

# COMMUNITIES THAT CARE NETWORK NEWS

*A Chester Education Foundation Initiative*



October 11, 2007

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

*October 11, 2007*

*Meeting Topics:*

- Meet the Communities That Care Network
- SPOTLIGHT: Chester Upland School District
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS Afterschool Program
- Chester Youth Collaborative (CYC)
- Chester Bandstand
- Sustaining CTC

*The next meetings of the CTC Network:*

**November 8, 2007**

**9am to 11am**

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

*For more information:*

Neilda Mott, CTC Network Director  
Stephanie Scappa-Hall, Asst. Program  
Director

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Directory: (Sign in as a guest)

<http://delcoresources.webexone.com>

*Sponsored through the  
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(PCCD)*

Today's meeting featured a special presentation and special guests. Following on last month's breakout session, in which members of CTC discussed topics they wanted Dr. Gregory Thornton, the new superintendent of **Chester Upland School District**, to know, **Neilda Mott, Program Director**, and **Stephanie Scappa-Hall, Assistant Program Director**, **Chester Education Foundation (CEF)**, presented a slide show that surveyed the mission, history, programming, and resources of the CTC network. The presentation included CTC's mission to disseminate and support delinquency prevention science and services; a brief history of Chester CTC, which has been in continuous operation since 1994; and a review of the CTC initiatives. There are CTC's worldwide, including branches in Canada, the UK, and Australia. When representatives of international CTC's come to the US to learn about the approach, they are told to visit Chester as a model. The presentation also covered CTC's resources, membership, partnerships, and projects. Neilda and Stephanie proudly noted that the 2005 Penn State CTC evaluation showed that communities with a CTC initiative such as Chester's, demonstrated improvements for children and youth. The presentation ended with a note that a sustainability committee is currently meeting to develop plans for taking Chester CTC into the future. This overview of CTC was followed by an extensive report on the current reality and plans for change in Chester Upland School District (CUSD).

**Joyce Wells, Assistant Superintendent for School and Supportive Services** and a long-time CTC veteran, shared test data that showed the extent of the problems faced by the district. She began by thanking those at CTC who have worked with the district to help children develop socially and intellectually, and stressed that Chester children are bright but challenged by the environment in which they live and study. Joyce also expressed appreciation for the current school administration, noting that she felt supported and focused in her work.

Joyce explained that every school year the state determines whether a school has made what is called Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and assigns each school an AYP status based on its current performance and previous status. If a school does not make adequate yearly progress in consecutive years, its status progresses from warning through school improvement to corrective action. Chester Upland School District, considered a historically low-performing school, has been at the Corrective Action II status for two to four years. Corrective Action II status means that a school has not met its AYP criteria for at least five years and exhibits one or more of a series of characteristics. Among these are attempts at reform that fail repeatedly, high turnover of staff, a culture of low expectations, little parental involvement, and weak community connections. CUSD is determined to break this cycle of school failure through individualized intervention, school by school, and by diversifying approaches to solving endemic problems.

In an extensive review of year-by-year and school-by-school data, Joyce showed that CUSD's percentage of students who achieve in the desirable advanced or proficient categories has hovered between 26% and 34% in reading and 19% and 25% in math over the past four years. The district's current AYP goal is to attain a 54% proficiency rating in reading and 45% in math; future goals are 63% proficiency in reading and 54% in math. Joyce noted that attendance or participation rate, for younger students, and graduation rate, for high school seniors, are also factors in a school's achieving satisfactory AYP.

**Sharon Hunter, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum**, and newly arrived in Chester from Philadelphia, celebrated the family feel of Chester, noting that there is a "good spirit" here. Sharon's portion of the CUSD presentation was focused on turning the picture around by improving the skills of teachers and administrators. She described a theory of action that included seven disciplines:

- Using real data to improve instruction.
- Developing a shared vision of good teaching.
- Focusing regular meetings on the work: honing the craft of teaching.
- Developing a shared vision for student results.
- Focusing supervision on assessing instructional quality and providing feedback.
- Fostering professional development by recruiting and preparing the best teachers to coach and support peers.
- Collecting diagnostic data by which to evaluate instructional practices and assess student learning.

Critical components in the effort to bring CUSD into compliance with AYP are skillful allocation of limited resources; good management; making use of family, school, and community partnerships; developing school staff; and creating a safe, nurturing and healthy environment for students. To this end, Sharon asked for the help of those present in developing a list of items to be included in the district's strategic planning.

