

CHESTER COUNTY CARING COMMUNITIES COALITION

Quarterly Meeting: June 24, 2005

9:00 – 11:00 AM

The Coad Group, Exton, PA

In attendance were the following:

Meg Polvino	Chester County Dept. of Drug & Alcohol Services
Kendra K. Weible	Chester County Dept. of Children, Youth, & Families
Lee Ritsick	Vision Quest
Nichi Baisser	Girl Scouts Freedom Valley
Joann Tarrant	New Life Youth and Family Services
Kathy Moran	Chester County Opportunities Industrialization Centers
Christina Valocchi	West Chester CTC
Lauren Atwell-Douglas	United Way of Chester County
Julie Dietrich	West Chester CTC
Audra Supplee	Local author/speaker
Bob Hume	Octorara CTC
Danielle Salada	Octorara CTC
Jen Brookover	Camp Dreamcatcher
Kim Lewis	Juvenile Probation Office
Diane Canney	Greencastle Video Productions Inc.
Sandy Lewis	Domestic Violence Center
Karen Brenneman	Child and Family Focus, Inc.
Dolores Winston	Phoenixville CTC
Reggie Wade	Chester County Juvenile Probation Office
Heidi Bryan	Feeling Blue Suicide Prevention Council
Linda Peduto	Downingtown CTC
Frank DeLuise	Kennett CTC
Joyce Chester	Chester County Opportunities Industrialization Centers (OIC)
Barry Schickling	Childhood Education Coalition
Doreen Ellis	Partnership for Healthy Youth
Jill Santiago	Parent Involved Network – CC Family Advocate
Dolores Perry-Hunter	COAD Board & PHY Board
Mary Ann Hughes	Downingtown CTC
Sandy Claus	Great Valley School District
Ellen Moeller	COAD/ Area Residents Caring & Helping (ARCH)
Nancy Clegg	COAD
Brooke Hedderick	Crime Victims Center of Chester County
Casey Yarnell	Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of Pupil Services for West Chester Area School District

The meeting was opened by Nancy Clegg, interim facilitator, at 9:15 AM. She briefly explained the establishment of this group as an effort to coordinate, not duplicate services, and to network with youth prevention efforts throughout the county.

First on the agenda was an opportunity to hear update reports from each of the six Communities That Care sites. Each was asked to share accomplishments and challenges.

Frank DeLuise reported from Kennett. They have been addressing the need for programming for high school and middle school youth, especially around the topic of possible gang activity. Presently they are offering “Middle School Mondays” from 3:00 to 7:00 PM in the summer. In the fall, they hope to match the participants with mentors. There are about 10 kids participating. This is a safe place for kids to go. They receive some life skills training, play computer games, have pizza, etc.

Kennett also has ongoing programming for girls (“Girls Talk”) and is also offering adult mentoring programming.

Christina Valocchi reported on West Chester CTC. As a new mobilizer, she is getting established in the community. She has been attending trainings, has been meeting with parent groups and committees, and has met with Representative Taylor. Representative Taylor commended CTC efforts to reduce duplication of services.

Christina has attended some community events and staffed information tables in the West Chester area. She is getting the website up to date, getting phones, and is presently looking for office space. Please contact her if you know of available office space in West Chester. They are working to get their Prevention Board and Executive Committee established. They have applied for a PCCD grant and a grant from Drug & Alcohol. They are exploring ways to partner with faith-based initiatives in the area. They are also preparing to do a risk and resource assessment. The 2005-06 meeting schedule has been set. They will be meeting on the 2nd Wednesday of each month beginning September 14, in the West Goshen township building.

Doreen Ellis reported on Great Valley PHY. They have been looking to identify gaps in parenting resources and have begun to offer the following: 1) Media - Wise® Literacy programming for parents of children in grades K through 5; 2) a speaker series for parents through “Parent Network;” and 3) marketing a PHY “Car Pack” resource, which is a folder full of resources that parents can read during those times they are waiting in the car. One of the most popular resources in the car pack is a website page entitled, “What to say to kids if you’ve ever used drugs.” It also includes a refrigerator magnet that includes parenting tips. This car pack was the result of a brainstorm, “if we can’t get parents to get out attending speakers, where can we reach them?” Parents are often open to prevention but cannot figure out how to fit it in to a busy schedule. Consequently, DARE graduations, Positive I.D. graduations and other events at the high school and middle school have been places to capture an already present parent audience. They are also putting out a prevention bumper sticker. This summer a newsletter will go out to the entire school district highlighting the work of PHY.

