

COMMUNITIES THAT CARE NETWORK NEWS

A Chester Education Foundation Initiative



March 13, 2008

Meeting Topics:

- Welcome and overview of agenda
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Harrah's Casino and Racetrack Chester Scholarships
- Chester Upland School of the Arts
- SPOTLIGHT: Presentation by Dr. Gregory Thornton, Superintendent, Chester Upland School District

The next meetings of the CTC Network:

April 10, 2008

May 8, 2008

9am to 11am

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

For more information:

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(PCCD)*

*Chester Education Foundation
20th Anniversary Celebration Event*

**March 13, 2008
MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

Neilda Mott, Program Director, Chester Education Foundation (CEF), opened the meeting by welcoming all to the second event in CEF's twentieth anniversary celebration—a reception followed by a presentation by **Dr. Gregory Thornton**, new Superintendent of the **Chester Upland School District (CUSD)**. Neilda noted the special double-U arrangement of the tables to accommodate additional guests, festively decorated white linens and baskets of candies. She extended a welcome to newcomers and veteran CTC members, and noted that members of CEF's Board of Directors were also on hand for the occasion.

Cheryl Cunningham, Executive Director, CEF, reviewed the special agenda for the day. The first portion of the meeting would be dedicated, as usual, to reports from organizations in the community. Announcements, which usually occur at the end of the meeting, would then follow the first segment and precede the reception, after which Dr. Thornton would give an extended spotlight presentation on his vision and plans for the district.



Myrna Russi, Crozer Keystone Healthy Start, announced the newest evidenced-based program available to the City of Chester and Delaware County: **Nurse Family Partnership**.

To provide some context, Myrna began by giving a brief overview of other programs offered by **Crozer Keystone Health System's Women and Children's Health Services**. These include Cribs for Kids, Healthy Start, and the Hispanic Resource Center. Myrna also announced an educational program for service providers who work with teens, pregnant teens, and teen parents, "*Teen Pregnancy Is on the Rise: Learn the Facts So You Can Take Action!*" The free half-day program will focus on medical complications teens may experience with having a baby so young, and on why it's important to talk to teens about sex to prevent teen

pregnancy. The program, which will take place Thursday, May 15, from 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at Community Hospital, will provide CEU's for nurses and social workers. For more information, please call 610.497.7344.

Joanne Craig, Administrative Director, Women and Children's Health Services, then introduced an important new resource for first-time pregnant women, **Nurse-Family Partnership**. The 30-year-old program has had proven results nationwide in helping vulnerable families and is one of the eleven Blueprint Programs identified by the University of Colorado and a proven program by SAMHSA. Based in Denver, where Crozer nurses are now in training, the free program offers one-on-one in-family intervention from early pregnancy to age two. Crozer's goal is to provide services for 100 families with incomes up to 235% of the poverty level. Joanne stressed the importance of enrolling women and their families early, and encouraged those present to refer first-time mothers who have never had a live birth and who are no more than three months pregnant. Women will be accepted into the program no later than the sixth month of pregnancy, as early intervention is critical to success. Each participating mother will receive weekly in-home visits from a nurse up through six months post partum, with monthly visits thereafter up to the child's second birthday. Nurses will work with women on life skills, parenting skills, and early childhood development.

Akasha Gainer, who will be the face of the new program in the community, receiving and handling referrals and managing the intake and enrollment process, encouraged those present to make referrals by calling 610.497.7344. She noted that there are additional programs for women who don't qualify for Nurse-Family Partnership. Joanne also announced an open house to introduce the program, Friday, April 4, from 1:00-4:00 p.m. at Community Hospital. Please RSVP by March 21 to 610.497.7399 if you would like to attend.

CTC members were reminded that Nurse-Family Partnership represents one of the goals of Communities That Care which is to encourage the implementation of research-based programs in the community to reduce risk and increase protective factors for children.



