



Information Meeting – January 2020 Summary Notes

Date / Time: Tuesday, January 7, 2020 7:00pm – 8:30pm

Location: Deale Elks Meeting Room, Drumpoint Road, Deale

Meeting Highlights:

Engaging Youth: Issues and Ideas

Introduction

The topic for this program was chosen because of the concerns that have been voiced to us by residents of South County. When asked, during community events, what is most needed in South County, residents overwhelmingly respond “something for our young people to do.” The lack of resources for youth in this part of the county is a concern for those who live here as well as those having family members who live here.

To begin to bring into focus the parameters of this problem, Karen Babich planned this information session to include presentations from two perspectives – the issues and the ideas. The first set of speakers provide the perspective of those who have first-hand knowledge of the issues. The second set of speakers provide information about programs that are proving to be effective in addressing the needs of youth in this and other parts of Anne Arundel County.

Issues

- **The law enforcement perspective was presented by Corporal Rick Brookman, Southern District P.A.C.T. Officer, Anne Arundel County Police Department.**

Corporal Brookman identified drugs (including vaping, opioids, alcohol and marijuana) as the biggest problem involving with young people in South Anne Arundel County. This problem affects the individual and also the larger community because of the associated crime, including trespassing, theft and assaults.

As Southern area PACT (Policy and Community Together) Officer, Corporal Brookman is involved with several programs which engage young members of the community. These outreach programs include: the Anne Arundel County [Police Cadet program](#), available to youth 14 to 21 years of age who are interested in a career in law enforcement; [the Police Explorer program](#), which helps introduce high school aged youth to the various aspects of law enforcement; the Youth Activities Program, which provides opportunities for young people to take trips (to the zoo, aquarium, sporting events, athletic camps for example) under the guidance of civilian volunteers and members of the police department. These excellent opportunities have limited capacity.

Corporal Brookman noted one program which is no longer available through the public schools, [D.A.R.E.](#) (Drug Abuse Resistance Education.) It is possible for this program to be taught in facilities other than public schools.

Several questions were asked regarding gang activity in our area. Corporal Brookman suggested that most of the gang activity occurs outside of the member’s neighborhoods and that gang members strive to keep



Engaging Youth: Issues and Ideas (continued)

their affiliation hidden. They have jobs and do not present outward signs such as colors or visible tattoos. While involvement with gangs is growing, it is not growing fast. The vulnerable population is those young people who lack family attachment and who are looking to be liked or loved.

- **The behavioral health perspective was presented by Jana Raup, Ph.D., LCPC, Chief Behavioral Health Officer, Bay Community Health and by Rayniece Anderson, Behavioral Health Care Manager, Bay Community Health.**

Dr. Raup described the behavioral health services available at Bay Community Health and identified that, in addition to behaviors associated with underlying problems such as ADHD and substance abuse, there is an increase in the number of young people experiencing anxiety and issues related to lack of self-esteem. Dr. Raup cites as contributing factors the lack of effective adult role models, and parents who fail to teach responsibility to their children. She emphasized that many young people don't have anyone to talk to about problems or feelings. In the absence of parents or teachers who care, young people are turning to their peers for role models. They need a place for social get-togethers where they can talk under the supervision of adults who care about them.

At the West River and Shady Side locations, Bay Community Health has expanded its behavioral health services in an attempt to provide for a growing need for services – individual, group and family therapy.

Transportation to Bay Community Health is a problem for many who are in need of services. The new Call N' Ride service has been helpful, but transportation remains a problem.

Rayniece noted that, in semi-rural South County, there is “lots of room for kids to get into trouble.” They need spaces and opportunities to talk out their problems in groups. There is a stigma in needing help and this often prevents young people from seeking the help they need. It is important for those in need to know that support is available, including several evenings per week and some hours on Saturdays. Suggestions regarding how to expand outreach are welcome.

Kris Smith suggested that Bay Community Health staff should call attention to their needs at the [District 7 Budget Town Hall meeting](#) to be held at Southern High School on Tuesday, January 28 from 6 until 7:30pm. She also suggested that issues and comments about the Call N' Ride service be communicated to the [Transportation Department](#).

- **The personal experience perspective was presented by Kathryn Donithan, Recent Graduate, Southern High School, Harwood.**

Kathryn described the physical and behavioral challenges with which she was faced during her high school years and the help she received from her parents and from the Guidance Counselor and other members of the school staff. She also identified what she sees as problems affecting the young people of South County: vaping (in and out of school,) drugs, bullying and violence. She made a point of emphasizing that, even though it might not be “right in your school, gun violence is everywhere and you have to be alert.”



Engaging Youth: Issues and Ideas (continued)

Several other insights were provided by Kathryn:

- many students have IEPs or 504 Plans, but teachers do not always follow the plan and the students fall behind
- many students need to take medication for specific conditions but they may not be consistent in taking that medication, or their families may be unable to afford medication
- some students look to establish a reputation by adopting a “role” to fit into a group
- “kids are suffering from materialism.”

Kathryn identified that there is support available to young people, including helplines, school nurses, family members, the “Let’s Talk” program and after-school activities such as sports or arts clubs. She noted that her involvement with the “Green Summer Works” program led to employment after high school.

