

Families Together in Albany County

In Partnership with Albany County Department for Children, Youth & Families

1st Issue

Fall 2005

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Building a Strong System of Care in Albany County

One year ago the Albany County Department for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), in partnership with Families Together in NYS, Inc., a family run organization and in collaboration with family and youth leaders, and neighborhood and countywide stakeholders, proposed to significantly improve coordination of, accessibility to, and effectiveness of services for children with serious emotional, behavioral or developmental concerns.



Families Together at 737 Madison Avenue in Albany

This proposed project formed *Families Together in Albany County*, in partnership with DCYF.

“Families Together is very excited about this opportunity to partner with Albany County,” said Paige Pierce Macdonald, Executive Director of Families Together in New York State, Inc. “Through this system of care project, children with emotional and mental health challenges and their families will benefit from an array of supports and services that are both family and child-centered.”

Sheila J. Poole, Commissioner for the Albany County Department for Children, Youth and Families, shares Paige McDonald’s excitement. “This grant allows county government, communities, families and all interested stakeholders with an unprecedented opportunity to bring family support to the forefront of service delivery.”

During the past year, Families Together in Albany County has reached out to the communities of our Family Centers, building strong relationships with families and schools. Linda G. Stewart, Co-Project Director / Family Coordinator likens this relationship building to planting a seed. “In this early stage, we have to nurture our relationships with the family, the school and the community as a whole. A tree does not grow overnight. Our relationships should be viewed in the same way. We want to show that we care and we are here for the long haul.”

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Building a Strong System of Care in Albany, continued

Building trust is a major component for establishing a successful system of care in Albany County. Partnering with Albany Medical Center Pediatric Group builds upon that trust. "We have partnered with a Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician to bridge a wide divide between general pediatric practice and child psychiatry through opportunities for co-management and consultation," said Project Director, Moira Manning, LCSW.

Families Together in Albany County defines system of care as a network of community services and supports for children and youth with emotional, behavioral and developmental concerns. Families, youth and providers become partners so each child can function better at home, in school and in the community.

This definition of a system of care will help us create an atmosphere in Albany County that is child centered and family focused, culturally competent and strength based.



The Hilltowns

The Hilltown Family Center: Services for Albany County Rural Residents

By Marge Capuano

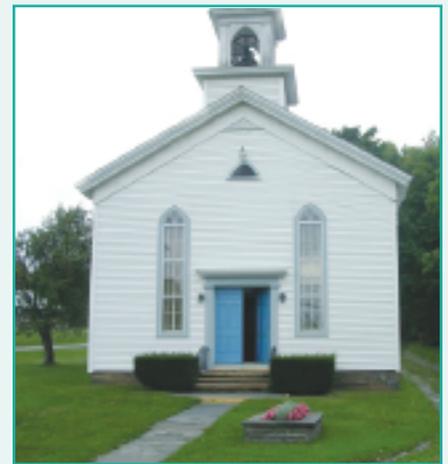
There's a new family in town! It is Families Together in Albany County in the heart of the Helderbergs, located on Main Street, East Berne. Our Family Center will be staffed by three local parents of special needs children including myself. I would like to introduce Amy Anderson and Marybeth Peterson as the other two Parent Advisors. As advisors, we will provide emotional support, educational opportunities, professional resources and referrals to other needed services. We are very excited for this opportunity to serve our own community here in the Hilltowns.

Our Family Center will reach out to the community. We want our Family Center to be a home away from home. All of our goals and accomplishments will be driven by the community. We have formed a steering committee comprised of local residents. This steering committee will be an integral component to our decision process.

A partnership between Families Together, school and families in the community will be formed so that children can function better at home, school and in the community. Thus, the family and child will be the focus of our Family Center in the Hilltowns.

"The Family Center will have a vital role in the community," said Linda Berquist, teacher/administrator from the Berne – Knox – Westerlo Central Schools. "The Family Center will not be isolated from the school, but be in partnership with the school, sharing resources in order to create a network for emotional and educational support. This network of support will help move all resources under one umbrella to strengthen families," said Berquist.