Marvin Fox, Vice President of Marketing, Harrah's Casino and Racetrack, announced a new scholarship program that will make a total of \$200,000 available for college scholarships to Chester residents, \$100,000 per year over two years. The top award available to each student will be \$10,000 per year; students must reapply for the second year. This scholarship money is intended to help bridge the gap left by financial aid. Any current Chester resident who

has lived in the city for at least three consecutive years is eligible to apply, and includes high school seniors as well as adults returning to school. Applicants must have been accepted into an accredited four-year institution, must have had no criminal record within the past five years, and must have filled out all necessary FAFSA (financial aid) forms. Applications are available at Chester High School, and at local colleges and universities. Applications must be submitted by May 1 for fall admission. For more information, please call his office at 484.490.1935.



John Alston, Founder, Chester Upland School of the Arts, gave an overview of the new Chester Upland School District partnership school, which will open in September to 160 students, 40 in pre-K, 40 in kindergarten, 40 in first grade, and 40 in second grade. Plans call for adding grades up to eight in future. John stressed the fact that the school was a public school, not a private or charter school, and spoke warmly of his strong relationship with Dr. Thornton and their mutual effort to negotiate the details of this innovative project. The school will receive its full allocation from the district and then will supplement up to \$4,500 in additional costs per student with money that includes a successful million-dollar match from Doris Buffett, Warren Buffett's sister.

The curriculum will fully integrate the arts into all aspects of study, using the practice of the arts as a way of teaching critical thinking, collaboration, self-discipline, and civic values. Study of the arts is known to raise the level of academic performance. Every child will receive music, dance or art instruction every day, unlike the once-or-twice-a-week scheduling of the arts in the traditional curriculum. There will be a 20:2 student-teacher ratio, with one lead teacher and one assistant teacher per class, allowing for lots of individual attention. The school will also have an extended day, running two hours longer than usual and providing piano and violin lessons, singing, dancing, and sports.

There will be two meetings for families interested in enrolling a child at the school. The first will include the entire family and will feature dinner. The second, smaller, meeting will give staff a chance to talk with parents about the level of responsibility they will need to take for their child's education if their child attends the school. Parental involvement is seen as key to student success. For more information on the Chester Upland School of the Arts, or to apply for a position as a classroom teacher or as a teacher of art, music or dance, please call 610.328.1339. Parents interested in enrolling their child *must* attend a meeting to *begin the enrollment process on either April 8th, April 9th or April 10th* at 6:30pm at the Parry Building, 9th and Fulton

Streets in Chester. If you have questions please call 610.283.3036.



The CTC Spotlight is a feature intended to help the network learn more about the resources in our community. Dr. Gregory Thornton, Superintendent, gave this month's spotlight presentation on his first 100 days at the Chester Upland School District (CUSD) and on his plans for the future.

Dr. Thornton began by finding out how many in the audience had grown up in Chester (about a third) and celebrated the high school basketball team's win at the Palestra the night before. After describing in good-humored terms his meteoric rise from teacher on the eastern shore of Maryland to senior administrator in Maryland and Philadelphia, to his position as Superintendent No. 13 in Chester, he got serious about his interest in Chester. Describing Chester as a place of energy, where something is happening, he called the city one whose time has come, stressing that the city's response to its moment of possibility was critical.

Dr. Thornton reviewed the current reality of education in Chester, stating that CUSD is not where it needs to be and graduating seniors are not ready to graduate. Although Chester High School's basketball team may be ranked Number 3 nationally, many high school students can't get into a Division I university because of their SAT scores. He also argued that the "good old days" were never as good as they're made out to be, noting that the average Chester High SAT score of 720 has deviated only 40 points in the past decades. Education in Chester has been in crisis for a long time. Emphasizing the fact that a city in crisis with respect to education is a city in crisis, he insisted that the current economic development of Chester is out of pace with its educational base, and that an overhaul is needed. This overhaul, amounting to a structural renovation, would cost a lot of money; but allowing the status quo to continue will, in the end, he argued, be more expensive.