Ideas

- **Erin Snell, Executive Director, [Charting Careers](#), provided information about her organization**, which works toward breaking the cycle of poverty using a longitudinal approach. Mentors are paired with third graders reading below grade level. Mentors provide reading as well as social and emotional support to these young people, developing relationships and providing mentorship over a number of years. Charting Careers is currently assisting 35 young people and their families. The organization maintains a scholarship fund and a goals fund (providing financial assistance to help young people to meet their goals.) Charting Careers believes that it is important to support the family in order to help the child, and that problems of poverty are systemic and therefore require a systemic fix. The staff and volunteers receive training on implicit bias and on teaching tolerance.

Ms. Snell noted that there are many resources in Annapolis through which Charting Careers connects families to opportunities. She is interested in how non-profits scattered about the area “can put together the pieces to address the large picture.”

- **Steve Poole, Program Director at [Creating Communities](#), provided background information** on the organization, founded by Rob Levit, Executive Director, which focuses on engaging youth through programs in the arts. They sponsor several programs in the community and through schools and organizations (for example, the Housing Authority of City of Annapolis) and provide young people with the opportunity to work with professionals in areas of interest. These experiences enable “kids to grow in their own belief in what they are able to do.”

Young people can find out about this organization’s programs through schools and through community outreach partners. Creating Communities would welcome young people from South County to participate in their programs, and mentioned the Arts Mentorship Academy, an all-day, week-long arts camp which will be held this year from June 22 through 26 at Maryland Hall For The Creative Arts.



Engaging Youth: Issues and Ideas (continued)

Julie Snyder commented on the value of Creating Communities programs, which include life skills such as financial literacy, in its approach to enriching young people. She suggested that those attending tonight's program could seek to work out transportation that would enable young people from South County to attend the summer program in Annapolis. Registration for this camp begins in early May.

Two critical needs were identified:

- facilities to house programs, especially problematic in South County
- program applications in Spanish (for Spanish-speaking parents of eligible students.)

- **Arvak Marshall, Vice President, [South County Youth Association](#), provided an overview of the team sports programs offered by his organization.** SCYA engages over 700 young people in its programs each year in various sports including soccer, football and lacrosse. To keep young people engaged and to encourage them to maintain an active lifestyle, SCYA programs focus on fun.

Given that "one coach will influence more people in one year than many will in a lifetime," Arvak and the SCYA coaches see their role as more than just a sports coach. They provide mentoring, serve as a caring person in the life of a young person, and seek to "coach the heart" by influencing how their team members deal with problems, how they interact with others, how they face victory as well as defeat, and how they function as a part of something bigger than themselves. They also hope to foster a sense of "community family" helping to encourage young people to stay engaged and connected to the South County community.

As an organization, SCYA is advocating for the county to invest in recreational facilities so that young people have places to go "just to play." South County is lacking in those play spaces.

Arvak encourages the young people of South County to come out and play sports. Money will not be a hindrance for any child wishing to be part of a team.

Reports on Community Alliance of South County Activities

Food Access and Nutrition activities report provided by Christine Harrison.

- Tracey's Elementary School Bountiful Backpacks Weekend Food Program support.
By recruiting volunteers and securing funds, we are enabling the program to meet an increased need for weekend food bags at Tracey's Elementary School. A total of forty students now benefit from the program. In addition, we organize to provide weekend bags on weekends when the regular program does not operate due to school schedules.
- Mobile home estates and SCAN food pantry events.
We are working with members of the Board of SCAN (the South County Assistance Network) to help expand access to their food pantry. By going to community centers on a Saturday morning, we are able to reach residents who might not be aware of the program. SCAN representatives sign-up eligible residents and Community Alliance of South County members provide information about the Call N' Ride service and other transportation options.



Reports on Community Alliance of South County Activities (continued)

- Little Free Pantry project.

We are promoting a South County-wide initiative to install "Little Free Pantries" in areas of need. Our objective is to increase awareness of food insecurity and insufficiency in our own neighborhoods through a project that will bring food to where it is needed and also engage communities in meeting neighbor's needs. We are currently seeking a sponsor for the pantry that we have built.

Education activities were reported on by Karen Babich.

- STAIR program support.

We are helping to connect interested volunteers with *Start The Adventure In Reading* (STAIR) programs at Lothian Elementary School and Tracey's Elementary School. These programs are operated by STAIR-Annapolis, a non-profit organization that pairs second graders reading below grade level with dedicated volunteer tutors for weekly one-on-one literacy support and relationship-building.

Transportation activities were reported on by Kris Smith.

A new transportation system for South County was implemented in mid-August. The "Call N Ride" service provides for curb-to-curb pick up and drop off, on demand, within the service area and to the Edgewater Library for access to connector buses to other locations within the County. Two hour advance scheduling is required. The current fare is \$2 per trip. Ridership continues to be low. Additional ridership is necessary to justify continued service which has an estimated cost of \$500,000 per year per bus.

Closing

Kris Smith thanked the presenters and all in attendance for participating in this program. The meeting concluded at 8:30pm.