

Milwaukee Brighter Futures

A Better Community Through Prevention

Summary of Meeting: March 16, 2010

BF agencies tell how homeless programs aim at ending dependence on shelters

The programs of two Brighter Futures agencies that work with homeless persons were described at the March 16th Brighter Futures meeting at Aurora Family Services.

Both programs, that of **Hope House** and **Pathfinders Milwaukee**, demonstrated that the programs are far-reaching and offer services that serve to bring families and individuals out of their dependence on shelters.

Ken Schmidt, executive director of Hope House, said the shelter began in a church basement in 1987 with a plan to become “part of the community” within which it was located. In that way, he explained, the shelter would be better accepted by the neighbors. The programs of Hope House serve ten resident families as well as families from the neighborhood.

He said Brighter Futures funds help Hope House to operate its **Shining Stars Youth Education** program which serves youth who are residents plus youth from the community.

Hope House was able to “be creative” in developing its center, Schmidt said. Milwaukee’s housing programs provide some flexibility for the shelters to create their programs so that they best serve their families, he added. “It’s not like Chicago, where the city prescribes the programs.”

The first community-serving program was a group for Hmong women, which lasted about 13 years, he said.

Schmidt said that originally Hope House had a child care center, but the shelter soon realized



Patrick Schrank and Ken Schmidt of Hope House describe programs

there were some other agencies doing it, and that a youth center might be better suited to the community. He credited **Wendy Weckler**, who had been hired at Hope House, with coming up with the idea to link programs, thus creating a connection between the House’s outreach program and the youth center.

The success of this linking of the programs has been demonstrated in that youth who live in the shelter and those from the community have become friends without any discrimination developing between the two groups, he said.

Patrick Schrank, program manager, said the Shining Stars youth program works with children over a longterm, even beyond the period during which families may be in shelter. He described Hope House as a “transitional shelter for women and families,” who are referred from other

shelters. Families may stay up to two years, although the average stay is 3 to 4 months, he said.

Our youth program works with children over longer term.

The youth programs include:

After school tutoring, which includes children from many schools in the area many of whom are not residing in the shelter. He described the program as being “a little out of the box.”.

An evening workshop held four nights a week involving group games, activities and other group projects.

A summer program that focuses on “social stuff.” Youth need to learn how to behave in groups; they play putt-putt golf, for instance, so that when they get into math in school they are able to feel comfortable with the activity.

The Teen Service Learning Program to help is to prepare for higher education. This is developed through the Brighter Futures funding. All we’re doing is providing resources, he said.

“There is a lot of excitement among the teens who stay with us,” he said. Shrank outlined the value of involving other professionals in the Hope House program to work with families to resolve their specific services.

“We demanded our youth to have a consciousness of their community,” he said. “Many of our kids didn’t feel connected to the community.”

Children need to understand that how they behave has an impact upon the others in the community, Schrank said. “If I do Action A, do I see any reaction to my behaviors,” he said. “Many kids didn’t understand why their behaviors affected the community. They honestly didn’t know.”

“For kids in a shelter, a lot of the kids never stayed long enough in one place to see the affects of their behavior,” he said.

He said the Community Garden activity, which has been going on for three years, has helped to

get the youth to interact with adults. Schrank said the youth meet up with adults who also have plots; this opens up communication with the adults, helping them to see the value of working with the youth.

The youth also engage in social networking, such as Facebook. The program includes much media literacy training. “Kids need media literacy all the time,” he said.

They are taught to look at information they see on the Internet and ask the question, “who created this?” It is important that youth have an understanding of the sources of information, he added.

Agency of the Month:

Pathfinders’ Hand-in-Hand Sexual Abuse Recovery Program

Joseph Stanley, of Pathfinders, said the agency has only 16 beds, which is “hardly enough when there will be some 400 homeless youth tonight.” The program offers “access to resources” of all types



Joseph Stanley

in the community, and this is critical in the development of the youth.

Stanley said the program looks to provide leadership training to youth, to get them to recognize that they are part of the community. He

explained that they took some 70 youth to a recent Milwaukee School Board hearing to support the renewal of the charter for the Alliance School, an alternative school for youth with special circumstances. The Alliance School of Milwaukee serves the needs of students who are not succeeding in the traditional high school environment due to harassment, intimidation, physical and/or emotional abuse. It is a 6-12 grade school community. It is a safe place, where

students are treated fairly at all times, regardless of sexuality, appearance, ability, or beliefs.

He also described a youth summit, held and facilitated by the youth. Some 130 youth participated, while some 20 were engaged in putting on the summit.

The agency has developed a Youth Drop-in center at 4200 N. Holton St., and Stanley invited persons to drop in anytime between 1 to 9 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.

