

Community health depends on community voices

North Port CHAT Meeting Summary
July 14th, 2010 4:30 pm

Present: Kris-An Hinds; Hilary Woodcum; Dawn Fenton; Anita Kubasiewicz; Janice Dirmeitis; Jan Huegen; Diane Picateggio; Cheryl Doyle; Sharon Turner; Kathy Turner; Linda Stone; Hector Mendez; Ellen McLaughlin; Brenda Szych; Mary McDonald; Tom Jones; Rachel Perry; Jack Fournier; Jackie Fournier-Clift; Jonathon Fournier; Todd Konen; Sam George; Tom Davie; Janis Russell; Christyl Lunsford; Anne Marie Lupien; Fay Williams; Jenn-Marie Grant, Laura Yahres, Diane Ramseyer

Welcome and Introduction– Fay Williams, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were provided. A special “welcome back” was given to Jack Fournier a founding member of the North Port CHAT.

June Meeting Summary Acceptance – The June meeting summary was reviewed and accepted as written.

Special Discussion – Homeless Children and North Port – Sam George introduced a group (North Port Coalition for Homeless Students) which has formed based upon the concern for children who are homeless in the North Port area. Jan Huegen, President of the group, shared their efforts to procure personal hygiene items and back packs. St. Vincent DePaul, Walmart, Patriot Storage, Curves and local citizens have been helping. Bins are located in Curves, Old World and Villages Arcade. Denise Brislin offered the school health room to store some of the personal supplies as well, especially to those kids who have not yet gotten connected into any services and approach her (as school nurse) for assistance. The group has already been working with the school and begun to getting supplies out to the kids.

Ellen McLaughlin from Schoolhouse Link provided additional information and data. Schoolhouse Link is the service who is the school’s homeless liaison and train schools to help identify children who are homeless.

The Federal definition for Homeless Children and Youth is: “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence. This also includes families who have lost their housing and are “doubled up” with other families in a temporary situation due to economic hardship or loss of housing (73% of those currently identified fall in this category); Living in emergency, transitional or runaway shelters (18%); Living in hotels, motels, or inadequate trailer homes (2%); Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, or public spaces not intended for human habitation (1%); Awaiting foster care placement (6%); Migratory children and unaccompanied youth who are living in similar circumstances listed above. In the past year there were over 900 students who were homeless in Sarasota County. As of June 30, there are 200 youth who are homeless in North Port. 51% are in schools north of Blackburn Point; 18% are in Venice; 33% are in North Port. Additional data related to homeless students indicates that:

- 47% are in Elementary School
- 19% are in Middle School
- 24% are in High School

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6% are in Charter Schools
1% are in Alternative Education
2% are GED or PreK students

Regarding North Port:

Glenallen Elementary – 39
Lamarque Elementary – 27
Cranberry Elementary – 15
Atwater Elementary – 9
Imagine – 9
Toledo Blade Elementary – 9
Heron Creek Middle – 22
Woodland Middle – 8
North Port High - 67

Unaccompanied Youth are those teens who lack a fixed, adequate, and regular nighttime residence and are not in the physical custody or care of a parent or legal guardian. They may have run away, been thrown out of their home, or abandoned by parent or guardian. In the past year, 67 were identified in Sarasota County, and 40% of them were in North Port.

Schoolhouse Link's mission is to help homeless students "enroll, attend, succeed". They provide services: enrollment assistance; transportation assistance; free lunch; school supplies; school uniforms; tutoring at some sites; referrals for VPK; referrals for before and after school care; connection to YMCA programs; scholarship information; case management. For more information – contact Ellen at 941.923.6112. Starting this fall, the CHAT will share its office with Schoolhouse Link on Fridays at the Family Services Center.

The Salvation Army is working with area churches to hold meals throughout the month for homeless. Denise also indicated that the school can send some food donations home with them. Linda Stone shared that the North Port Health Center is getting approximately 20 homeless youth each month.

Group offered to be of continued assistance to the groups involved in these efforts to provide services and support to homeless youth. One specific suggestion discussed was the development of a resource list which could be made into flyer and poster for distribution throughout the community. The group agreed to sponsor the poster – asking the ladies' coalition, Salvation Army Coalition, and Schoolhouse Link to provide the material – CHAT/CHIP will create the poster/flyer and make available for distribution. Tom Jones suggested that material be made available to the HOPE program – the 9th grade required living skills class at the high school. Laura Yahres also suggested that the Back to School Resource Fair might be another avenue to get the word out.

Encouragement was also given to the guests to share information about their backpack program to local civic groups.

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Updates –

Health Services Committee – Sam provided the update from the committee. They are working on getting selecting a new chair for January 2011. The Chair will serve for 2 years. Please give consideration to this role.

The Park and Ride located off 75 at Sumter has run into a snag, and the group is helping locate a new site. The Express Bus is on course, just the Park and Ride is on hold at this point. The committee will continue to keep the group posted.

Community Child Dental Project – The Committee continues work on a Child Dental Health project with other local groups, including the Health Department. This will be a dental sealant program in the school. Efforts are for the

North Port Connects Website Update – Diane reported that work is happening on the transfer of the North Port Connects Website to its shared host with the CHAT. This will occur the end of August, when the current contract is up. No change in web address (www.northportconnects.com) will occur. The website needs to be totally re-done, since the program which originally created it does not transfer.

NP-ASAP/NP D-Fy Update – Work has begun on getting business partners for the North Port Drug-Free Youth (NP D-Fy). Tom Davie asked for help in getting businesses to sign up as a partner. Will be holding an open event on July 21st at the library for NP D-Fy at 4:30 pm. There will be a presentation on Hookah's and some fun activities.

Unfortunately, the State of Florida cancelled all new VISTA volunteer placements starting in August, due to the Oil Spill and other issues. This means the VISTA placement with NP D-Fy will not occur as planned. Efforts to address the need for staff person to help move the initiative into full execution are being explored.

NP-ASAP, NP D-Fy and SWAT (Students Working Against Tobacco) – will be at National Night Out at NPHS on August 3rd 6-9 pm. If you are interested in helping, let Diane know.

An Open Event for NP D-Fy will be held on July 21st at the North Port Library – 4:30 – 6pm Some Medical Student Interns will present on Hookahs – in addition to some recreational activities.

Community Announcements –

Library offering Career and Education Forum on July 29th 2- 6pm

North Port Block Party Day is September 19th – www.npblockparties.info or North Port Neighborhood Day on Facebook.

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Salvation Army Hot Meals for the Hungry – every Monday night and the 1st and 3rd nights of the month. The planning group meets the first Tuesday of the month at 1:00 pm at the Salvation Army

Tidewell Hospice has a speaker's bureau which is available to any group – contact Tidewell to schedule

Meeting Dates to Remember

National Night Out – Aug 3rd – 6 pm – North Port High School (NP-ASAP and NP D-Fy will be there)

Health Services Committee – Aug 5th - 4:00 – Family Services Center

NP-ASAP – August 10th 6:30 pm – North Port Family Services Center

Next CHAT – August 11th, 4:30 pm – North Port Police Department

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