PHY needs assistance with a marketing plan and is always open to learning about good speakers. Their website is www.gvphy.org.

Dolores Winston reported for the Phoenixville CTC. Phoenixville CTC is now under the auspices of PAPA, Phoenixville Area Positive Alternatives. They have had over 700 people

attend their Fatherhood Initiative. They are sponsoring a summer basketball league. PAPA and the recreation league are partnering on a “Fathers Reunion,” inviting the 44 who have graduated from the Fatherhood Initiative Workshops to get together. The high school principal is enrolled to take the fatherhood workshops to help promote the program. They are receiving strong support from the school district to their initiatives. During a recent key leader’s breakfast, the situation of the no-show caterer proved to be an opportunity to encourage community problem-solving and teamwork in action. They are pleased that OIC (Opportunities Industrialization Centers) is in Phoenixville and they are working together on projects, in the interest of sharing resources and not duplicating services. They have also partnered with Greencastle Productions in working on producing a youth video, which is geared to establishing a strong program for at-risk youth. Family Night continues as a venue for parent and child activities. This summer there will be a family Karaoke night at a local business establishment. They are now recognizing a “Father of the Month” award to lead up to “Father of the Year” recognition.

Danielle Salada and Bob Hume represented Octorara CTC. They reported that the school district is one of their biggest supports. In recent weeks, they have been evaluating their accomplishments, and are interested in expanding mentoring opportunities to more youth. They would love to be in a position to offer a mentor to every student who wants one in K – 12. They are looking to partner with Big Brothers Big Sisters. They are working with high school and middle school staff on offering life skills training for students. The high school guidance department is now offering a Girls Youth Forum. They have also collaborated with local police on Kid Care ID day. The YMCA is expanding to their area, which CTC sees as a positive partner for collaboration. They are always looking for funding opportunities. Bob Hume reported that The PA Dept. of Agriculture may partner with CTC on a healthy fruit days fundraiser. Senior citizens continue to have a strong voice for youth advocacy in Octorara.

Mary Ann Hughes reported on Downingtown CTC. They are growing community awareness and capacity building, understanding there is a wealth of resources in Downingtown. The question is how to bring them to the table so they can collaborate and share with each other. They have tried to use meetings this year to raise awareness about other community resources. Representatives from the following programs came to speak : PIN (Parent Involved Network) advocate, addressing bullying among students, the LINK program (leadership, tolerance, mentoring), pet therapy in collaboration with Hopewell Methodist Church, and a support group for parents of special needs children. They are also seeking ways to address suicide, depression, sexual and racial issues through outreach programming with guidance counselors. CTC is regularly a presence at back-to-school nights in the middle and high schools and at 6th grade orientation. Elementary school guidance counselors address issues of cyber bullying, sexuality, etc. for parents whose children are advancing to middle school. The guidance department is aware of the vast differences in the maturity level of middle school-aged students and is using SRO (School Resource Officer) in collaborative presentations to get the parents involved and aware of how they can participate in prevention and protective activities. CTC has applied for grants from D & A, PCCD and Downingtown Women’s Club. They continue to look for creative ways to collaborate. They currently have 74 matches in their mentoring program. Parenting Wisely® is growing. They recognized that some parents are more comfortable attending a parenting series outside their own district, so they are inviting from a wider circle of districts. Police – community – schools are working together. The SRO (School Resource Officer) is also working in conjunction with the probation department. They concede it is very hard to prove what the collaboration is preventing, but find that numerous positives are coming

out of the partnership. The Brandywine Y is offering some programming to families and children affected by childhood obesity.

Prior to round table introductions, Nancy highlighted two individuals who are new to the Consortium who represent the arts. One is **Audra Supplee**, a local author who does clowning and juggling, in addition to speaking to groups of adults or children. Her book is written from a child's perspective about her stepfather who is an alcoholic. She is available to speak to groups about children of alcoholics and draws from her own personal experiences. She also does creative writing workshops that can empower youth to express themselves about difficult issues and feelings.

