

North Port CHAT Meeting Summary
May 8, 2013

Present: Maureen Coble, Dave Powell, Janis Russell, Sue Owens, Faith Chapman, Jasmin Rogers, Tom Davie, Deborah Robinson, June Brady, Brenda Reid, Linda Greaves, Vince Giuffre, Linda Stone, Monica Becket, Diane Ramseyer

Welcome and Introductions – Diane Ramseyer, CHAT Coordinator, welcomed everyone and introductions were provided.

Summer Meetings – Members agreed that with a full agenda of items to tackle in the coming months that CHAT meetings will be held on July 10th and August 14th.

Handouts – Diane distributed handouts regarding “Red Alert” Community Notification Enrollment and how to sign on; Back Pack Angels fundraiser event on June 6th, 7th and 8th at Ruby Tuesday in Port Charlotte. 20% of customer’s purchase benefits Backpack Angels.

Homelessness – Janis Russell reported that this topic (including homeless teens with babies) was discussed at the 4/17/13 Interagency Meeting and felt it needed more attention. Those meeting notes are included as an addendum to today’s meeting minutes. The Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness and Charlotte County Homeless Coalition continue to collaborate in addressing this issue in NP. The Gulf Coast Community Foundation has funded a caseworker for NP.

It was decided that **homelessness is a key issue** that needs further exploration. The Suncoast Partnership, CC Homeless Coalition and School House Link will be invited to a roundtable discussion at either the July or August CHAT meeting. Diane will contact participants.

Diane provided a report from the At-Risk Youth Focus Summit held on April 10, 2013 at North Port City Hall. (The report is attached to today’s meeting minutes). The summit, which included organizations in and outside the NP community, attracted 40-50 people to discuss

what CHAT can do to help mitigate the numbers of abused children in our community. Three central themes emerged. Homelessness was one of these. The following are also areas for further investigation:

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren – One evening a month a grandparent support group meets at Children First on Outreach Way; this provides a good core group on which to build a community dialogue. Faith Chapman and Sue Owens will meet with this support group to see if there is a list of basic questions they would like answered or resources they require. CHAT will then invite them along with like groups in Englewood, Venice and Charlotte to sit at a table with Kinship Care, a curriculum offered at USF, perhaps a lawyer to address legal guardianship issues, healthcare expert to address consent for medical treatment of minors and churches in the area who may have programs that provide respite for caregivers of minors.

The North Port Pastoral Network may be interested in focusing on this particular issue. There was discussion about CHAT sponsoring a luncheon around this subject and providing information as well as resources for the pastoral network. Linda Stone, Janis Russell and Tom Davie volunteered to help with a luncheon.

Juvenile Assessment, Intervention & Sentencing Alternatives: Civil Citations is a program in Charlotte County which allows minors (under 18) who have committed a non-serious delinquent offense to perform community service hours while also participating in intervention services instead of being arrested. Upon completion of the program, there is no arrest record. This procedure is already written into Florida law.

Teen Court is a program in Sarasota which accepts cases from the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, DJJ, Traffic Court and schools. Instead of deliberating guilt or innocence, a teen jury decides what a teen defendant's sentence will be. The sentence comes in the form of community service and a contract is signed accepting responsibility to fulfill that sentence. Breach of contract returns the minor to DJJ or Traffic Court.

No means of juvenile assessment nor either of the above alternatives is available in south county. It was suggested that several experts in this area be invited to the CHAT to provide further information and insight, including Judge Bennett (Teen Court), Katy Self (Teen Court), Wayne Applebee (policy expert), Ginny Donovan (DJJ) and Rob Tabor (Coastal Behavioral Health). This will be scheduled for the July or August CHAT meeting depending on the availability of participants.

Next CHAT MEETING – June 12, 2013

At the North Port Police Station

Guest – Coastal Behavioral Health

NORTH PORT CHAT met on 4/10/13 to discuss that some of the missing services are, as well as the gaps in services.

BIGGEST NEEDS CURRENTLY IN NORTH PORT:

- Huge problem with the gap between kids needing mentors and the number of mentors in the system. Big Brothers/Big Sisters has about 70-80 North Port kids waiting for mentors
- Need baby products FAST for street outreach – so much need but resources have been cut back. Back Pack Angels have identified this need through local pre-schools, but it is not an area they can address.
- LACK OF SHELTER in the county for unaccompanied youth with no place to go. A special piece to this puzzle is the number of YOUNG teens who are pregnant and kicked out of their homes. 14-15 yr olds have been identified as sleeping behind buildings with no place to go. There is also a lack of Foster Care homes in North Port, so kids have to be placed out of their home area.
- ALL FAITH'S FOOD BANK: has food for all organizations – they are working hard getting more food into schools. They are already helping create food pantries in many of the schools. A suggestion was made to All Faiths to contact NPHS School Nurse, as there is a pantry there.
- SPECIAL PROBLEM: So many children have NOTHING to eat on the weekends. All-Faith's Food Bank works with local groups in the county and schools to create food packs for them to take with them on Friday's. This might offer more options for North Port through linking to schools that have not been linked.
- Sue Lord spoke of efforts to provide shoes to school kids – very successful endeavor, but never complete. She also identified need to help provide healthy snacks at many of the schools. Donations she is able to secure, as well as some donations through the Salvation Army helps her do this at Atwater. But, likely other schools have similar issues.
- Remind everyone that the North Port Family Health Center has a place people can shower – but signage is terrible and many people do not know this is available.
- Dept. of Juvenile Justice – Mike: DJJ has a problem with Mental Health services – in need of people who are willing to work with kids. Need both psychiatrist and psychotherapy. Lots of trouble getting kids from NP to Sarasota where they are required to go to court.
- COASTAL BEHAVIORAL – voiced same struggles as Mike from DJJ. They have great services, but getting parents to bring the kids is a huge problem.
- HUGE numbers of grandparents are caring for children – They really need support. They often are unaware of services in the area and not sure how to link to supports.
- There continues to be difficulty communicating the services and resources that are available. Different ages respond to different types of communication. Dave Powell from the Sun's *Feeling Fit*, reminded the group that grandparents are of the demographic that most strongly read this supplement. It can provide a good communication means for this demographic.
- Mindi Rohan from Volunteer Community Connections shared information on the opportunity for agencies to use them in finding volunteers. She has willing North Port residents who need a place to volunteer.

There was some conversation about a Southern Annex (other side of Toledo Blade – (Atwater area) – difficult for people to get up to this area from South County.