



CMCHC

Bulletin Board



central massachusetts center for
healthycommunities
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Letter from the Director

Dear Community Partners,

Our fall newsletter explores community protective factors and their impact on positive youth development. As you will see in the following articles, there are many ways communities can provide safe havens and positive opportunities for youth to grow up strong and healthy. One of the keys to developing a community full of protective factors for youth is through community collaboration.

In these times of great change and reduced funding, communities are being encouraged to collaborate more and more. Why? The more a community works together toward a common vision, coordinates resources and reduces duplication, the better the outcomes. In recent years, budget constraints have begun to affect not only programs, but also the very safety net we depend on. In order to make the most of the resources that remain, we must continue to strengthen our collaborations and maximize our assets to best use.

Here are some key things collaboration can offer:

- Encourages understanding across sectors of a community so new and non-traditional partners can discover ways their work intersects.
- Promotes positive beliefs about a community. The more we focus on our assets and strengths, a natural outcome of collaboration, the stronger our community safety net becomes.
- Helps us recognize our community's unique diversity and helps us discover untapped resources and strengths.
- Increases a community's knowledge of itself. Each new relationship brings us new information and knowledge, deepening our understanding and ability to access our unique assets.

Our language is full of the benefits of collaboration; "two heads are better than one", "many hands make light work". Collaboration is not easy, however. It requires a strong commitment, an ability to see outside of one's own sphere of knowledge to embrace another's point of view. It requires time, patience and flexibility. In the

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long run, this investment creates returns that are powerful.

The staff of the CMCHC is able to assist communities ready to embrace the spirit of collaboration with tools and resources to support your work. We can help with developing strong partnerships, running effective coalitions, evaluating your progress and mapping and building on community assets. We look forward to working with you to build healthier, stronger communities in Central MA.

Thank you!

Dodi Swope, *Director*

Risk & Protective Factors

By Laura Martínez

To succeed as adults, all youth must acquire positive attitudes and appropriate behaviors and skills. By creating protective factors on multiple levels such as family, school and community, youth become more prepared for being healthy and positive citizens. Protective factors are conditions that shield and potentially decrease the likelihood of young people engaging in risk behavior. The following are domains that build resiliency and protect youth from engaging in unhealthy behaviors:

1. Building strong bonds with positive, pro-social family members, other positive adult role models, and friends
2. Interacting with individuals and social groups who have healthy beliefs and consistent standards for behavior

3. Having positive constitutional factors such as a positive, sociable nature; a resilient temperament; and high intelligence

According to research youth are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as drugs and alcohol when they are exposed to risk factors. In addition, youth that are exposed to more than one risk factor are much more likely to practice unhealthy behaviors such as youth violence, delinquency, school dropout, risky sexual behaviors, and teen pregnancy.

Risk factors can be grouped into four categories:

1. Community: availability of drugs and firearms; absence of community norms against drug use and crime; low neighborhood attachment; extreme economic deprivation
2. Family: family history of problem behavior;

ior; family management problems, family conflict, favorable parental attitudes toward problem behavior.

3. School: early and persistent anti-social behavior; early academic failure; absence of commitment to school; engaging in problem behavior; favorable attitude towards problem behavior; early initiation of the problem behavior; constitutional factors (for example, an impulsive nature).
4. Peer group and individual constitution: rebelliousness; influence of peers who engage in problem behavior; early initiation of the problem behavior; constitutional factors.

The Central MA Center for Healthy Communities works to enhance "protective factors" and to reduce "risk factors " by providing resources and technical assistance in partnership with healthy community initiatives.



She supported him and participated in his school life as much as possible. Leo's mom is a substance abuse counselor. He could see his mother's position as someone helping others and he appreciated that. Leo is now a residential counselor at the Department of Youth Services and thanks his mom for building the strong bonds with him and being the positive adult figure that every child needs.

Both of these young people experienced both "risk factors" and "protective factors" in their adolescence. The protective factors far outweighed the risk factors and because of that, these young people are community oriented, advocates for youth, and may some day be our future leaders.

Healthy Communities Build Healthy Youth

By Faye Fulone Sweeney

Tom Houatchanthara learned how to spell his name in kindergarten, quite a feat for a 5 year old given that there are 14 letters in his last name and he had yet to learn the alphabet. Tom was able to accomplish his first big challenge at such a young age because of the support of his mother and father and seven brothers and sisters. Without even knowing it, Tom was experiencing a "protective factor" that would soon lend itself to even better things for him. Tom was raised in the "bad" section of town where drugs and violence prevail. A "risk factor" by every definition, but because of the shelter and safe environment provided by his immediate family, Tom was well prepared for school. The support of teachers and extra curricula activities in the community and school kept Tom off the streets and out of trouble, enabling him into becoming a community asset. Tom is now Director of the

Boys & Girls Club in Southbridge and has been able to credit the "protective factors" in his life with helping him get there.

