

Island County Children's Commission
June 5, 2008 Meeting
Minutes

Members Present: Tomi Whalen, Kate Grossman, Mark Brown, Janice O'Mahony, Peggy Dyer, Margie Forbes, Rod Merrell, Bess Windecker-Nelson, Kristin Lasher, Hillary Mellish, Kristina Saunsaucie, Patty Page, Paty Williams, Carol Stillian, Keith Higman (Ex-Officio)

Members Absent: Colleen Bowles, Sandy Ziemer, Dave White, Cynthia Shelton, Fran McCarthy (all members who missed the meeting contacted staff regarding the necessity of their absence)

Guests: Patti Carroll, Director of Island County Public Health and Safety Network
Christina Urtasun, Foster Parent Recruiter/Liaison

Staff: Dan N. Bond

This meeting was opened by Vice-Chair, Carol Stillian at approximately 4:35 PM.

Following introductions/greetings, Carol offered the Opening Thought. She read two poems, the first regarding the importance of "early messages" about one's self worth, and the other about the value, even nobility, in helping others "just because you can". Janice O'Mahony will offer the Opening Thought at the July meeting.

Dan suggested a correction to the May minutes to include reference to Rod Merrell providing the Opening Thought "On Turning 10". Minutes of the May meeting were approved as corrected.

Committee Reports

Nominations/Development - No formal report at this time. It was suggested that recruitment for vacancies be done strategically, by geographic area, when possible. Dan mentioned that there has been preliminary discussion with an Oak Harbor School District Administrator to fill the current vacancy.

Public Relations – Hillary provided a handout (also sent electronically) of the work of the P.R. Committee. This work outlines Goals, Action Plans and Outcome Expectations in the areas of:

- Development of Children's Commission "Packets" containing business cards, brochures and key information.
- Publication of Crisis Resource Cards
- Web-site development
- ICCC Brochure development
- ICCC scheduled "open houses"
- Venues/plans for ICCC booths at events
- Attendance/representation at fall PTA events/meetings
- Parent Awareness events
- Development of ICCC Newsletter
- Development of ICCC Annual Report

There was also discussion of the Logo submitted by a 16 year old Camano Island youth, depicting the water between Camano Island and Whidbey in the shape of a child. The designer saw this as depicting the two islands coming together for children. Following discussion, there was a vote on this Logo and a majority decided that this would be the Commission Logo. Dan suggested the Tag Line, "Coming Together for Kids". This was also adopted by majority vote.

Dan passed out a contact list, the information from which will go onto Children's Commission members' business cards. Members were asked to correct the information and be sure they are comfortable with it before it goes on the cards. Dan continues to work on member packet development/assembly.

Presentation

Committee Reports were interrupted to welcome guest speakers, Patti Carroll, Executive Director of the Island County Public Health and Safety Network, and Christina Urtasun, Foster Parent Recruiter/Liaison.

Patti gave a brief history of the Network in Island County. Funds for the local Network come from the state-level Family Policy Council, through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The Island County Network has been in existence since 1997. The Network establishes priorities based upon assessment and funnels dollars to local efforts to address local needs. No direct services are provided by the Network. The current priority area being addressed is the Foster Care issue. The Network has concluded a 2-year study, or review of community efforts, regarding foster care in Island County. Identified needs are:

- More foster homes
- More respite foster homes
- Better support for existing foster families
- More emphasis upon relative placements
- Mental health services for children and youth

The next steps are to work toward support and retention of current foster parents, and recruitment of new foster homes.

Kristina has been a Foster Parent for 7 years. She now provides informal supports for other foster parents – 24/7. This support takes the form of finding ways for kids in care to access the services that are available and finding, or providing, respite care. There are apparently 47 foster homes in Island County.

It is agreed that the Children's Commission will look for ways to be supportive, rather than duplicative, of Network efforts regarding this issue. The specifics of such support have yet to be determined. More to come on this topic.

The next presentation before the Children's Commission will be on juvenile justice issues. Janice will collaborate with Mike Merringer, Juvenile Court Administrator, to prepare for a short presentation at the July 10th Children's Commission meeting.

Committee Reports (continued)

Data Committee – No report at this time.

Executive Committee – Carol and Dan explained that Don Cook has resigned from the Children's Commission for personal reasons. Don remains completely supportive of Children's Commission efforts. Whereas we will miss Don, it is clear that we need to adjust and move on.

It was then suggested that Carol move from Vice-Chair to Chair for the period of time until next February – at which time we will have elections of new officers. The Commission agreed to this plan. Carol then asked for a member to step forward to assume the vacant position of Vice-Chair. Janice O'Mahony stepped forward to unanimous approval from the membership. The Executive Committee is now comprised of : Carol Stillian – Chair, Janice O'Mahony - Vice-Chair, Tomi Whalen and Sandy Ziemer - members at-large, and Patti Williams - Liaison to the Board of Health. This will be the case at least until new elections in February of 2009.

Carol also suggested that we meet next as a full Commission on July 10th, because of the Holiday in July. This was agreed upon. She also announced that our next Executive Committee meeting is June 26th, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM in Oak Hall, Room 203, Skagit Valley College.

Dan reported that Janice O'Mahony gave the May 19th Children's Commission quarterly report to the Board of Health. She did an excellent job. Thanks to Janice for filling in for Paty Williams.

Study Group Reports

Secondary Group – Rod reported that this group has been working on Focus Groups of youth in middle and high schools county-wide. Of all districts, it has been difficult gaining access to Oak Harbor Schools. It is also a bad time of year to be approaching schools, as they have a lot going on. The secondary group has decided to hold off trying to do focus groups until September, and to put their attention on trying to refine their survey questionnaire. Additionally, a letter is being drafted to Building Principals in the various Districts regarding the intent of this project and to gain access to the school domain. There was a suggestion raised that questions be added to the survey instrument/questionnaire regarding adults who have been a positive influence on the youth respondent, shining a light upon the positive, or building on strengths rather than deficits. This group asked for a 15 minutes time slot on the July meeting agenda to report out results of the planned work.

Primary Group – Kristina reported out for this Study Group. The group is intending, at this point, to put their focus upon prevention and education for parents/caregivers. They are developing a brochure listing care options for children county-wide. They are also developing a safety checklist for use by parents/caregivers before leaving a child home alone. Their intent is to go to the PTAs to present their material. This group will have a more formal report at the August meeting.

0-5 Group – In the context of a presentation to the BOH by Bess and Karin Watson, scheduled for June 16th, the 0-5 Group deferred its presentation until next meeting. They

do recommend that The Children's Commission be a supporter of the Born Learning Trail, as requested by Carrie MacLachlan and Karin Watson at the May meeting. It was also announced that the Kids Art Celebration, discussed at a previous meeting, is going up for display this weekend. Members were encouraged to view it.

Announcements:

Dan related a request from Duane Gimbal, who works with the Drug Action Team (DAT), for a Children's Commissioner to sit on that Team and help with revising protocols for dealing with youth who are taken into custody from drug houses. Mark Brown sits on the DAT, and volunteered to represent the Commission in this regard. Any other Children's Commissioner who has interest in this work is encouraged to make contact with Duane or Mark and get involved.

Meeting evaluations were distributed.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:30 PM.