

# COMMUNITIES THAT CARE<sup>®</sup> NETWORK NEWS



*February 8, 2007*

*Meeting Topics:*

- Breakout Session: Chester Facts and Delco Facts
- Is It Summer Yet? 2007 Summer Fun, Recreation, Activities and Camp Calendar
- SPOTLIGHT: 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS College Afterschool Program
- Delaware County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition
- VITA (Volunteers for Income Tax Assistance)

*The next meetings of the CTC Network:*

**March 8, 2007**

**April 12, 2007**

**9am to 11am**

SE Conference Room, 1st Floor  
Crozer-Community Hospital  
2600 West 9th Street, Chester

*For more information:*

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Directory: (Sign in as a guest)

<http://delcoresources.webexone.com>

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**February 8, 2007**

## **MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

The meeting began with a **breakout session** focused on Delco Facts and Chester Facts, databases designed to help community organizations write grants, evaluate programs, and gather information to address gaps in services. The two databases incorporate information from the previous Needs Indicator Database. **Neilda Mott** explained that **Chester Education Foundation (CEF)**, sponsor of the databases, wants to correlate data with information members of the network actually use, or would like to know more about. In the first of several planned breakout sessions, participants worked in pairs to answer two questions related to the topic of education, including pre-school, K-12, adult education, and health education. The first question focused on what resources people use now, for example the average math score of middle school students. The second question addressed what people would like to know, for example, the graduation rate of Chester ninth graders who go on to high school. Participants shared a few of their thoughts before handing in index cards with their collected questions. One person mentioned the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) website and database as a current resource. A question one participant would like answered is the number of “unemployable” residents of Chester, those who cannot pass a criminal background check, have a low skill level, or cannot read or write. CEF will use the questions submitted to populate its database so as to serve the network as effectively as possible.



**Carita Morgan, CEF**, urged all to submit information on summer activities for children and families for inclusion in the **2007 Summer Fun, Recreation, Activities, and Camp Calendar**. The calendar is a joint project of the network, CEF and the Chester Upland School District (CUSD). Its goal is to provide a comprehensive listing of educational, recreational, cultural, and sports activities for children, teens, young adults, and families in the school district and in Delaware county. Calendar listings should take place during June, July, and August, 2007; be open to the general public; and be adequately supervised by responsible adults. The free

calendar is made available through schools and community organizations, and will also be published online.

A lack of funding prevented the printing of last year's calendar, which was only published online. Since many people in Chester don't have computers, CEF is hoping to return to print-based as well as electronic publishing. CEF prints 8,000-10,000 calendars at a total cost of from \$10,000-\$12,000. Carita noted that if there isn't sufficient input for this year's calendar, CEF won't put the time and money into developing and printing it. So all are urged to fill out a listing form, available by mail or fax from CEF, as well as online. The deadline for receipt of forms is April 27. CEF will need help in organizing and compiling the calendar information, and is seeking volunteers. Financial support for the project will also be appreciated. For more information or to request a listing form, please call Carita at 610.364.1212.



*The CTC Spotlight is a feature intended to help the network learn more about the resources in our community. This month's spotlight is on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS College.*

Having recently given a presentation on 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS College at the January Afterschool Program retreat for elementary, middle and high school staff, Neilda gave members of the network the benefit of this overview. As is regularly noted in the CTC update, 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS College provides homework help, tutoring, and after-school activities to elementary students (Columbus), middle school students (Smedley), and high school students (Chester High School) during the school year.

CEF, which has been doing after-school programming since 1988, saw in 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS an opportunity to work with federal funding and with CUSD to provide students a place to spend time and get extra help after school. The main partners in the venture are CEF, CUSD, CTC, Swarthmore College, and Widener University. The partnership was formalized in 2004, with CEF in the lead. CUSD submitted a proposal to PDE and received funding for three years. This is the third and final year of the grant, and the partners are now looking to the future and wondering if and how to continue the program.