Leo is one of the lucky ones. Growing up in a single parent home, Leo will be the first to tell you that had it not been for his mom's friend who offered him a job doing yard work and his first real paying job at the youth center, he would certainly have gotten into more trouble than he did. Leo was an above average student academically, but because schools can't always afford to take care of the "at-risk" students and the "gifted" students, one group loses out. In this case, it was Leo's. He was not challenged in his classes and was bored. Many times he acted out because of that boredom. He began to rebel at home, as well as at school. Although his mother was not always available because she was working a lot (a potential risk factor), she was still there for Leo.

Youth: Our Great Resources By José Rivera



A recent article in the Worcester Magazine (August 5 – 11, 2004) was titled:

“The kids were great.” The article was about a group of youngsters from Worcester who sang at the Democratic National Convention. I read it because I loved the title, and because our grandson was one of those kids. The author spoke warmly and with genuine appreciation of them (“Some of them gave up vacations and camps, but were ready to work.”); spoke about the daunting task ahead – prepare a group of 60 young people to sing at a world-wide televised event in two weeks; and spoke of “the support of some very talented friends and professionals, along with the support of the parents” who rallied around these kids to help them be the success they were. My grandparental

pride and joy were matched by a deep sense of admiration and hope for a community that had selflessly provided the triad of protective factors that studies have shown to support the positive development of youth: caring and support, high expectations, and participation.

As I was watching the DNC, I was amazed at how well the kids performed. Reading the article made me realize that the youth, friends, professionals and parents who “brighten[ed] the National Convention” were humbling reminders that we begin positive youth development by knowing that our youth are valuable resources, not by being surprised by their ability to succeed. Bonnie Bernard, a Risk & Protective Factors guru, has stated: “The natural outcome of having high expectations for youth is the creation of opportunities for them to be contributing members of their community.”

Once the opportunities are

there, our communities are “brightened” by the contributions of our youth. In the eloquent words of Ruthanne Kurth-Schai, Associate Professor & Chair of the Education Department at Macalester College in Minnesota, “[youth possess the capacity] to create images of the future powerful enough to guide and motivate positive social change [as well as] to provide leadership, nurturance, and economic assistance. In a world characterized by widespread feelings of purposelessness and powerlessness, the social contributions of childhood represent a primary source of humanity’s hope for the future.”

I hope the author of the Worcester Magazine’s article doesn’t mind a slight alteration to her headline as a gentle reminder to myself: “The kids ARE great.”

New Addition: STEP Program By Courtney Bisceglia

My name is Courtney Bisceglia, and I am the Victim Services Coordinator for the STEP (Strengthening, Transitioning, Empowering, Prevention) Program. I am a recent graduate of the University of Connecticut with a BS in “Child and Family Legal Studies”. Throughout high school I was an active member of Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), and strongly believe driving under the influence is a serious problem that needs attention. The STEP Program is a new program funded by the Drunk Driving Trust Fund, provided through the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA). The Drunk Driving Trust

Fund is made up of fees incurred by drunk drivers. STEP will serve all victims of Driving Under the Influence (DUI) incidents in Worcester County, including affected family members and friends. As Victim Services Coordinator I will provide crisis intervention and advocacy to victims in the time directly after an incident has occurred.

This program will assist the victims in understanding their rights and the criminal justice system and advocate for their families as requested. In addition, STEP will provide community education and networking support for schools, courts, faith organizations, hospitals, and public safety offices throughout

Update!
CMCHC is happy to announce that we are now a web based library.
 Please visit
<http://rhc.andornot.com>



the year. All of our services are free of charge.

If you have any questions regarding this program please contact me at cbisceglia@cmchc.org.



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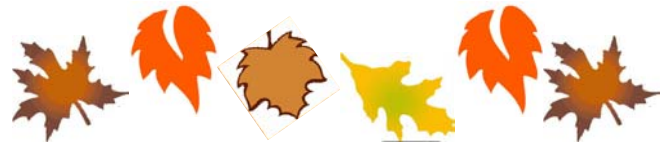
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Address Update:

In order to serve you better we would like to keep our list serve/database up to date. Please e-mail: lmartinez@cmchc.org or fax 508-438-0516 with your current contact info. **Thank You!**

Calendar of Events



September

National Alcohol & Drug Prevention Month
www.recoverymonth.org

6 Labor Day Office Closed

25 Food & Fitness Carnival
11:00-2:30 p.m.
@Boys & Girls Club of Worcester

October

Domestic Violence Awareness Month www.ncadv.org

3 14th Annual MPHA meeting
4:30-8:00 p.m.
@Hoagland Pincus Center
Shrewsbury, MA

ABCC Trainings

To increase parity across the state regarding how the laws are enforced and to give a better understanding of the laws.

Springfield- September 10
Cambridge - September 23
Billerica - September 30

Contact: *Natacha Dunker*
617-727-3040 x26

November

Lung Cancer Awareness Month
www.alcase.org

18 Great American Smokeout
www.cancer.org

25 Thanksgiving Day Office Closed

Upcoming Fall Trainings:

Locations, Time and Dates TBA

- Using Data to Mobilize your Community
- Local Gov't. Partnership for Youth Forum
- Environmental Strategies Training
- Middle Manager Training Series

**Please note: There is a \$25 registration fee for these workshops. We would never want anyone not to be able to attend due to financial restraints, so scholarships are available.*

