

Council Quarterly

July-September of 2009

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



Choosing the Best Path for 2010 and Beyond

OTHER RESOURCES The Citizens Council continues to seek alternative resources to support its important work for children and families in Belknap County. Currently the Council is a county department and has functioned since early 2002 as a public-private partnership, a concept that was introduced by the County Commissioners. The Commissioners' goal in creating the Council has always been to involve citizens in resolving some of the thorny issues confronting children and families.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP The Citizens Council has welcomed residents from throughout Belknap County as members. These Council members have partnered with professional service providers, state and local officials, and other interested citizens to identify and quantify what it would take for Belknap County children and families to thrive and be self-sufficient.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES ARE TEAM PROJECTS Council members have initiated numerous activities and strategies to accomplish this goal. All are described in some detail on the Council website: www.bccj.org. The scope of these efforts has been broad and varied. All activities have always been organized and carried out as team projects.

Examples of these Council-led initiatives include the Belknap County Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (JJAC) that uses the relationships and combined

resources of its members to improve juvenile justice programs in Belknap County. Before JJAC was organized, the different components of the juvenile justice "system" operated independently with little idea how the pieces fit together or what results their efforts produced. Today we have a systematic way of collecting and interpreting juvenile justice outcomes data and have been sharing this information with Belknap County residents on a regular basis through annual Report Cards and an information-packed website.

PUBLIC EVENTS The Council has organized a variety of public events including:

- Yearly Convocations on Children and Families
- Week-long observance of National Crime Victims Rights Awareness Week
- Several annual observances of National Recovery Month
- Public forums on underage drinking and community needs.

OTHER BENEFITS FOR BELKNAP COUNTY The Council has been directly or indirectly responsible for bringing over \$3.5 million in grant funds for programs and services benefitting children and families in Belknap County. The Council is now leading a very large Systems Integration Initiative that is pin-pointed on developing better coordination among the agencies and organizations



*"Travelers, there is no path; paths are made by walking."
Antonio Machado (Spanish poet, playwright 1875-1939)*

Continued on pg 4

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

SERVICES INTEGRATION INITIATIVE

MANY YOUTH CAUGHT IN THE juvenile justice system are there because of what life has handed them. They have often 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 justice system.

For more than 15 months, the Citizens Council has been leading a large problem-solving partnership to learn more about these particular children and youth. Called the Belknap County Services Integration Initiative (SII), this group of participants from 17 state and local agencies is operating under a Memorandum of Understanding. They have agreed to work together and with project consultant, John Tuell of the Child Welfare League of America.

Volunteers from the community and from agency partners are chairing various committees. Thousands of in-kind hours have been given to this effort.

Using information gathered from two divisions of the NH Department of Health and Human Services, the SII Data Committee estimates that probably one in six

youth (16%) involved in the juvenile justice system also have a prior substantiated history of maltreatment. These youth and their families would benefit from specific and targeted interventions to help them avoid getting entangled in the justice system.

Other SII committees are:

- 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.

This large effort will conclude its work in December with a report of findings and recommendations. It is expected that this 18-month effort will inform the management of children who have been abused and neglected and then end up in the juvenile justice system. If society does not intervene early, these youth will likely move into the adult criminal system.

COMMISSION STUDYING JUVENILE JUSTICE LAW IN NH

N.H. HOUSE BILL 342 THAT WAS PASSED on July 29, 2009 established a 14-member Commission to study the scope and application of current NH statutes relative to juvenile diversion. Commission members will determine if this law is still consistent with what is currently happening in New Hampshire and with what are now considered "Best Practices" across the country.

Four of the fourteen members of this Commission are connected to Belknap County. They are:

- *Rep Beth Arsenault* (Laconia Representative to the House and Study Commission Chair)
- *Att'y Jim Carroll* (Belknap County Attorney)
- *Brian Loanes* (Director, Belknap County Restorative Justice Program)
- *Dan French* (Supervisor, Laconia District Office, Juvenile Probation and Parole)

The study committee will explore such issues as program definitions, evidence-based practices, how data is collected and reported, fee structures, and funding support for court diversion. As part of its mandate, this Commission will solicit information and testimony from individuals, agencies, and organizations. Meetings are open to the public.

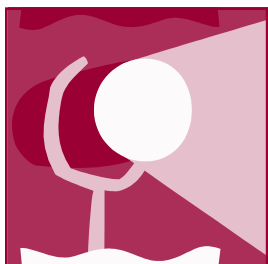
The first meeting of this Study Commission was held on September 9th in Concord. The group will hold regular meetings through November 1, 2009 when a final report of the Study Commission is due. Call 527-2432 for more information.

ANNUAL REPORT CARD TO THE COMMUNITY PREPARED AND READY TO MAIL



THE FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT CARD to the residents of Belknap County is ready for mailing to every county household in early October. Prepared and distributed by the Citizens Council, this year's report describes progress towards Juvenile Restorative and Community Justice goals. It expands on the three previous Report Cards issued by the Council between 2006 and 2008. Highlights include juvenile justice data, program updates, and brief sketches of six prevention-focused efforts in Belknap County.