CUSD responsibilities under the grant are to provide a coordinator, transport, snacks, evaluation, and funding. Seemingly incidental items like snacks and transport are essential in Chester, where kids have lunch at 11:00 and need something to eat before dinner, and where "safe passage" is an issue. Carita noted that funders often fund "safe passage" rather than transportation per se.

CEF responsibilities include providing additional financial support for the afterschool program currently at the rate of two dollars for every dollar contributed by CUSD, for a total of more than \$720,000, a serious fund-raising challenge. CEF also manages the program and partnerships, provides personnel along with CUSD and local agencies, and handles accountability, in the form of data collection and reports to funders.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS contract calls for extended learning for 360 students, each of whom attends a minimum of 30 times in the school year. This attendance goal is not so easy to reach as it might sound, given school closings, early closures, student medical appointments, and athletics. Last year the program served 544 students. Goals for 2006 are for 92 students at Columbus, 48 at Smedley, and 220 at the high school, with an additional 30 students necessary to meet Pew funding requirements. The Smedley component is still under enrolled and is actively recruiting students.

Features of 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS are an achievement plan for each student, certified teachers, a student-staff ratio of 1:10, a high-interest curriculum, and regular financial audits. Each site offers tutoring, academic support for homework, enrichment services, snacks, social services through Social Work Consultation Services (SWCS), and outreach services to families. The goals are to increase achievement in reading, writing, and math; to improve school-related attitudes and behavior through programs like Second Step anti-violence training and Families Together; to increase the graduation rate of participants; and to increase parental involvement.

21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS operates under a set of performance requirements. Among these are improvement in reading and math among seventy-five percent of attendees, higher attendance rates from one year to the next, lower suspension and referral rates from one year to the next, retention of at least seventy-five percent of enrollees for one full academic year, and a rating of at least four out of five on an attitude scale distributed to enrollees.

A recent evaluation of the program indicated the following strengths: strong administrative support and organization, dedicated and talented staff, a large number of collaborating partners, a large number of adult and student volunteers, and a large number of enrichment activities. Challenges include communication with day-school staff and teachers; building security and space; inadequate time for staff training, staff meetings, and coaching; difficulty obtaining and managing student data, including student grades; plus the need to increase attendance, engage parents better, provide more support for classroom management, and further develop the curriculum.

The focus of the January After-School Program retreat was to ask staff to help with these challenges. Attendees were asked, "What are we doing to meet requirements?" Within this broad question, staff were asked to focus on providing required services, collecting required data, and meeting required benchmarks. Staff were also asked the following questions:

- Do we have the appropriate staff resources and support?
- Do we have an adequate case management process?
- Are we providing a continuous improvement process?

After concluding her report, Neilda asked those at the CTC meeting to help out with the challenges identified for 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS in a second breakout session. Members broke up into small groups and also circulated around the room, filling out flip-charts focused on the following questions:

- How can we increase attendance to a minimum of 30 days?
- How can we increase enrollment at each site?
- How can we increase parental involvement?
- How can we improve assessment of academic performance in after-school programs?
- How can we improve communication with day-school teachers about homework, attendance, and academic performance?

The groups generated many creative ideas, which are listed below by question.

How can we increase attendance to a minimum of 30 days?

- Provide incentives like daily small door prizes, including special snacks, monthly best-attendance prizes like movie tickets or mall gift certificates, healthy food, monthly pizza parties for kids with the best attendance, competition between different grades, and special privileges, like activities or allowances.
- Provide diverse, interesting programs using outside organizations. Suggestions included cooking, style, music, and dancing.
- Make an announcement over the loud speaker at school when someone has reached a milestone like 10, 15 or 20 days.
- Create public recognition via a banner or chart.

How can we increase enrollment at each site?

- Give incentives like movies, bowling, trips to stores and other locations, tickets to events like Widener sports.
- Give parents gift cards for each child attending.
- Have direct contact and follow-up with parents over enrollment forms.

- Hold lunchtime recruitment activities attended by children who are already enrolled.
- Take a survey asking students what they would like or need.
- Offer incentives for referrals based on the number of times each referred student attends.
- Hold a bring-a-friend day.
- Make the program more service oriented, giving students the option of working outside school.
- Introduce hands-on projects or "out-of-your-seat" work.

