

# Council Quarterly

April-June of 2009

Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families  
36 County Drive, Laconia, NH 03246 (603)527-2432 [www.bccj.org](http://www.bccj.org)



## Council Exploring Alternatives to County Funding

The Belknap County Citizens Council learned at the end of 2008 that the County would not be able to continue funding the Council beyond the end of 2009. Council members do understand the dilemma the County faces in this difficult economy, yet they would also like to cite the numerous accomplishments of their unique, public-private partnership over the past 7 ½ years. This is why Council members have been exploring options that could continue this valued work into 2010 and beyond. Several questions have guided this exploration:

- Could the Council form specific partnerships, affiliations, or mergers with other agencies and organizations whose purposes and values are compatible with the Citizens Council?
- Should the Council seek its own independent, non-profit status?
- Do the Council's Mission Statement, goals, objectives, and strategies accurately reflect the work and intent of the Council?
- Are there other funding sources including government, corporate, foundation, and private resources available to support Council work?
- Is there additional problem solving and service coordination that can be done with County, State, and municipal leaders?

While there are no definitive answers yet to these questions, Council members, both past and present, are now more concerned than ever about the well being of children and families in Belknap County. Will the deep gouges in court-ordered

services for juveniles imposed by this year's budget cuts at the state level, lead the State to curtail any of their obligations to youth? Will this delicate balance of financial responsibilities prevent children and youth from receiving restorative and competency-building care in their own communities?

In this uncertain economic environment, members of the Citizens Council remain fervent in their belief that the approach they have promoted over much of this decade must be preserved. Our county needs a vehicle:

- For mobilizing citizen involvement on behalf of children and families.
  - That can take the time to nurture collaboration and that recognizes effective partnerships can take several years to mature.
  - That prioritizes a neutral "30,000 foot view" of the landscape of services for children and families, and
    - That promotes the principles of Community Justice: Prevention; Balanced and Restorative Justice; and Strength-based community development.

"The Council will continue to explore its options in a positive way," says Andre Paquette, Chair of the Council. "We welcome dialogue with the Belknap County Commission, the County Delegation and others, so that the basic themes of the Council—as developed earlier this decade, well ahead of the current national trend to engage citizens as partners in the design of their communities—can remain a beacon for others in New Hampshire."

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# Updates: Council-Led & Council-Associated Projects and Initiatives

## Services Integration Initiative On Track

The Belknap County Services Integration Initiative—a year-long effort led by the Council to make it easier for families to find and receive appropriate services—has had both “some successes and a few challenges,” says Alan Robichaud, Executive Director of the Council and the project leader. “All in all, we are starting to get a focus on how agencies can work together to help kids through rough times and keep them here at home.

“We have clarified our goal, which is to better coordinate and integrate services provided to Belknap County youth between the ages of 10-16 who have either Delinquency or CHINS petitions and a prior history of substantiated abuse and/or neglect. We want to know why these kids wind up in the deep end of the juvenile system,” explaining that this is “more than a hundred of our own youth.”

According to Robichaud, Initiative activities this quarter include:

- Securing federal funding through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for the technical assistance provided by John Tuell. John leads other similar projects around the country through the Child Welfare League of America.
- Moving ahead with the detailed work of:
  - Mapping the decision points and processes used by agencies that provide services for the population targeted by this Initiative
  - Creating an inventory of resources and services that are available to this targeted population and their families
  - Identifying and describing the “evidence based practices” used with this targeted population
  - Understanding the policies and statutes that govern services to this targeted population

The final project goal is to offer formal recommendations to state and local agencies on how to better manage this identified population of youth. More information is available at [www.bccj.org](http://www.bccj.org).

## Belknap County Youth Services

With interests in being as streamlined and cost-efficient as possible, Youth Services Bureau and the Belknap County Restorative Justice Programs have successfully joined several of their services. These newly integrated functions include:

- Central Intake that directs cases to appropriate court diversion services

- Short screening to identify those youth with potential alcohol, drug, and mental health needs so that appropriate services can be offered to them.

These centralized services, now known as *Belknap County Youth Services*, are the first step in further integration and coordination among court diversion programs in Belknap

## 2008 County Juvenile Justice Data Show Both Progress and Challenges

A review of data from the 2008 Case Closing Forms show that Belknap County is doing a good job in implementing several components of Restorative Justice while needing to strengthen others.

These Case Closing Forms are completed each year by Youth Services Bureau, Youth Assistance Program, Belknap County Restorative Justice Program, and the Laconia District Office Juvenile Probation and Parole Services (*NH Department of Health & Human Svcs*)

The 2008 data show that youth are completing their community service and financial restitution obligations, yet the data also shows that victims of juvenile crime should be more involved in the restorative process.

Building capacity to collect juvenile data in Belknap County has been a three-year joint effort with Plymouth State University consultants, Stephanie Halter, PhD and Scott Meyer, PhD. It has been funded by a grant from the NH State Advisory Group for Juvenile Justice Services.

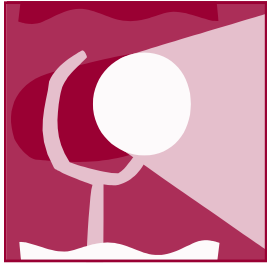
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••••• County. Further information is available at 603-527-5493.



Brian Loanes (Ex Dir: Restorative Justice) and Alicia Morey (Ex Dir: Youth Services Bureau) discuss consolidation plans together.