Members began with a list of items already under consideration by the district. These included the following:

#### **Administrative**

- Mission, values, and goals
- Communication strategy
- Staff development for solution teams

#### **Finances**

- Finding ways to pay down the district's debt
- Mapping and consolidating resources
- Creating a development strategy
- Fund raising at schools
- Grants

#### **Curriculum**

- Stratifying approaches to student needs, including high-end and struggling students
- Arts education
- Gifted education
- Consumer sciences
- Economic literacy
- Vocational education—middle and high schools

#### **School life**

- School spirit
- Code of conduct

#### **Infrastructure**

- Facilities: playgrounds, classroom modernization
- Instructional resources
- Technology

#### **Education beyond the school**

- Alignment of the school day and after-school programs
- Alternative education programs
- Working out a charter school strategy
- University partnerships
- Extra-curricular activities

#### **Use of Data**

- Accountability in collection and sharing of data
- Assessment strategies
- Marking and grading policies

**Family and community involvement**

- Supporting students and families
- Parent resources
- Parent workshops

Members of the meeting broke out into small groups and brainstormed ideas that were collected by Sharon and Joyce. Ideas developed by break-out groups included the following additions to the district's list:

**Administrative**

- Ownership by administrators, teachers, students—accountability
- Effective teachers
- Consistent written and oral communication
- More leadership classes for teachers
- Smaller class sizes
- Teacher mentoring
- Principals actively engaged in classrooms
- More volunteers in classrooms

**Finances**

- Create another source of funding

**Curriculum**

- Exposure to different experiences (debate, art)
- Not just academics for ESA (clubs, life skills)
- An effective curriculum with materials students can bring home
- Financial literacy
- Entrepreneurship
- Elective courses
- More leadership classes for students
- Make learning fun
- Teach cultural diversity
- Offer more classes that lead to careers or jobs after high school
- Mediation, conflict resolution classes

**School life**

- Manners and etiquette training (code of conduct)
- Stick to guidelines concerning code of conduct (lateness, uniform policy, hall walking, violence and disruptive behavior, abusive language)
- Dissemination of disciplinary policies
- Social services in schools
- Classroom management
- Recess
- Extra-curricular activities and programs
- Work ethic
- Respect and responsibility at all levels
- Cultural diversity
- Individual goal setting for students

- Field trips (incentives)
- Team building among students and teachers (East vs. West)
- Peace site (conflict resolution)
- “No tolerance” zone in schools

**Infrastructure**

- Updated library (books, etc.)
- More computers

**Education beyond the school**

- Late bus
- Work with Drexel-Neumann and charter schools in Chester
- More collaboration between public and charter schools

**Family and community involvement**

- Educating partners on benchmarks
- Parent coaching
- Encouraging community pride
- Educating parents about the system
- Schools to go into the community
- Parent-teacher socials
- Using school auditorium for community events
- Mental health support for families
- District-wide parent involvement plan
- More parent accountability
- Conflict resolution for students and families
- Community service
- Bring in the businesses of Chester
- Offer classes for parents at night (adult education)

Sharon concluded her presentation by issuing a call to action, saying that although it is common to say that children are our future, in fact we are all the future of our children.

A follow-up discussion revolved around enforcing attendance policies and using the CUSD website to keep parents up to date on their children's homework assignments and other activities. Sharon noted that developing web resources took money, but that the district had plans in the works, and would in the meantime do what it could with the resources available. Neilda concluded the CUSD portion of the meeting by inviting CUSD to consider CTC a resource and a place to look for help. To contact Sharon or Joyce, please call 610.447.3600.



**Janet Riley-Ford, Program Coordinator, Crozer Wellness Center**, reviewed the purpose and components of the **Chester Youth Collaborative (CYC)**, which helps youth 12-22 reach their full potential and transition

successfully into adulthood. Janet reported on a wide range of CYC programs.

CYC is once again offering a college scholarship; deadline for applications is November 30. More information is available on the CYC website, <http://cyc.crozer.org>.

CYCLE, CYC's Leadership Empowerment institute, has trained 14 new youth council members. Trainees will return to their home organizations to hold a series of town hall meetings on issues that affect young people in Chester. The first town hall meeting will take place October 18 at Chester City Hall. Refreshments will be served at 6:00 p.m., with the meeting beginning at 6:30. Topics for this meeting include the curfew and the impact of loitering policies on youth. Parents from high crime areas are welcome to express concerns. Police will be present to explain the loitering policy and its enforcement. (Note: this event is being rescheduled.)

Twenty students are enrolled in the Swarthmore College Advance Program (CAP). Half of the students come from CYC, half from the general student body of CUSD. The program is designed to introduce tenth- through twelfth-graders to resources that will aid them in the college application process. In addition the program provides academic and personal skill building as well as one-on-one help with college prep. Tenth graders will receive SAT prep, homework help, and tutoring in math and English skills as well as mentoring from Swarthmore engineering students. Eleventh graders will also receive SAT prep, while twelfth graders will get help preparing for attending college. The program includes a computer lab and access to the Swarthmore College library during Saturday sessions and Wednesday tutoring.