Three principles have informed Dr. Thornton's first 100 days in office: effective and efficient operations, student and family support, and curriculum and instruction. To build an effective and efficient operation, he brought in key staffers who have formed a leadership team. In Dr. Thornton's vision, a reallocation of space is critical to turning CUSD around. According to his draft Long Range Space plan, the district would eliminate middle schools, allocating seventh and eighth graders to schools that will take students from pre-K and follow them through eighth grade. Developing long-term relationships between schools, kids, and families is an important part of this idea. The plan also calls for downsizing Chester High School either to create three

separate schools as one campus or to establish three separate, stand-alone schools. Located at Chester High, Smedley, and Showalter, each high school site would serve students with a distinctive educational emphasis. Allowing again for building relationships between kids and schools, the plan would also provide students with real choice. One school might emphasize life sciences and health, another science, technology, and math. Dr. Thornton mentioned the importance of choice to students of all ages, citing the Chester Upland School of the Arts as an example. He noted that he was working to develop partnerships and bring charter schools into the public system. Since money is critical to achieving this long-range plan, each school in the district will be expected to develop a 501(c)3 arm to raise funds for its mission.

In the area of student and family support, Dr. Thornton cited the establishing of a parents' advisory board, a parents' advocate, 21st Century Community Learning centers for all schools, after-school clubs and programming, and a College and Career Awareness Center at the high school. Help for those who are truly poor is central to his vision. Improvement in instruction and curriculum has included additional professional development for teachers, improvement plans for each school, tutoring programs in each school, and increased use of technology in the high school.

The ideas continued: a summer reading club; implementation of programs like Upward Bound perhaps with Widener as partner; improving security in the high school, and developing programs with and for parents. Many parents in the district have been dealt a short hand and need help.

Dr. Thornton closed by noting that he was working to build sustainability at CUSD so that measures put in place will survive any change of leadership. He also noted that there will not be a school district at all if enrollment continues to drop. And he posed and answered a key question, "Would he send his children to schools in the district," with the answer, "No." To reverse the trend, courage and commitment will be necessary. In response to a question, Dr. Thornton ended his presentation by inviting all who wished to partner with the district to participate in a process by which partners will be selected. Before he concluded, Dr. Thornton provided network members with copies of his administration's Mid-Year Accomplishments which included glimpses of future projects and programs for the district.

Cheryl then closed the meeting by thanking members of the community for 20 years of support for educating the youth of Chester, and wished Dr. Thornton a long tenure as No. 13.

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.

Chester Education Foundation's **21st Century SKILLS College** still has spaces available for students in grades 2 through 12. Elementary students attend after-school programming at Columbus, middle schoolers at Smedley, and high school students at Chester High. For more information on the free program, please call Stephanie Scappa-Hall, 610.364.1212 or email sscappa@chestereducation.org.



All ages and skill levels are welcome to attend **drawing classes** taught by local artist Van Buren Payne at **Crozer Library**, 620 Engle Street. Students may attend any or all of the classes, which meet Thursday evenings from 5:30-7:30 p.m. on March 20 and 27, and April 3, 10, 17, and 24. For more information or to register, please call 610. 494.3454.



The **Women's Resource Center** offers **free legal consultation** Tuesday, March 25, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the CASA offices in Media. The on-going program will make consultations available on the fourth Thursday of every month. For more information, please contact Michele Daly or Sue Deutch at 610.687.6391.



Chester Community Improvement Project (CCIP) will host a **foreclosure prevention workshop** on Tuesday, March 25, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at North Chester Baptist Church, 2331 Providence Avenue. The free workshop is open to all. For more information, please call Gladys Ramirez-Wrease at 610.876.8663 or email gwrease@ccip.cc.



A **Town Hall Meeting on improving the health status of Chester** will be held Tuesday, March 25, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. in the Community Room at Chester City Hall. Dinner will be served. Please call by Friday, March 14, to reserve a place. For more information, please contact Dr. Melanie Ragin at 610.447.7770 or mragin@chestercity.com.



