

DRYC Stakeholders Forum October 7, 2014

Members Present: Stephanie Mulinos, Tracy Kurtz, Steve Meyer and David Bravo-Cullen

Youth Services Coordinator: Kris Bennett

Guests: Mary Ann Sumner, Town Supervisor

Attendees:

Patty Ard - Dryden Opportunity Fund, receive applications and fund small projects for youth, preschool to 18

Paul Street - Dryden Opportunities Fund and Sertoma Soccer

Shelley Lester - Rural Youth Services and OURS program - late elementary through high school

David Hall - RYS

Mike Watkins - Lieutenant, Village of Dryden police

Don Schutt - Dryden Kiwanis softball and baseball

Lewis Gotto - Instructor for 36 year at Cortland State

Sandy Sherwood - Superintendent of Dryden Central Schools

Please introduce yourself and your program/agency; if applicable, tell us the ages of youth you interact with.

Patty Ard works for the Dryden Opportunity Fund. They review applications and fund small projects for youth (preschool to age 18) and other youth services programs that enrich youth lives. She doesn't work directly with the kids.

Paul Streeter also works for the DOF which he says is a local philanthropy group that has funded about 120 grants. They have awarded around \$80,000 over the last 10 years. He also works with the Sertoma Soccer program which has about 200 youth participants.

Shelley Lester works through Cooperative Extension with Rural Youth Services which has been in existence for 19 years. Youth Services program and OURS program both exist in the Town of Dryden. She doesn't work directly with the kids but is welcome to attend any activities.

Dave Hall has worked with youth services for 16 years. He works in the Dryden School offering services to help teens deal with their issues. He also works with kids in the community through programs like camping, canoe trips, hikes, wilderness survival, etc.

Mike Watkins is a lieutenant with the Dryden Police. He has worked in the city of Ithaca for 20 years but has only been in Dryden for 6 months. He doesn't have a lot of direct interactions with kids.

Don Schutt said he runs Kiwanis softball and based for kids from kindergarten to 7th grade. There are about 40 coaches which is who he spends most of his time with. Kiwanis has a goal of good citizenship combined with service.

Lewis Gotto is married to Sandy Sherwood. He has taught at SUNY Cortland for 36 years and is willing to share what he has witnessed.

Sandy Sherwood is the Superintendent of Schools in Dryden. She doesn't have a lot of direct interaction with the kids but she is familiar with many of the issues.

What strengths and skills do you see in the Dryden youth and their families that you work with or are in contact with? How has this changed over the past 5 years?

Sandy Sherwood: Families who are involved, there has been a shift in the acceptance of responsibility and a social structure, a shifting of traditional values from the families to the school. The school is putting more focus on middle school kids, to help them get through that tough age after which they seem to do better.

Lewis Gotto: From the perspective of the professor, the students he sees are more honest, realistic about themselves. He says they don't tend to camouflage like students from other areas.

Don Schutt: He believes there is still a good core section of parents that are teaching responsibility; a vast majority of baseball/softball kids have parents that are working with them. His concerns in regard to "recent" changes is that the parents have not figured out how to limit the activities - they are not home enough to have the family time.

Dave Hall: He agreed with Don, the kids are either involved in too much or they have no involvement at all.

Mike Watkins: He said kids are electronic wizards and parents are connected to their kids electronically. That might be good or bad. Communication through electronics rather than face to face is a negative but the fact that they are able to stay in communication with the parents is a positive. Social media is a negative issue but electronics make it easy to participate. As law enforcement, he can't get to the information that kids have on their electronic devices but as a parent, he encourages intervention; know what your kids are doing.

Dave Hall: He feels really tied in with guidance and administration. In addition he has had kids referred by counselors and community members. He sees families taking advantage of the social programs but he sees families that are really tied in and some that are not focused on their kids.

Shelly Lester: She believes that there is more of a global awareness due to the modern technology. They don't see themselves as insulated in a small little area but as part of a larger world. One of the challenges the kids are facing are the testing and new requirements that are being handed down in the school system. Not only does it stress the students but the students pick up on the stress of the faculty and instructors.

Paul Streeter: He believes youth are a bit more sophisticated but the enthusiasm is enormous but there are some youth that are not permitted due to family situations.

What issues and challenges do you see facing Dryden Youth and their families? How has this changed over the past 5 years? This question was generally addressed with the first question with the added comments.

Dave Hall added some patterns that he sees which is part of the low income situation; kids are moved around a lot shifting from town to town. He is seeing a larger group of transient kids that don't get a settled environment so they are not learning coping skills.

Paul Streeter added that he believes transportation is an issue. Parents might not have vehicles and public transportation doesn't reach everywhere.

Dave Hall asked about the 5PM bus and whether it is still running. Students in grades 6-12 can use the bus to get close to their homes if they stay for after school activities.

What troubling or challenging behavior do you face in working with youth?

Don Schutt: He said that he doesn't tend to have any trouble with the youth. His issues are generally with the parents. Some of them are working hard with their kids to ensure they have the right priorities but some parents are not involved.

Mike Watkins: He has noticed a trend with the older kids, a sense of entitlement. Kids and younger adults feel things are owed to them

Kris Bennett asked: How does that demonstrate itself?

