

## Literacy Coalition/HOC Meeting Minutes for September 18, 2015

Twenty-seven Coalition members attended this monthly meeting of the Coalition, held in the Innovation Room of the Community Foundation from 8:30-10:30.

1. Ann Maher, Interim Coalition Director, opened the meeting at 8:35 and welcomed the group.
2. Highlights of the Roundtable Sharing (which turned out to be the major portion of this meeting's agenda):
  - **Patrice Van Nortwick, from the Neighborhood Center**, opened the sharing circle by mentioning the renewal of their Circles Oneida County initiative.
  - **Amy James, from Hamilton College**, spoke about their community opportunities program (Coop Interns), tutoring in schools, and their desire to support literacy projects in the community.
  - **Katie McCauley, MidYork Library**, was thanked and complimented on the improvements she has made to our LitPower.org website. She reminded Team Leaders to send information about projects and progress to her for posting on team pages.
  - **Monica Melnicki, from the Learning Disabilities Association/RCIL** gave information about event about a program working with parents to help them better understand IEP's.
  - **Chris Hullar, Adult Action Team co-chair and Learning Center Director at the Rescue Mission of Utica** highlighted their anniversary banquet celebrating 125 years in the community. He described their new initiative, *Skills for Success*, a collaborative project with MVCC, ON Point and others. The project will teach 15 students carpentry and masonry skills and lead to a certificate through MVCC. Chris also **introduced Ben Greco**, who is working on adults video testimonials with the Adult Action Team. The Rescue Mission will host our October Coalition meeting – details to follow.
  - **Sarah Lam, MVCC** described fall classes that have started at their education center on Elizabeth St. including SAT prep on Tuesdays and Thursdays; also starting +50 classes at education center (computers and math programs)
  - **Robin Robinson, United Way** shared the disappointing news that we were not chosen for the Red Nose Grant; reason given was other projects had evidence based programs that they had been working on longer. (Ann M commented that this reinforces that we're on the right track with Results Scorecard; Robin feels it will leverage us in our grant writing.) In other UW news, the annual Campaign Kickoff was held last night; they are on the upswing (2.15 million). She thanked Katie McCauley for her work on the LitCo website (all agreed). She mentioned the Anti-Poverty work going on in the community, clearly an essential focus for all. United Way will be the convener for this effort, working with local officials.
  - **Mary Hayes Gordon, Utica College Young Scholars** gave a **brief overview of the** program to work against high dropout rate with underachieving students. It is a busy time since colleges and public schools have started. One example: 45 tutors sent out to schools (all Utica college students).
  - **Mary Ellen Evans, Workforce Development Board** – work is ongoing
  - **April Bliss, Director of Dunham Library** talked about the improvements and expansion going on at their library; discussion followed about ways to engage parents and support early childhood learning projects. This brought the group discussion to the LitCo EZRead Community Bookshelves Project (see more notes later in minutes.)

- **Susan Butler, Dolgeville CSD Elementary principal** overviewed their Open House last night; many booths that had to do with early childhood – parenting classes, Imagination Library booth, things aimed at early childhood and families. A new idea they are instituting is to start college visits at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade during the Community unit. It will be a way to make the statement “you’ll go to college someday” real for the children. Sue learned of the idea from another school and her staff is excited to try it here.
- **Mary Kline, Herkimer BOCES**, talked about some of their fall projects. They’ve moved one of their high school tech classes to Herkimer College so they are in the college campus atmosphere and also at BOCES. Another exciting start is with welcoming the first VP Tech Class of thirty students. These students will work towards a degree in advanced manufacturing and also receive their high school diploma; starting with 9<sup>th</sup> grade class this year but will continue on and add classes each year. Mary then talked about progress with TASC testing for Adult Ed; results are coming back faster which helps keep students engaged. In the area of Early Childhood, their preschool special education class is full so they’re waiting on approval for another class. Mary brought with her a copy of the Adult Learner Video produced for Herkimer County; their PR person has made a copy and written story about it so there may be media coverage about the project soon.
- **Sue Casanova, Bridges Tobacco Prevention Program** works in the community with multiple groups on tobacco use; educating municipalities that they have ability to work on tobacco use issues in their region. Usage rates have decreased in all populations except those with GED or lower education rate, in this group the rates are still going up. Literacy is definitely related to tobacco use. Tobacco retailers near schools increases rates and municipalities can now limit the proximity of tobacco near schools. They can also make laws that say pharmacies can’t sell tobacco; her group is also working with municipalities to make all public areas tobacco free. Reaching the adolescent population is key.
- **Brittany Pape, Center for Family Life and Recovery** described how their agency deals with mental health, substance abuse, behavioral issues; evidence based programs into the school. One example is working with JFK and other school on a variety of projects. She also runs a book club every month in Utica public library for those recovering from mental health and substance abuse. Another program offered is a parenting class.
- **Linda Allen gave an update on the Dolly Parton Imagination Library project, which provides books to children from Birth to age five population.** The website is [www.imaginationlibraryhoc.org](http://www.imaginationlibraryhoc.org); families can sign up on that website. Progress is being made to bring Imagination Library more formally under Literacy Coalition, continuing the strong involvement of eight local Rotary clubs. Linda is passionate about getting kids signed up - \$30 per child per year.
- **Brian Ross and Emily Tracy, Utica School of Commerce**, talked about their work with high school and college visits; fall semester is underway; working on recruiting for spring.
- **Melanie Adams and Krista Drake, Oneida Health Dept.**, gave an update on the Health Action Team – moving forward with goals; working with Diana Haldenwang from the Perinatal Network. Projects the Health Department is running include teaching nutrition in schools; hiring a health educator to take on community role, working with stores and vendors; another health educator works with community health improvement plan teaching classes on smoking cessation.