Diane Canney has been doing some work with at-risk kids using her skills in media and broadcasting. She uses kids to create, tape, and produce programs for a local PBS affiliate. Her dream project is called "Producing Winners" and involves empowering youth through involving them in all aspects of TV and video production from being talk show hosts to being behind the camera.

Nancy also introduced three individuals who are new to Consortium who are parent advocates: Jill Santiago, Family Advocate for PIN (Parent Involved Network), Karen Brenneman, family outreach coordinator/trainer for Child and Family Focus, Inc. and Linda Peduto.

Following the CTC site updates and the introductions of those new to the table, those present were invited to introduce themselves and give a brief update re: the programs they represent.

Brief round table updates:

Barry Schickling - Vice President of the Board of Childhood Education Coalition of Chester County, addressing school readiness. They are updating their website and willing to provide partner links for those interested.

Sandy Claus - GVPHY Board, Great Valley School District, *Character Counts*

Linda Peduto - parent advocate and writer for e-county Info.com web news

Julie Deitrich – WC CTC new board member, professor of philosophy at WC with an interest in character education

Kathy Moran – new staff for the Chester County OIC, "I Can" Program, offering life skills and career education to at-risk youth 16-21.

Diane Canney - Greencastle Video Productions Inc., Phoenixville CTC board, working with at-risk kids, taping programs for PBS, is mentoring them through the process.

JoAnn Tarrant - New Life Youth & Family Services, truancy prevention program, (high lighted speaker today)

Jill Santiago - Parent Involved Network Family Advocate, Chester County.

Karen Brenneman - Family Outreach coordinator/trainer with Child and Family Focus, Inc. She serves as a parent advocate, offering support groups and family groups for parents, caregivers, siblings (of various ages) of children with emotional/behavioral disorders.

Kendra Weible - Program Specialist for Children, Youth, and Families

Kim Lewis - Juvenile Probation Office

Reggie Wade - Juvenile Probation Office

Sandy Lewis - Domestic Violence Center, addressing violence and dating

Brooke Hedderick - Crime Victims Center of Chester County, working with victims of sexual assault using art therapy. They are also offering a Bulimia program free of charge. She also mentioned Judge Ott's new program entitled "Risky Business". This is a newly developed prevention program for alcohol, other drugs, and sexual violence for 7-8-9th grade young women. It addresses some of the issues of concern to Judge Ott for young women in our county. They want to offer a prevention program for young men as well.

Audra Supplee - author in West Chester. Talks to school groups re: creative writing, ACOA (Adult Children of Alcoholic) issues, and child advocacy. She uses juggling in her programs.

Jen Brookover - Camp Dream Catcher, programming for youth affected by AIDS, HIV, in Kennett Square, is serving 150 kids this summer. They are always looking for volunteers, as well as money. They are working to eliminate stigma.

Meg Polvino - Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services, manages the public dollars targeted for county prevention and treatment.

Nichi Bausser - Freedom Valley Girl Scouts. She is new to this area, and has been involved in CTC in western PA.

Casey Yarnell - West Chester Area School district

Dolores Perry-Hunter, Parent network, COAD Board of Directors – working on improvisational theatre program called "Spontaneous Combustion" to be launched in schools.

Wendy Beck - although not present, Nancy Clegg mentioned her involvement in the Annual Recovery Expo, planned for September 24, 2005 in Downingtown.

Linda Peduto - parent advocate helped CTC's this month by writing an article for eCountyInfo news.

Ellen Moeller - Co-Chair of ARCH (Area Residents Caring and Helping), is working on a partnership with the Conestoga High School Athletic Department.

Old Business

A motion was made and seconded that Consortium minutes of 4/22/05 be accepted as presented. Motion approved. Nancy mentioned that the consortium member directory that is being handed out today could be used as a tool for keeping in contact with one another. Please let Nancy Clegg or Ellen Moeller know of corrections and updates as information changes. Nancy also mentioned that she is aware that some email is duplicated and that the list serve process is not yet perfected. Please exercise patience as we work to improve our services. If there are duplications that have a recognizable solution, please let us know.

Nancy reported as follow up to Terry Kenworthy's discussion last meeting about the possible opportunity for this Coalition to be mentored as part of the SAMHSA Drug Free Communities Support mentoring grant, by a Buck's county coalition. However, due to timeline challenges in submitting the proposal and the uncertainty to the level of increased commitment and time it would require from both Coad staff and coalition members, it was decided to decline this opportunity at this time.