How can we increase parental involvement?

- Have a play, skit, or musical. Parents love to see their kids in action.
- Offer child care.
- Give report cards to parents, not children.
- Create a report to give out to parents at report-card time.
- Hold monthly parent dinners with door prizes and activities and resources for parent development.
- Develop activities that involve parents and students, like food prep and planting window boxes.

How can we improve assessment of academic performance in after-school programs?

- Use a bank account awards system with real prizes.
- Set up a comment box where parents, students, administrators, and members of the community can write what they see and think about the program.
- Give pre- and post-tests.
- Give prizes for the most improved grades after every report card.
- Hold a fair to illustrate what is happening or show "good news."
- Use formal and informal testing.
- Have a formal graduation or completion ceremony.

How can we improve communication with day-school teachers about homework, attendance, and academic performance?

- Create a form with information and have CUSD reproduce it using carbonless paper.
- Attempt to work around parents' schedules.
- Make notes on the blackboard.
- Create a simple checklist.
- Use the activities period for bi-weekly teacher/staff update meetings.
- Create a Yahoo listserv to communicate ideas and resources.
- Have teacher visitation days during which CEF goes into the schools.



**Dianne Butera, Crozer Pediatric Residency Program,** announced the regular **Delco Teen Pregnancy Coalition** meeting on February 23, the fourth Friday of the month, at the Delaware County Intermediate Unit, 200 Yale Avenue, in Morton. Because Delaware County is not seeing a decline in teen pregnancy, and is seeing younger and younger children getting pregnant, the coalition wants to get community organizations involved. A public education campaign is under development by the coalition, together with Planned Parenthood, Project Elect, and Healthy Start, among other partners. For more information, please call Dianne at 610.497.7676; Kate Blackburn, Wellness Center, at 610.497.7422; or Joanne Craig, Healthy Start, at 610.497.7468.



**Yvette Dickinson, CEF,** announced that free **VITA (Volunteers for Income Tax Assistance) tax preparation** is now available to families whose income is under \$40,000 and whose taxes are simple and do not require itemization of deductions. In addition to free tax preparation, the service offers split refunds, enabling refunds to go into three separate bank accounts, and encourages clients to avoid taking out pre-refund loans offered by commercial tax preparers. Tax preparation is available at the following Chester sites: Chester Education Foundation (610.364.1212), Chester Micro Enterprise Partnership (610.499.9184), Franklin Mint Federal Credit Union (610.619.7000), and the YWCA (610.876.8226). Delaware County sites include Centro de Apoyo Comunitario (610.734.7425), Darby Borough CDC (610.586.0867), Delaware County Family Centers (610.532.2811), PathwaysPA (610.543.5022), and Women of War Ministries (610.622.1300). Please call for specific times; appointments may be required.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*To accommodate all the important and interesting information to be shared, CTC meetings begin promptly at 9:00 am. Please arrive a few minutes early and take advantage of the networking opportunities.*

**Urban Family Council** began its character education program in the Chester Upland School District the week of February 5. For more information, please call Tad Mahan, 215.663.9494, or email [tmahan@urbanfamilycouncil.org](mailto:tmahan@urbanfamilycouncil.org).



**The VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program** is in full swing. Families in Delaware County making less than \$40,000 are eligible for free income tax assistance. Anyone interested in the service, or agencies looking for VITA and Earned Income Tax Assistance (EITA) presentations or workshops, should call Joy McManus at PathwaysPA, 610.543.5022. PathwaysPA also provides confidential screenings and application assistance for working individuals and families interested in the **USDA Food Stamp Program**. It's easy and fast to find out if you or someone you know is eligible. Call Vernice Lloyd at 610.543.5022 for details.



A special program for job seekers, **“What Can CareerLink Do For You?”** will be held Saturday, February 10, 1:00 p.m., at the J. Lewis Crozer Library, 620 Engle Street, Chester. Please call 610.494.3454 to register.