- **Kevin Marken and Ushona Mclean gave an update about On Point for College.** They have a 79.4% success rate which is amazing for the population. Save the date: special celebration honoring partners, organizations, contributors and graduates on Thursday Nov 12, 6-9 at Daniele's Banquet Center.
- **Michelle Sebastian, Madison Oneida BOCES/ROME ACCESS Site** – works with students for high school equivalency and ESL students. Plans underway for an Open House at Rome Access site and everyone's invited. Michelle spoke in detail about their strategies to secure TASC scores early and working with MVCC and other programs to support their students in making and meeting personal goals.
- **Dietra Harvey and Pat Lawson, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency** described the exciting things happening with community engagement initiative talking about poverty and engaging community service providers. Poverty Simulations offer a real-life experience with follow-up discussion and have now been done within several school districts. Within the next few months they are going to do simulations in every school in the Utica school district; collaboration with regional BOCES districts continues.

Dietra also gave updates on the volunteer groups she's involved with:

- NAACP – resumed in September after summer; continue working with Utica school district dealing with issues of MLK school.
- MV Latino association – regionalizing forces, working with Rochester; coming together as a region to address issues in a more forceful way; intense area of focus; Latino summit took place this week and engaged in conversations with governor
- MV Junior Frontiers – back to school; 70 kids at meeting in Utica; parents are super involved and engaged; meets at Radisson at 7AM on Saturday, reading program above what they do in school – benchmarks are really high. Have to be civically engaged in community. College tours, including Ivy League tour. (NEED CHAPERONES in February for Historic Black Colleges tour)
- **Jessica Murphy Armstrong, Herkimer BOCES talked about the** locations (4) where she provides adult education and the challenges they encounter. Locations include Herkimer county Jail, Dolgeville library, St Johnsville library, Working Solutions in Herkimer. She doesn't have finances to stock each location with materials; continuously trying to find ways to use technology to advantage as resource; only see them 3 hours a week so they need to own their education. She's a resource but they need to be engaged and really want it – the test is hard and personal motivation is key.
- **Joanna Robertson, parent and new Coalition member,** took notes from the discussion which are the basis for these minutes of the meeting.

Everyone agreed that although today's Roundtable took the majority of meeting time to complete, this opportunity to network is vital to the work of the Coalition. It is the **STORY** of what we are about.

3. **EZ read community bookshelves need attention. There are** between 17 and 21 bookshelves in Herkimer and Oneida Communities; many of us volunteered to look over a bookshelf, but Ann is aware that attention to this project has suffered since Lara's departure. One example is Camden where the bookshelf in Kinney Drugstore is active is but the volunteer doesn't get to

come to meetings because of time and distance. We can send her boxes of books through the BOCES mail courier; Michelle can get books to send to Camden. New Hartford Library (Jack) gets more than 100 children's books donated every week and they can't use them all: we need a plan to match that resource to our needs. Proper signage is needed (Kevin). Amy talked about the Hamilton College bookshelf history, and hopes to reactivate their project this year.

Action steps needed begin with Ann distributing Lara's list of bookshelf location; Joanna offered to help with this project. Katie will help with communication via the website; every organization is on website, mechanism to add information, maybe a page on the website, maybe a place on the website it can land so that people can get information.

4. Herkimer Adult Learner Video: Our goal was to watch the adult learner video, but technology was not our friend and we couldn't get the sound to work. For the sake of time, we decided to be prepared with a technology solution next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 but the networking went on.

NEXT MEETING: Friday, October 16 at THE RESCUE MISSION, 201 Rutger Street