## Spotlight on Council Members



### COUNCIL MEMBERS

- Betty Anson ~ *Laconia*
- Laurie Belanger ~ *Gilford*
- Emily Clement ~ *Laconia*
- Sarah Fox ~ *Sanbornton*
- Rasim Gusinac ~ *Gilford*
- Pam Kuczowski ~ *New Hampton*
- Sandy McLaughlin ~ *Gilford*
- Richard Moed ~ *Gilford*
- Andre Paquette (Chair) ~ *Laconia*
- Jim Pilliod, MD ~ *Belmont*
- Ruth O'Hara ~ *Laconia*
- Nancy Porosky ~ *Gilmanton*
- Deborah Rosato ~ *Gilford*
- Micheline Roy ~ *Laconia*
- Gil Schohan (Vice Chair) ~ *Belmont*

### Staff:

- Alan Robichaud, Executive Director
- Judith Buswell, Resource and Planning Coordinator

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**Laurie Belanger** As a School Assistance Counselor at Gilford High School with prior work experience in the legal field, Laurie assists the Council in understanding the challenges faced by today's youth. She has provided effective liaison with school networks and has interpreted school policies and procedures for Council members. Laurie is a member of the Council's Prevention Workgroup and in this role has provided a school perspective to a variety of prevention projects, including a school safety effort. Holding degrees from Colby-Sawyer, St Anselm, and Notre Dame Colleges, she was honored as Educator of the Year by the NH National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. Laurie is completing her fourth year as a member of the Council. She resides with her family in Gilford.



**Emily Clement** Emily, a professional guidance counselor with degrees from Wheaton College and Plymouth State University, is finishing her fourth year as a Council member. Following several years as an educator in the Lakes Region, New Jersey, New Mexico, eastern Europe, and the Middle East, she became the Director of Christian Education at the Laconia Congregational Church where she is now.



Emily has been a member of the Council's Prevention Workgroup where she recently helped organize discussion groups on youth activity within the community. This project culminated in the Council publication, "Helping Kids To Hope" (see back page) Emily represented the Council in a panel discussion on this topic that is now appearing on Lakes Region Public Access TV. Emily lives in Laconia.

**Gil Schohan** Gil is well-respected for her years of volunteer service throughout the Lakes Region. Currently she is a member of the Board of Trustees at LRGHealthcare where she had already served eleven years, including one term as Board Chair. As a member of the Belknap County Juvenile Justice Initiative (2000-02), she played a key role, first with the transition to the Council and then as the Council's first Chair. She is now in her second term as a Council member and is the Council Vice Chair. Gil's focus with the Council has been with the juvenile justice system. As a trained family mediator, Gil helped to develop the Family Mediation Program at Youth Services Bureau. She has worked on Belknap County Recovery Month activities and served as the Chair of the Belknap County observance of National Crime Victims Rights Awareness Week in 2006. Gil lives in Belmont.



## “Helping Kids To Hope”: Now on LR Public TV

The Citizens Council organized a panel discussion program for taping by the Lakes Region Public Access TV studios. Called “Helping Kids To Hope” (HKTH), this program reviews highlights from four focus groups held during 2008 and is based on the recent Council publication by the same name. Panelists shared stories from their experiences on how the community can foster the personal and social growth of children and youth. Three panelists: Joyce Selig from Temple B’Nai Israel; Jon Martin who owns a forestry business; and Emily Clement of the Laconia Congrega-



(L-R) Dan Kusch, Jon Martin, Emily Clement, Joyce Selig

tional Church and a member of the Citizens Council, joined Dan Kusch, Executive Director of the Appalachian Mountain Teen Project, who was the host for this discussion. This 30 minute program is now airing on Channel 25 several times each week throughout the summer.

“Helping Kids To Hope” has been a community counterpart to the personalized education that schools have been incorporating into their classrooms and has been led by the Citizens Council in association with the Appalachian Mountain Teen Project. A schedule is at [www.lrpa.org](http://www.lrpa.org). More information at [www.bccj.org](http://www.bccj.org) 527-2432.

### NEWS AND UPDATES:

**STEPHANIE HALTER, PhD**, and Professor of Criminology at Plymouth State University, was recently honored with the *Doctoral Dissertation Award* by the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) at their national conference and colloquium. The award recognizes an individual whose research has the greatest potential for making a significant contribution to the child maltreatment theoretical and applied knowledge base. Halter and Scott Meyer PhD, Professor of Social



Stephanie Halter, PhD

at PSU, have been consultants for the Council’s State-funded Data Project, now in its 3rd and last year. This project has provided Belknap County with four years of outcomes data about its court-diverted and court-involved juveniles.

### COUNTY CONVERSATIONS

The County Commissioners have completed their visits to every community in Belknap County where residents have shared their thoughts about the role of County government. Council members have attended many of these sessions and they will continue to support this process.

## A Closer Look...

Agencies making a Difference for Children and Families in Belknap County



### BELKNAP COUNTY UNH COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Belknap County UNH Cooperative Extension, located in the County Complex, is a wonderful resource for families!

Cooperative Extension, originally linked with American agricultural economy, was designed to connect rural isolated households with each other and with the state’s “Land Grant” university. Today’s Cooperative Extension embraces the 21<sup>st</sup> century! It is a product of long-standing partnerships that combine federal, state, and county funding.

Extension does its work in affiliation with others including non-profits, schools, businesses, and private citizens who serve as members of each county’s Advisory Council. Its principal partner is the University of New Hampshire, NH’s “Land Grant” college.

Extension programs for families in Belknap County include 21<sup>st</sup> century 4-H, parenting education, financial management, and nutrition guidance. Other programs include forestry and agricultural resources. Extension shares its resources via workshops and classes, conferences, site visits, by telephone, fact sheets, and its website:

<http://extension.unh.edu/Counties/Belknap/Belknap.htm> 603-527-5475