The Widener Partnership Charter School (WPCS) will hold its **Scholastic Book Fair** Thursday and Friday, February 15 and 16 from 8:30-4:30 in the Southeast Conference Room, Community Hospital. For more information, please call Pat Mullen at 610.859.6034.



Philadelphia's own New York Connection will perform jazz at the J. Lewis Crozer Library, Monday, February 26, 6:00-8:00 p.m. as part of the library's **Black History Month celebration**. WRTI personality and host of the jazz history program “The Historical Approach to the Positive Music” Harrison Ridley, Jr., will speak on the role of music and theaters in the Harlem Renaissance on Tuesday, February 27, at 6:00 p.m. The following evening, Wednesday, February 28, also at 6:00 p.m., storyteller Linda Y. Goss will lead an interactive, family friendly program on the African-American storytelling tradition. She will show participants how to do storytelling in this tradition. All events are free. For more information, please call Kim Braun, 610.494.3454.



Delaware County Family Centers offers a **Parenting Plus Workshop** on four Thursdays, March 1, 8, 15, and 22 from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Community Hospital. For more information on this free program, please call Karen J. Clark, 610.494.9280.



**The Delaware County Master Gardeners' Urban Gardening Committee** is looking for a new garden site for

the **Intergenerational Garden** in Chester. The garden is currently located at 6<sup>th</sup> and Morton Avenue. They are looking for a site closer to community gardeners who would like to plant vegetable gardens. The Master Gardeners are also interested in presenting a series of Community Beautification workshops in Chester communities whose residents are interested in gardening. Workshops can be designed to fit the needs of the community. Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who educate the home gardening public. They are part of the Penn State College of Agriculture and the Delaware County Cooperative Extension. For more information, please call Linda Barry, 610.690.7669 or email lrb16@psu.edu.



Covenant Fellowship Church, 2215 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Chester, will be holding **free English-as-a-second-language classes** each Saturday from 10:30 a.m.-noon. The church also invites all adults 18 and older to join **computer classes** on Saturdays from 10:30-noon. The classes will include lessons on typing, Microsoft Word and Excel, and email through Microsoft Outlook. Class size is limited. To register or for more information, please call John Shaw, 610.361.0606 or email jshaw@covfel.org



SWCS is accepting referrals for **free individual, couples, and family counseling**. SWCS is also planning a speak out

and vigil on violence against women and children as part of Take Back the Night, April 18, on the Widener campus. For more information, please call Pat Mullen at 610.859.6047.



The Bernardine Center is offering monthly **parenting classes** on Tuesdays, mornings or evenings depending on participants's schedules. For more information, please call Sister Rose, 610.497.3225 or email jperose@bernardinecenter.org.



The Center Foundation's **Young Parent Support Network**, a mentoring program for pregnant and parenting teens, is always looking for adult volunteer mentors. For more information, please call Maura O'Brien, 610.565.6171, or email maura@theCF.org.



For up-to-date information on the community, make sure to visit the **Community Resource Directory** at [www.chestereducation.org](http://www.chestereducation.org). Click on "Data Links." Or sign in as a guest at <http://delcoresources.webexone.com>.

## Upcoming Events

**Ongoing: Free VITA tax preparation** available at sites throughout the city of Chester and in Delaware County. Call Joy McManus at 610.543.5022 for information or to schedule presentations on the service.

**March 1, 8, 15, 22:** Delaware County Family Centers offers free **Parenting Plus** workshop, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Community Hospital. For more information, please call Karen J. Clark, 610.494.9280.

**March 19, 2007:** Spring session begins at Smedley Afterschool Program. Do you have an interesting program or activity for Middle School Students? Call Neilda Mott, 610.364.1212.

**April 18: Take Back the Night** observance plus speak out and vigil on violence against women and children. All events on Widener campus. For more information, please call Pat Mullen, 610.859.6047.

**April 27:** Deadline for receipt of forms for **2007 Summer Fun, Recreation, Activities and Camp Calendar**. For more information, or a form, please call Carita Morgan, 610.364.1212.

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