaren, The Loving Well Project Director**

Phone: 617/353-4088

Email: nmclaren@bu.edu

Fax: 617/353-2909

4. **Issues Driven Structure** The Executive Committee is considering adopting a new organizational structure. Council members were directed to the three documents emailed earlier to them: (1) Current Hierarchical Organizational Chart (2) One model of an “Issues-Driven” Organizational Chart and (3) Rationale for “Issues-Driven” structure.

During this first year of the Council, the typical “Hierarchical” structure has been needed. As form should follow function, this type of organization best facilitated our need to get organized. Now, we are more likely to be action-oriented as we focus on the array of substantive issues confronting children and families in Belknap County that were raised at the Community Forums held last fall.

Discussion points included:

- The “current “issues-driven” chart does not reference “prevention”. Where will that fit in?
- Arguably, the most important indicator of future difficulties in becoming a contributing citizen is the inability to read by Grade 3. Addressing this issue will make a sizeable contribution in the “prevention” arena.

- Jim Pilliod said that as far as he can see, “the ‘Loving Well’ curriculum is the only true ‘prevention-oriented curriculum currently available.
- The Community Action Networks (C.A.N.) should include professional providers and actual consumers, as well as at least one Council member to act as the “Council Champion” for this issue.
- The five “P’s” in the blue ring (Partnership, Planning, Policy, Promotion, Practice) represent “functions” which are now currently being done by the Council ‘s Standing Committees (Legislative & Advocacy, Finance & Grants, Public Education & Awareness, and Planning). This may mean that the current Standing Committees can be dissolved.
- The “issues-driven” organizational structure re-frames our earlier discussion on how the Professional Providers Advisory Council (P-PAC) would be organized. The “issues-driven” approach would use Providers in each of the Community Action Networks as well as include youth, families and other private entities (e.g. businesses, faith groups, etc.).
- We already have at least one effective C.A.N. with the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee.
- The C.A.N.’s would be responsible for bringing information back to the communities, so that citizens will have this same information. This raises the question on how the Council can relate to these C.A.N.s, and respond to issues without getting “bogged down” in process and detail.
- The need to communicate where and what community resources are available remains a major issue for people. Can we work with UpStream to identify a process for information dissemination? As clarification on this issue, Sue Smith noted that the “Community Benefits Workgroup” will have a highly sophisticated website that will be searchable and direct people to the resources they need. However, as there are still people without access to computer technology and a definite need for early intervention with families, a strong partnership with local schools is needed.
- What does “Meaningful Youth Activity” really mean?? This topic will be discussed in greater depth at a later meeting.

5. **Committee Action Items**

- **Legislative and Advocacy** Mary Alice Warner urged Council members to call their legislators regarding their current consensus discussions to settle on final budget. These calls are needed within the next several days. Mary Alice urged Council members to ask legislators to keep the funding intact for Substance Abuse programs.
- **Restorative Justice Advisory Committee** Leo Sanfacon said that Brian Loanes is looking for opportunities for Community Service (i.e. yard work) that will also pay the juveniles. This is needed as many of the contracts created by the Reparative Panels expect the juveniles to make financial restitution for the property damage they have caused. Brian is looking for opportunities that pay \$6-8/hr.

ACTION: Any Council member that has, or knows of “paying work opportunities” should contact either Leo or Brian Loanes.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

WHEN: Friday, July 11th 8-10am

**WHERE: Gilman Library, Main Street in Alton
(Directions will be given to Council members at a later date)**