Mike Watkins: They think they are owed an explanation for everything, they have the right to challenge and question. They don't see the necessity of consequences for actions. Although he feels it is good for kids to succeed, they don't always have to succeed. Sometimes it is good that you are not the one getting the trophy; that doesn't mean they are not still smart, capable or amazing.

Dave Hall: added that one of the things he has seen in the 22 or so years he has been working with kids is their desire for instant gratification. Probably due to the electronic world that we live in now; anything that is worthwhile takes elbow grease and time and that is something that he is working on with the students.

He has found that kids need a bit more of a push to be imaginative and to really physically try. There is a polarity between the kids that are over involved into athletics and exercise and the opposite extreme that is overweight and unhealthy.

Shelly Lester: added that she feels the lack of respect the kids have for themselves and others on a wider scale than ever before. The kids also don't seem to have any barriers when they share, they share far too much at times. They don't have a filter between their brains and mouths. The lack of respect doesn't allow adults to have the platform to teach and guide them – they tend to challenge rather than question out of curiosity.

Don Schutt believes that America is losing it's dream, the idea that your kids will have it better than the parents and the parents are working to make it a better existence. There is more living in the present rather than working for a better future.

What barriers do you face in working with the youth you serve?

Electronics, availability of mental health services, parents, transportation, lack of respect

What community services or programs are you aware of that you value and that benefit youth?

The late bus at Dryden middle/high school
After school programs
BOCES - skills are taught giving them a trade
Jr. Fire Academy
Sertoma soccer
Kiwanis baseball
Dryden recreation
Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts
4-H programs

What community services or programs are needed?

Mike Watkins: He is a big fan of the skateboard park in Ithaca, the kids take good care of the place and behave responsibly. His daughter was very into gymnastics which we do not have locally.

Paul Streeter: We have tremendous assets here, a lot of programs through the school, cooperative extension, municipal, volunteers, philanthropic, the library, and great personnel.

Don Schutt: The goal of Kiwanis is to change the life of a child through volunteerism. He stresses involvement by the parents – volunteering in the snack booth, etc. His biggest challenge has been getting parents involved.

Patty Ard: One of the things we need is a place for kids to socialize; a place that they can get together.

Paul Streeter: Suggested a common theme to get the community involved. How can we all engage in the community and get the people to connect? Perhaps obesity or physical health or a generic theme that can mean different things to different groups. The group agreed that coordination will be the greatest challenge.

What gets in the way of youth being able to access programs and services?

Patty Ard: Public/private transportation

Don Schutt asked what the issue with transportation is? **Shelly Lester** responded that it could be a wide variety of reasons including parental apathy, lack of a license, no car, public transportation doesn't align with programming and doesn't generally take a rider directly to their destination, etc.

Mike Watkins: the community is safe but that doesn't mean he would let his kid walk alone 10 miles. He thinks it is from the fact that we all have access to information globally so we know what is happening out there even if it is not happening here.

Stephanie Mulinos pointed out that society has changed, when she was younger, she was allowed to walk to events but today, a child walking unaccompanied a significant distance is not acceptable.

Sandy Sherwood: There is a lack of self worth and many kids might not participate because they don't think they can do it or that they should.

What are the 3 best things about Dryden for young people?

Dave Hall: The location is fantastic. A lot of his programming is outdoor activities. There are a lot of great opportunities around here. This a very culturally rich area. The Dryden Café has added a level of community and pride.

Shelly Lester: The DRYC and the Recreation Department are great for the community.

Paul Streeter: The size of the community is a positive. Dryden is small enough to make a difference but not have it be overwhelming.

Patty Ard: It is evidenced in this room, the people that are in the room that offer programs, guidance, opportunities, etc.

Sandy Sherwood: One of the things that stand out is willingness of adults outside of family to get involved and reach out to kids.

Don Schutt: He believes that the school is a hub and since Sandy (Sherwood) has been superintendant there is more pride within the school system. It is a safe community and we have a great parental system.

Mike Watkins: Dryden might be smaller than other areas but he has vast respect for the school system and the pride that comes from there. Since he has been in Dryden, the calls he gets here are nothing like he used to get in Ithaca.

What 3 things would you change about Dryden to make it a better place for young people?

Paul Streeter: He would like to see more less organized activities, more time and activities for kids to participate without everything being planned – pick up games.

David Bravo-Cullen: He suggested that the reason activities are organized rather than free flowing is related to the fact that moms are not home anymore. Kids can't count on their mom or neighbors, etc to keep an eye out for them.

Stephanie Mulinos: In the 20 years since she moved to Dryden, she has noticed that there are more and scarier challenges facing the teens but she has also seen a significant amount of community cohesiveness. She encouraged attendees to think about what they want the identity of the town to be.

She loves the opportunities of this area and despite the drawbacks of central New York, the community has strengthened, community engagement seems to be increasing.

Mike Watkins: He would like to see a recreation hall, sports arenas and a community center for the students to congregate and interact. He feels strongly that sports that are the next generation. He also hopes to see a school resource officer installed at the high school.

David Bravo-Cullen: Suggested that the Town and the School can work together more in the future to increase the opportunities for kids.