Guidelines subcommittee report by Christina Valocchi. The committee has been meeting with the purpose of recommending guidelines for this coalition to use in writing letters of support for member groups who are applying for grants. The committee has been looking at guidelines that are in use by other organizations. They plan to have a proposal for the next Coalition quarterly

meeting in September. Members are encouraged to contact Nancy if willing and available to serve on this subcommittee. Members are also invited to contribute ideas to Nancy or Christina, as well.

Review of Mission Statement: The Chester County Caring Communities Consortium is a web of agencies, individuals, and organizations aimed to prevent and reduce youth health and behavioral issues including substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school drop out and violence through connecting resources that promote healthy youth and families throughout Chester County.

New Business

It has been suggested that this organization change its name from *Consortium* to *Coalition*. The recommendation is due to the grant language used in many proposals indicating participation in a “coalition”. Nancy highlighted the Webster definitions that consortium emphasized “association” where coalition implied a stronger “unified effort”. This decision could potentially position its members more favorably in grantwriting efforts. Following a discussion, M. A. Hughes made a motion and B. Hume seconded the motion that the name be changed to **Chester County Caring Communities Coalition**. The vote was unanimous in favor of this change. The website will indicate this change shortly.

Member Highlights

New Life Truancy Prevention Program - JoAnn Tarrant gave an overview of this program, indicating that they have collaborated with many people and agencies sitting around this table, already. She reported that the risk factors that are discussed are risk factors for truancy as well as for substance abuse and other behavioral issues. New Life takes a therapeutic/ holistic approach by offering therapy with students and their families. They have provided services for students in grades 6 through 9, and are expanding their services in Chester County. Currently in this year, New Life has been serving over 115 families. Through data collection, they are recognizing an 82-85% improvement in attendance. The families that are dealing with truancy are also often dealing with some of the following difficulties including mental health issues, alcohol and other drug use, health problems, domestic violence, and single parent homes. They are recognizing that funding is getting tighter, making it ever more important that services not be duplicated. They are finding that more schools are recognizing the need to deal with truancy, which has been a taboo topic and not always addressed as directly as it could be. Truancy is a problem everywhere. New Life takes a therapeutic approach and offers long term counseling, connecting families to other resources, as indicated.

What needs does New Life Truancy Prevention Program have that can be addressed by this coalition? New Life is continually working to solidify funding support. They may ask for letters of support through grant applications. They are continuing to seek strong mentoring programs in the community that they can link clients with. There has not been an “evidence based” or “research based” truancy program identified that uses this holistic approach. New Life has not explored what steps are involved in affiliating with a university to undergo the rigors of an evidence-based protocol.

Jo Ann Tarrant is the contact person and Program Supervisor. The address is 405 Willowbrook Lane, West Chester, PA 19382, 610-429-1432.

Vision Quest Functional Family Therapy - Lee Ritsick presented an overview of this model of treatment. They offer services for at-risk youth and their families in Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties. In the beginning, the Home Quest Program was charged with working with children who were referred through the juvenile probation office. As they worked with more and more children, they began to see the child's juvenile probation situation as a symptom in the family. They adopted Functional Family Therapy (A Colorado Blueprint model program) as a method to address the family issues. FFT is based on the concept that everything either creates risks or protective factors. In youth, if risk factors are reduced and protective factors are increased, then fewer problems and delinquent behaviors should result. FFT works with the entire family. It has a beginning and an end. The average number of sessions is 12. The therapist aims to build an alliance with each family member, not with just one family member. In that way, the intent is not to place blame. By observing and identifying the "dance" in a family, the therapist can begin to empower each member to match up with what they need and are capable of doing, and, thus, give them hope in a nonjudgmental way.

FFT referrals come from CYF (Children, Youth & Families) and JPO (Juvenile Probation Office), who pay the fee for service. They have a pre- and post-test questionnaire, and do follow up for five years.

Contact person is Lee Ritsick, Functional Family Therapist, Vision Quest, 560 Trestle Place, Downingtown, PA 19335, 610-873-6330, ex 238, email: lritsick@vq.com.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 AM. The next quarterly meeting will be Friday, September 23, 2005 from 9:00 to 11:00 AM, at The COAD Group Building.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Moeller
COAD Administrative Assistant