Delaware County Family Center will host "**Think Green!**" a free workshop on environmental awareness, on Wednesday, March 26, from 5:30-7:00 p.m. at Community Hospital. The evening will feature refreshments, give-aways, ideas on recycling, and tips on investing this year's taxpayer rebates. Those contributing the most original ideas on what the greening of the earth means for our future will receive prizes. For more information or to register, please call 610.494.9280 by Monday, March 24.



Catholic Social Services will offer **Parenting Teenagers**, a program designed to help parents find more effective ways to relate to their teens. The program helps parents learn how not to reinforce their teens' unacceptable behavior and how to encourage cooperative behavior. The seven-session program will run Wednesdays, 7:00-9:00 p.m., from March 26-May 7 at 240 N. Bishop Ave., Springfield. A \$10 registration fee includes a parent handbook for each parent/couple. For more information, please call 610.626.6550.



The Nia Center at Freeman Cultural Arts announces a range of early spring activities, including a fundraising dinner at Appleby's, March 26; the annual Children's Art Fair hosted at Widener University, April 10; and Chester Pride Day plus a Chester Historical Walk-a-thon on April 26. Ruth L. Bennett Day will take place May 17. The Nia Center also runs ongoing after-school and arts programming for children. For more information on any Nia Center activities, please call 610.872.9571.



Learning for Life presents **Exploring After Dark** on Friday, March 28, from 6:00 p.m.-6:00 a.m. Students will meet at the Cradle of Liberty Council of the Boy Scouts of America, 22nd and Winter Streets, and will be taken to the Wachovia Center to see the Sixers play the Suns. Afterwards the students will visit the U.S. Customs and Border Control site at the airport for an in-depth tour of the facility and its operations. Students will continue to Girard College for leadership and career development workshops, games, food, and fun. The focus of the evening will be career exploration. For more information on the event, which costs \$50, please call Taadhameka Kennedy, 215.988.9811, x145 or email tkennedy@colbsa.org.



Cathy Bishop, real estate broker and lifestyle coach, will offer **“No Romance without Finance”**, a workshop for women on ways to obtain and hold onto money, at Crozer Library, 620 Engle Street, on Saturday, March 29, from 10:00 a.m.-noon. For more information or to register, please call 610.494.3454.



Keen’s Martial Arts will hold weekly **Summer Karate Camps** beginning in June. Enrollment for the camps, which serve ages 7-12, starts April 1. Keen’s is currently providing martial arts training to over 200 children in CUSD through the 21st Century SKILLS program. Keen’s also runs the Karate Kidz Zone, a graded series of karate training programs, throughout the year. For more information, please call 610.872.4814 or email lohon6@msn.com.



The **Women’s Resource Center** will offer two free **parenting groups for single moms**. One group will meet at the Darby Family Center on April 1, the second at the Wayne Central Baptist Church on April 7. Both groups run from 6:00-8:00 p.m. For more information, please call Sue Deutch, 610.687.6391.



Chester Upland School District is holding its **2008 Parent Summit** on Saturday, April 5, at Chester High School, beginning at 8:30 am with breakfast. Lunch and a keynote speaker at 1:00 p.m., a Pre-K and Kindergarten enrollment fair, activities and workshops will complete the free event.



PathwaysPA’s Pathways to the Stars art show and auction will take place Sunday, April 6, from 5:00-8:00 p.m. at the Radisson Hotel, King of Prussia. Tickets are \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. For more information, please call Allen Reese, 610.543.5022.



Enrollment information sessions for parents interested in sending their pre-K through second-grade children to the **Chester Upland School of the Arts** will be held Tuesday-Thursday, April 8, 9, and 10, at 6:30 p.m. in the Parry Building, 9th and Fulton, Chester. Dinner will be served. For more information, please call Wendy Emrich, 610.328.1339.



“The Poetic Connection” will feature some of the best poets—children and adults—in the Tri-state area on

Saturday, April 12, from 2:00-3:30 p.m. at Crozer Library, 620 Engle Street. There will also be an open mic segment, free library card sign-ups for first time patrons, and light refreshments. If you are interested in being a featured artist, please call Kim or Kesha at 610.494.3454 or email crcsd@delco.lib.pa.us.



Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) will help students and parents complete the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** until May 1st. Please call Cheryl Browning or Jeneen Norfleet, 215.735.2877, to set up a no-cost appointment.



Widener University will host the ninth annual **Second Time Around Parents Conference** on Thursday, May 1. Roberta Greene, Ph.D., of the University of Texas, Austin, will be the keynote speaker. Continental breakfast and lunch will be served at the event, which runs from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Fees: \$75 for professionals, \$5 for grandparents. For more information, please call Cheryl Thomas, 610.566.7677.



Crozer-Keystone’s **Flea Market and Spring Craft Fair** will take place Saturday, May 3, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. in the Community Hospital parking lot. Proceeds benefit Crozer-Keystone participants’ Emergency Supply Fund. The fee for a space is \$20, for a space with a table, \$30. Please call 610.497.7344 by Friday, April 25, to reserve a table.



Catholic Social Services will again offer **The 3R’s of Budgeting: Responsibility, Reality, Resources**. The free program runs for three Thursday sessions, May 8, 15, and 22, from 5:00-8:00 p.m. Babysitting, snacks, and incentives are provided. For more information or to register, please call Lisa at 610.626.6550.



The **Chester Children’s Chorus** will present its annual **Spring Concert** Friday, May 9, and Saturday, May 10 in the Swarthmore College music building. Arrive at 7:30 p.m. for a good seat at this popular free event. For more information, please call Andrea Knox, 610.328.8180.



The **Chester Youth Collaborative** will sponsor **“Flip the Script, Stop the Violence”**, the **2008 Youth**

Empowerment Summit at University Center, Widener University, from 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 10. The summit has been designed to promote a message of anti-violence while empowering youth to become positive catalysts for change in their communities. If you or your agency would like to participate, please call Ieasa Nichols, 610.497.7422, or email ieasa.nichols@crozer.org.



Grace Community United Methodist Church celebrates the **fifth pastoral anniversary** of the Rev. Andrew L. Foster, III, on Saturday, May 31, from 5:00-10:00 p.m. at the ballroom of the Phoenix, Boothwyn. Tickets to help the congregation celebrate Rev. Foster's five years of serving the Chester community cost \$45. For more information, please call Rev. Foster, 610.876.6347.



The **Office of Behavioral Health** holds a regular meeting of its **Adolescent Drug and Alcohol Task Force** on the last Thursday of each month. Meetings are intended to help agencies in Delaware County become aware of new trends and treatment for adolescents. For more information, please call Beth Mingy or Linda Moore-Singleton, 610.713.2365.



Philabundance recently launched the **Fresh for All** program to distribute fresh produce free to people who need it. Two locations operate every Friday: Delaware County Housing Authority, 1825 Constitution Ave., Woodlyn, from 12:30-1:30 p.m., and Good Neighbor Senior Center, 1075 Hook Road, Sharon Hill, from 9:30-10:30 a.m. Please contact Kelly Hile for more information or for flyers to

distribute at your organization or in your community, 215.339.0900, x208 or khile@philabundance.org.



Anna's Place is pleased to announce that Sr. Julie McColl, OSF, has been named director. Sr. McColl is presently serving part-time and will take the position full time in September. For more information, please call Sr. Connie Davis, OSF, 484.361.5900 or email conniedavisosf@hotmail.com



The **Bernardine Center** will offer **parenting classes** each Tuesday in April and May. For more information, please call Sr. Sandra Lyons at 610.497.3225.



Delaware County Office of Services for the Aging (COSA) is accepting applications for **job training** in Delaware County. Applicants must be 55+ and resident in Delaware County. The program offers paid training and job placement assistance. For more information, please call 610.499.1962.



Delaware County Foster Grandparent Program is looking for people 60 or older who enjoy being with children. Foster grandparents receive up to \$400 a month to mentor and tutor children in classroom settings such as Head Start centers, day care centers, and schools. For more information, please call 610.490.1498.