Talks are underway with Delaware County Community College (DCCC) on continuing the summer academic program leading to college credit for participating high school students. The challenge is helping students acquire skills and learn.

An African-American male mentoring project kicks off Saturday, October 27, with a symposium. The project will provide training for mentors.

CYC is distributing adult engagement surveys in an attempt to discern who is engaged in the community, who is not, and why.

The city of Chester is now formally partnering with CYC. Any organization seeking funding from the city for youth programming will be encouraged to become part of CYC. For more information on CYC or any of its activities, please call Janet at 610.497.7422.



**Stephanie** announced that **21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS College** afterschool programming will start October 22. Active recruitment of students is underway. Programming for grades 2-6 will take place at Columbus Elementary School, for grades 7 and 8 at Smedley Middle School, and for grades 9-12 at Chester High School.

The Columbus program runs Monday through Friday until 6:00 p.m. Participating students receive homework help, enjoy activities, and get incentives for attending. Mondays and Fridays feature activities. Tuesdays through Thursdays focus on academics; this year students will take on the 100-book challenge, an opportunity to do sustained reading in silence. At Smedley students get both academics and activities every day, as well as homework help. Activities are made available through a wide choice of clubs in which students can enroll. This year 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS marks a milestone, as the first group of elementary students to have been in the program for four years will enter middle school. Applications are now available for both programs. To be eligible, children must go to a public school in the Chester Upland School District. Transportation is available to and from both sites. For more information or an application form, or if you have ideas for programs that will appeal to children, please call Stephanie at 610.859.6011.

**Elaine Greene-Upton, Program Director, CEF**, noted that students at Chester High School have been knocking on the program's door, requesting tutoring, which will begin on October 22. High school after-school programming, which operates on a drop-in basis, runs Monday through Thursday, 2:30-5:30 p.m. Students benefit from homework help and academic help in reading, math, and other skills. High school students will be taking on the 100-book challenge as well; the program is looking for people to read out loud with the kids. Elaine reported that a male mentoring program has produced positive changes in attitudes and that the summer program was very successful. Participants in the summer program are producing a book, *Untold Stories of Chester*, entirely written by students. Transportation home from 21<sup>st</sup> Century SKILLS is available, as well as daily snacks. To find out more, or for an application form, please call Elaine at 610.859.6005.



A musical introduction provided some members of the meeting an opportunity to show off their moves in advance of **Chester Education Foundation's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dance Party**, to be held Saturday, January 5, 2008, at Harrah's Chester Casino and Race Track. Billed as an Oldies Dance Party, the event will include music from the fifties through the eighties. **Nancy Gray** of the CEF Event

Committee, who invited all to attend, gave prizes of champagne to those at the meeting who will be celebrating their twentieth wedding anniversary in 2008 along with CEF. Also equally lucky were the newlyweds in the room. For more information on the anniversary bash, sure to be the event of the year, please call CEF, 610.364.1212.



**Nafis Nichols, TALL Team Coordinator**, announced a job posting for a full-time police officer to patrol the Weed & Seed target area, walking the streets and getting to know the people in the community. The target area covers the upper west side of Chester. Nafis also invited organizations to come to the Community Harvest Night at Wellington Ridge Community Center, 3001 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Chester, on October 30. Games, food, fun, and information on local services and issues like credit repair will be available from 4:00-6:00 p.m. Children must be accompanied by an adult. On Thursday, November 29, an open house will take place at the police sub-station at Community Hospital, 5:00-8:00 p.m. For more information on any of these events, please contact Nafis at 610.485.7034.



Neilda announced that the next meeting of the **committee on sustaining CTC** would take place at 11:30, directly after the CTC meeting ended. For more information on the committee, please call Neilda at 610.364.1212.

## 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.*

After-school programming at the **Nia Center** begins October 4 and 5 with an orientation for the **Young Explorers** and **Higher Hopes** programs, 4:00-6:00 p.m. The Young Explorers program is open to children in grades K-5 and includes homework assistance, tutoring, arts and crafts, games, creative writing, music, and supervised recreation. Children are encouraged in academic excellence, personal responsibility, and civic and cultural awareness. Regular sessions begin October 8. The Higher Hopes program is geared to middle- and high-school youth. Along with homework assistance, art, writing, and games, students will receive workshops in basic computer skills, etiquette, and civic engagement. There is a \$20/week fee for each program,

with full and partial scholarships available. For more information, please call Bernadette Henderson, Program Director, at 610.872.9570.