The 2009 Report Card to the Community will be distributed throughout Belknap County by Fosters Publishing and The Citizen newspaper in Laconia. Shown (L-R) Alan Robichaud, Ex Dir of Council; Judith Buswell, Report Card Editor for the Council; and Tony Limannii of Fosters. Photo: Daryl Carlson, The Citizen



COUNCIL MEMBERS

- Betty Anson ~ *Laconia*
- Laurie Belanger ~ *Gilford*
- Emily Clement ~ *Laconia*
- Sarah Fox ~ *Sanbornton*
- Rasim Gusinac ~ *Gilford*
- Pam Kuczowski ~ *Moultonboro*
- 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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BETTY ANSON Betty has a rich and varied background that includes prior senior-level executive experience in healthcare organizations and financial institutions and now as a family therapist. For the past 18 months, she has been actively involved with the Services Integration Initiative (SII), a major project of the Citizens Council. She serves as Chair of the SII Leadership Executive Committee and in this role she brings strong facilitation skills and keen insights on how to improve the systems that provide services for children and families.



Betty and her husband recently moved from Connecticut to the Lakes Region where she shares her passion for the well being of children and families with the Citizens Council and with Genesis Behavioral Health as a therapist.

SARAH FOX One of the younger members of the Citizens Council, Sarah has already made impressive contributions to the well being of children and families throughout New Hampshire. She is the immediate past Chair of the Citizens Council (2007-2008) and has taught elementary school in the Lakes Region,. Sarah earned a JD degree from Franklin Pierce Law Center, joined the Bar in 2007, and worked two years in the NH Department of Education. She is now the Court Improvement Project Training Specialist with the NH District Court and Family Division.



According to Sarah, her “proudest endeavor” is the time she has spent as a foster parent.

RASIM GUSINAC Rasim and his wife Umija are political refugees from Bosnia who arrived in Laconia in September 2000. They quickly became active in the community life of the Lakes Region, even as they were learning English and the customs of their adopted land. They were granted US citizenship in 2006.



A schoolteacher by profession, Rasim earned his college degree in Macedonia and taught in Serbia and Zvornik, Bosnia. During the Bosnian war, the couple moved to Turkey where they lived for 8 years before coming to America.

Rasim and Umija volunteer with the growing refugee communities in the Lakes Region, assisting individual families and organizing such events as Laconia Multicultural Market Day. Rasim is a trained medical interpreter in hospital and medical settings throughout the state. Rasim enhances the Council’s understanding of cultural diversity and its impact on families.

The Best Path *(continued from page 1)*

providing services for children and families.

UNIQUE APPROACH This unique problem solving approach of stepping back and taking a long view of the terrain, one that involves numerous partners, that prioritizes prevention, and that focuses on the community and the best use of resources, must continue. These community-based strategies are even more necessary in this perilous economic environment. Council members agree that now is not the time to abandon these efforts just because the current funding through the County may not be possible for the future.

NEW PATHWAYS There are other pathways that can be taken. Some have yet to be discovered. Some just need “some walking” as so aptly expressed by the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado.

And that is what the Council has been doing throughout this year. Some ideas have come to an end while others are still emerging. While the future of the Council is yet uncertain, discussions with the County Commissioners are ongoing, requiring all involved to think creatively.

We agree with Machado. There is no well-defined and carefully groomed path in front of us. Instead, all of us need our sturdy walking shoes.

NEWS AND UPDATES:

HILARY HARTFORD RECEIVES TOM FOX TREATMENT SCHOLARSHIP AWARD



Hilary Hartford from Gilmanton is the Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment Case Manager for Child and Family Services of NH. She works in the Laconia office.

This award is given annually by New Futures-NH to recognize a NH individual who has shown excellence, leadership and advocacy in the field of substance abuse treatment. Hilary who is only 24 years old is close to completing a Masters in Mental Health Counseling from Southern NH University. She “has a passion for early intervention and working with kids”. Hilary is a member of the Council’s JJAC network.

ECONOMY IMPACTS BELKNAP COUNTY CORE COALITION

CoRe (*substance abuse prevention*) faces a difficult future with the lack of local, state, and federal funding opportunities. The recent loss of continuation funding from the federal Drug-Free Communities Program will create a major funding gap for the future.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR PARTNERS IN PREVENTION MEMBERS

Partners in Prevention (Substance Abuse) Coalition for Belknap and Grafton Counties recently sponsored trainings for its members and others:

- 5-day Social Marketing with William DeJong from Boston Univ.
- Capacity Building training with Dave Shavel from CADCA

www.pipnh.org 528-2145

A Closer Look...

Agencies making a Difference for Children and Families in Belknap County



FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER OF CENTRAL NH

In March 2009, Lakes Region Community Services skillfully combined many of its numerous resources into one comprehensive community-based center for families. Located in downtown Laconia at 635 Main Street, this Laconia Center has 17 staff members and is one of ten other similar centers located throughout New Hampshire. The Laconia Family Resource Center includes:

- On and off-site playgroups
- Parent education services
- Early intervention programs and services
- Child care resource and referral
- *Born Learning* public education campaign promoting optimal environment and opportunities for early learning
- *Step Ahead Program*, providing specific services to families with children under age 18
- Information and referral to supports, resources, and services for families

The Laconia Center is available to families in Belknap and Southern Grafton Counties. It is open weekdays, 8am to 4pm.

The Citizens Council values efforts such as this Family Resource Center that make it easier for parents and caregivers to find the resources they need to be effective parents.