Upcoming Events

March 27-April 24: Drawing classes with Van Buren Payne at Crozer Library, 5:30-7:30 p.m. For more information, please call 610.494.3454.

March 26-May 7: Parenting Teenagers at Catholic Social Services, Springfield. \$10 includes parent handbook. For more information, please call 610.626.6550.

March 29: "No Romance without Finance" workshop for women at Crozer Library, 10:00 a.m.-noon. For more information, please call 610.494.3454.

April 1 and 7: Free parenting groups for single moms run by Women's Resource Center, 6:00-8:00 p.m. April 1 session at Darby Family Center, April 7 session at Wayne Central Baptist Church. For more information, please call Sue Deutch at 610.687.6391.

April 5: CUSD 2008 Parent Summit, Saturday, April 5, at Chester High School, beginning at 8:30 am with breakfast.

April 6: PathwaysPA's Pathways to the Stars art show and auction, 5:00-8:00 p.m., Radisson Hotel, King of Prussia. Tickets \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. Call Allen Reese at 610.543-5022.

April 8, 9, and 10: Enrollment information sessions for Chester Upland School of the Arts, 9th and Fulton. Contact Wendy Emrich at 610.328.1339.

April 10: Children's Art Fair at Widener University. Contact the Nia Center at 610.872.9571.

April 12: "The Poetic Connection" poetry reading and open mic, 2:00-3:30 p.m., Crozer Library, For more information, please call 610.494.3454.

Ongoing through April 15: Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) provides free tax preparation to low-income earners at locations in Chester City and Delaware county. For a list of locations and numbers to call to make an appointment, please see the article in this issue. PathwaysPA is also looking for volunteers to help with tax preparation during tax season. Please call Henry Earl at 610.5543.5022.

April 25: Roll Out the Red Carpet dinner dance. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., scholarship fundraiser. Wilmington Doubletree. Tickets \$50 in advance. Check <http://www.dstchesterpaac.org> for details.

April 26: Chester's First Annual Fun Day: Spring into Good Health will offer fun and information from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at Chester City Hall. Agencies interested in presenting or exhibiting should contact Dr. Melanie Ragin, mragin@chestercity.com, or Shauna Watson, swatson@chestercity.com, 610.447.7770.

April 26: Chester Pride Day and Chester Historical Walk-a-thon. For more information, please call the Nia Center at 610.872.9571.

May 1: Deadline for submission of applications for Harrah's college scholarship and for receiving PHEAA help in completing FAFSA application for all colleges. For more information, please call 484.4990.1935.

May 1: Second Time Around Parents Conference, 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Widener. \$75 professionals, \$5 grandparents. For more information, please call Cheryl Thomas, 610.566.7677.

May 3: Crozer-Keystone Flea Market and Spring Craft Fair, 10:00a.m.-3:00 p.m., Community Hospital parking lot. For more information, please call 610.497.7344.

May 8, 15, 22: The 3R's of Budgeting: Responsibility, Reality, Resources, 5:00-8:00 p.m. at Catholic Social Services. For more information, please call Lisa, 610.626.6550.

May 9 and 10: Chester Children's Chorus annual Spring Concert, 8:00 p.m. (arrive by 7:30 for a good seat), Swarthmore College. For more information, please call Andrea Knox, 610.328.8180.

May 10: "Flip the Script, Stop the Violence" 2008 Youth Empowerment Summit, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Widener. For more information, please call Ieasa Nichols, 610.497.7422, or email ieasa.nichols@crozer.org.

May 15: "Teen Pregnancy Is on the Rise: Learn the Facts So You Can Take Action!" program, 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at Community Hospital. For more information, please call 610.497.7344.

May 31: Grace Community United Methodist Church fifth pastoral anniversary celebration, 5:00-10:00 p.m., Phoenix ballroom, Boothwyn. Tickets \$45 each. For more information, please call Rev. Andrew L. Foster, III, 610.876.6347.