**The All-Chester Family Reunion and History Fair** will take place Saturday, October 13, from noon-3:00 p.m. in the Community Room, Chester City Hall. Exhibitors will include the Chester Historic Preservation Committee, the Delaware County Historical Society, DELCO Athletes Hall of Fame, Freeman Cultural Arts, and the Traveling Black History Museum. Since the reunion is in the heart of Chester's historic district, those attending can visit nearby points of interest like Old Swedes/St. Paul's Cemetery and the 1724 Courthouse. For more information, please visit [www.oldchesterpa.com](http://www.oldchesterpa.com).



**Covenant Fellowship Church** sponsors a **neighborhood cleanup** starting at the Chester Community Center, 2215 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, on Saturday, October 13, from 10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Free pizza and refreshments will be on offer to encourage members of the community to help pick up trash, sweep the sidewalks, and clean the playground. For more information, please call John Shaw, 610.361.0606.



**Chester Microenterprise Partnership** will be offering a **Successful Entrepreneur Business Skills Training Course** beginning October 16 at Christ Lutheran Church, Walnut Street, Upper Darby, PA. The 10-week course will run Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:30-9:00 p.m. for the first three weeks, then Tuesdays only for the remaining seven weeks. The course will be offered on a similar schedule beginning December 11 at 23 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Chester, PA. Both courses cost \$225. Scholarships are available for Chester residents. For more information, please call Antoinette Truehart at 610.499.9184.



**Harcum College's College Without Walls** is recruiting for the Spring 2008 semester. To reserve a seat at an information night to be held Wednesday, October 17, at 6:00 p.m., please call 610.364.1212.



**Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Chester Alumnae Chapter** presents their annual **Gospel Brunch**, Saturday, October 27, from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., St. Luke's Community Christian Center, 325 Tilghman Street, Chester. A \$30 donation benefits the scholarship fund. Artists

scheduled to perform include the Grace and Truth Delegation; JTK Mime Ministry; Jamaal Brown, jazz saxophonist; and Russell Delegation. For ticket information, please call Maria at 302.475.1186 or visit the chapter website, [www.dstchesterpaac.org](http://www.dstchesterpaac.org).



**Widener University** will be holding a **Halloween party** October 31, from 3:30-5:30 in the University Center. Pumpkin painting and trick or treating on campus will be featured activities. The university is also sponsoring a **Red Cross blood drive** October 31 and November 1, 8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. both days. For more information, please call Jacqui Rossetter, 610.499.4411.



The **Nia Center at Freeman Cultural Arts** will hold its **3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Banquet**, Friday, November 9, starting at 6:00 p.m. in Widener's Latham Hall. Honorees at the banquet will be **Cynthia Jetter, Director of Community Planning and Placements, Swarthmore College Lang Center; Janet Riley-Ford, Coordinator, Chester Youth Collaborative;** and **Bernard Pinder**, recipient of the Outstanding Achievement in the Arts award. Tickets cost \$45; proceeds benefit children's programming. For more information, please call Delores Freeman-Clybourn or Linda Richardson at 610.872.9570.



**Anna's Place**, a hospitality/drop-in center located at St. Katherine Drexel Evangelization Center, Second and Norris Streets, Chester, is now open. The center offers the chance to relax, make new friends and visit with old ones, enjoy hot drinks, think, pray, play cards or board games, read the newspaper or magazines, and share ideas, skills, and talents. For more information, please call Sister Mary Peter Kerner, OSF, at 484.361.5900.



The **Bernardine Center** seeks donations in support of its holiday gift giving and dinner plans. Please bring donations to the Center, 2625 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Chester on the following schedule:

- Thanksgiving food (turkeys, ham and fixings)—October 1-November 16 for distribution October 31-November 20
- Christmas toys and household linens—November 1-December 14 for distribution November 28-December 18
- Christmas food (turkeys, ham and fixings)—November 26-December 14 for distribution November 28-December 18.

For more information, please call 610.497.3225.



## Upcoming Events

**November 9 Nia Center's 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Banquet** at Widener's Latham Hall. 6:00 p.m.. Tickets \$45. Please call Delores Freeman-Clybourn or Linda Richardson at Freeman Cultural Arts, 610.872.9570.

**November 29: Open house at police sub-station**, Community Hospital, 5:00-8:00 p.m. Please contact Nafis Nichols, 610.485.7034 for more information.

**January 5, 2008: Chester Education Foundation's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dance Party**, Harrah's Chester Casino and Race Track. Tickets are \$55 and include a two hour buffet and two drinks. For more information, please call 610.364.1212.

**Ongoing:** Harcum College recruiting is for the spring semester of **College Without Walls**. Please call Denise Beauchamp, 610.859.6023 for more information.

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