We will have the office up and running by mid Fall so feel free to stop by and see what we are all about.



St. John's Lutheran Church on 96 Main St,
East Berne, NY 12059

The Colonie Family Center: Services for Albany County Suburban Residents

We are thrilled to report that the Outreach Center at 1639 Central Avenue, located in front of the new Village of Colonie Family Recreation Center, will be home for our Colonie Family Center. The completely refurbished Outreach Center will provide families with a warm, safe and friendly environment. This past September, Project Director Moira Manning, LCSW and Co-Project Director Linda G. Stewart finalized contract terms with the Village of Colonie Mayor, Frank Leak.



"I believe that the proposed use of the Outreach Center would bring an important and currently unavailable service to vulnerable youth and families within the Village community," said Mayor Leak. Susan Bredice, Colonie resident and parent of special needs children shares Mayor Leak's vision for the Outreach Center. "This Family Resource Center is a service that has been long needed in Colonie. There are many families who do not know where to go or how to receive services for their children. This Family Center will help tremendously."

The Colonie Family Center, similar to our site in the Hilltowns, will be staffed by parents of children who have serious emotional, behavioral or developmental concerns. Susan Bredice believes staffing the Family Center with parents will be a benefit for those looking for assistance. "Families looking for help can feel more comfortable getting information from others who have been through the same thing. That is something I wish I had years ago."

Let Your Voice be Heard: The Evaluation Program

a major component of all systems of care is the evaluation. In keeping with the family-driven principles of the system of care, The Evaluation Team from the University at Albany's Center for Human Services Research will be seeking the input from families and youth on satisfaction with services, how services can be improved, and how families reach toward their goals.

"It is the voice of families and youth that will really help drive the direction that Families Together in Albany County takes over the next few years. The Evaluation Team is pleased to be a part of getting those voices heard," said LuAnn McCormick, Evaluation Team Leader from the Center for Human Services Research at SUNY Albany.

Families who have children with a diagnosis of serious emotional disturbance may be eligible to participate in this voluntary evaluation. If eligible, parents/caregivers and youth age 11-22 may participate in a series of confidential, in-person interviews with a trained interviewer from the Center over the course of three years. As a token of appreciation for this commitment, those who do participate will receive a gift card to a local merchant after each interview.

"The information that is collected from families and youth is so important at both the local and national level," added McCormick. "We're committed to sharing this information with the local community all along the way. The gift cards are one of the ways we show our appreciation to families for their commitment to the evaluation process."

There is an Evaluation Workgroup that helps guide the evaluation and will also help interpret results and make community presentations. If you are interested in learning more about the workgroup or the evaluation program, please contact LuAnn McCormick at lmccormi@pdp.albany.edu or 518.442.5731.

Linking Generations: The Across Ages Mentoring Program

By Kevin Brown

The Across Ages Mentoring Program will help at risk youth (aged 9-15) of co-occurring disorders across Albany County. Youth will be paired with older adults. This pairing will help both age groups by bridging the gap between the generations.

Rather than seeing young people and older adults as problems to be solved, we need to view them as resources to be tapped. Many older people are seeking opportunities to share their skills, knowledge and experiences with younger generations. They are an invaluable source of support for young people who need caring adults to guide and nurture them as they navigate the difficult course to adulthood. At the same time young people need opportunities to give of themselves. By working with older adults on community projects or by reaching out to those who may require assistance, young people develop important skills and meet real needs.

The Mentoring Program cannot be all that it can be – without you!

For more information on the Across Ages Mentoring Program, please contact Kevin at (518) 432-0333 ext. 24.



To get your own Strengthening Families wristband, call 518.432.0333 ext 23.

Coming Soon...

- Launch of the new Families Together in Albany County website
- Open House at the Hilltown & Colonie Family Centers
- City of Albany Family Center
- Albany County Youth Coordinator

Families Together in Albany County

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737 Madison Avenue

Albany, NY 12208