10-Year CoC plan seeks to end homelessness

Milwaukee Continuum of Care Coalition recently released a ten-year plan to "end homelessness in Milwaukee," in the words of CoC Coordinator Joe Volk.

The plan is a result of a planning process that involved much of the community, and it is currently being reviewed for passage by the Milwaukee County Board and later by the



Joseph Volk

Milwaukee Common Council for endorsement by the two governments.

Volk told the March Brighter Futures meeting that it is important the plan "not be put on a shelf and forgotten."

"We've decidedly to stop managing homelessness in Milwaukee, and to end homelessness," Volk, who is also executive director of Community Advocates, Inc., said.

He said the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel had a supportive editorial. "It's pretty specific ... and it is THE plan, and we have to do it," he said.

Also, Volk cited a plan being developed in the Department of City Development (DCD) which would site alternative housing among aldermanic districts, so as to scatter what some persons feel is housing for undesirable persons throughout the community.

He explained that everyone may favor housing for persons suffering from mental illness or other disabilities, except when it's in their own neighborhoods. "It's the NIMBY syndrome," he said. "Not in my backyard."

Volk said Mayor Tom Barrett had made it clear that Milwaukee would cover 60% of the needs, and that the suburbs will have to take their share.

To view the survey, go to:

<http://milwaukeebrighterfutures.org/documents/10-YearPlanFinal.pdf>.

TPPN Report: Family Unity Night looks to be bigger, better

Plans for the 2010 Family Unity Night were outlined by Anthony McHenry, co-chair of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Network. "We're determined to make this a huge, huge event," he said.

He said the TPPN is looking for modest support from Brighter Futures agencies to help make it a success. Already more than 200 families have been identified by the agencies as potential participants, he said, and he urged others to also identify families.

The 4th Annual Family Unity Night will be held on Oct. 14th, and is an annual event proclaimed for the second Thursday of October by Mayor Tom Barrett of Milwaukee.

Jody Rhodes of the Neu-Life Community Center, said the Youth Ambassadors group, formed last year by TPPN, is working with a core group of about 15 youth, many from last year's group. The teen will be working on social networking groups and involving other interested teens, she said.

A summit is planned in a high school in April for some 300 persons. Any other agencies interested in doing a workshop or providing giveaways are urged to contact her.

March 16, 2010
Brighter Futures Meeting Attendance

First Name	Last Name	Agency
Laura	Watt	Alma Center
Joan	Lecus	Aurora Family Service
Christina	Treiber	Big Brothers Big Sisters
Kari	Nervig	COA YFC - Riverwest Ctr
Heather	Monroe	COA-Milwaukee Public Allies
Racquel	Bell	Community Advocates
Andi	Elliott	Community Advocates
Kenneth	Germanson	Community Advocates
Joe	Volk	Community Advocates
Wendy	Mc Carty	Dept. of Children and Families
Mark	O'Neil	Diverse & Resilient
Ken	Schmidt	Hope House
Patrick	Schrank	Hope House
Wendy	Weckler	Hope House
Ken	Schmidt	Hope House of Milwaukee
Juanita	Valcarcel	Latino Community Center
Sandy	Dotson	Managed Health Services
Brittany	Gresl	Marquette Univ. Behavior Clinic
Carole	Poth	Marquette Univ. Center for Peacemaking
Deborah	Bryant	Milwaukee Adolescent Health
Lenora	Shaw	Milwaukee Adolescent Health Program
Julie	Bock	Milwaukee LGBT
Odell	Chalmers	Neu-Life Community Resource Ctr
Tracy	Hrajnoha	Neu-Life Community Resource Ctr
Jody	Rhodes	Neu-Life Community Resource Ctr
Trudy	Ranallo	Parents Plus, Inc.
Joseph	Stanley	Pathfinders Youth Shelter
Susan	Tragesser	Planning Council
Thelma	Newby	SET Ministries
Jim	Bartos	Silver Spring Neighborhood Center
Anthony	Mc Henry	Silver Spring Neighborhood Center
Luke	Waldo	Sojourner Family Peace Center
Karen	Johnson	St. Amelian Lakeside
Greg	Lewis	St. Gabriel's COGIC
Cathy	Arney	The Counseling Center
Daphne	Jackson	United Healthcare
Sharlen	Moore	Urban Underground
Megan	McGee	Volunteer
Mary Pat	O'Hara	Walkers Point Youth and Family Ctr.
Joanne	Luedke	WAWM Family Resource Center
Sam	Zajac	WI Foundation for Independent Colleges

Correction: In February attendance list, Jane Ottow was identified as representing the wrong agency. She was representing St. Amelian Lakeside.