

Island County Children's Commission
May 1, 2008 Meeting
Minutes

Members present: Margie Forbes, Kristina Saunsaucie, Tomi Whalen, Sandy Ziemer, Kristin Lasher, Cynthia Shelton, Janice O'Mahony, Kate Grossman, Fran McCarthy, Hillary Mellish, Bess Windecker-Nelson, Rod Merrell, Paty Williams, Dave White, Carol Stillian

Members Absent: Patty Page, Colleen Bowls, Mark Brown, Peggy Dyer, Don Cook

Staff: Dan N. Bond

This meeting was opened by Vice-Chair, Carol Stillian at approximately 4:30 PM.

The opening thought was given by Rod Merrell who read a poem by Billy Collins entitled "On Turning Ten", concerning the thoughts, emotions and realizations of a boy turning ten years of age. The group enjoyed this reading and thanks were given to Rod. The Opening Thought for the June meeting will be given by Carol Stillian.

Carol welcomed guests Carrie McLachlan, Karin Watson and Keith Higman of the Health Department. Keith is the new Island County Health Department Director.

The first order of business was a request from Carrie and Karin that the Commission be a partner in the creation of a Born Learning Trail, a project to promote families and their children being more physically active. This would consist of being on record as a partner, being active in the placing of signs at strategic location on trails within the county, active collaboration with Karin, Whitney Webber, and the committee of the CHAB that is doing this project, and participating in the publicity around the project. The request received favorable consideration and it was decided that the 0-5 Study Group take up this request and bring a recommendation back to the full Commission at the June meeting.

Minutes of the April meeting were then approved as written.

Executive Committee Report

Carol reported that the Executive Committee met on April 21st. At that meeting, the topic of bringing in speakers to discuss key issues with the full Commission was discussed. Examples of potential speakers, garnered from the April full Commission meeting, are Victoria Santos, from the South Whidbey Learning and Community Engagement Program, Gail LaVassar, from Readiness to Learn (RTL), Patti Carroll, of the Public Health and Safety Network, and Mike Merringer, Juvenile Court Administrator. Carol asked for discussion and selection of the order in which the full Commission would like to hear from these people. It was decided that Patti Carroll might first be asked to join us to speak of the work of the Network regarding the foster care issue in this county. In rank order, then, Gail LaVassar would be the next person invited to speak, primarily of the homeless youth issue as it is understood through the work of RTL. Victoria Santos would then be the third person asked to address the Commission on an array of youth

issues on the south end of the Whidbey Island. It was suggested that it might be best to approach Mike Merringer strategically to speak to the Executive Committee, and/or perhaps with the full Commission, in a joint presentation with Janice O'Mahony, as Janice Chairs the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee at the state level.

This conversation generated a suggestion that we utilize the expertise around the table and ask our own Children's Commissioners to present on issues about which they have particular knowledge. Additionally, we have three Study Groups that are working to assess issues facing children and youth by age group (0-5, 6-11, 12-18). These Study Groups will be ready in the next couple of months to present to the full Commission on their deliberations and findings. Will there be time during the next few months' meetings to bring in speakers from the community of child serving agencies, and to hear from our own members and Study Groups? The Executive Committee will be discussing this topic within this month, before our next full Commission meeting. It was also suggested that it would be good to hear from "consumers" of services, to get something other than agency perspectives.

Carol also reported that the Executive Committee will be inviting Keith Higman, the new Health Department Director, to the next Executive Committee meeting, and to full Commission meetings as he has time to attend.

Carol also reported that the Executive Committee discussed holding "meet-and-Greet" events with youth serving agencies at 3 locations on Whidbey and on Camano. These would be to share information/network and get to know one another. The first of these might be at the Coupeville Recreation Hall on an evening in September, approximately 4-7 PM. We have begun to look at availability of the facility.

It was also discussed by the Executive Committee that we might try to have a table at as many school curriculum nights as possible in September and October. Paty Williams is the originator of this idea, and may be the one to direct our efforts in this regard.

Some evaluations submitted to the Executive Committee expressed concern for members who are missing meetings, that we are moving quickly and these members may be left behind. Sometimes it is unavoidable that a member must miss a meeting. In such cases, it was reiterated that it is important to contact an Executive Committee member, or the leader of your Study Group to catch up before the next meeting. Carol reminded members of the attendance expectations per the By-Laws – 3 meetings in a row, or 5 in a year. Dan passed out an Excel sheet that he uses to track attendance, so that all members can see at a glance how they are doing.

It was also reported that Paty will be giving the next update to the BOH on May 19th. It would be good to have a few Children's Commissioners in attendance.

Standing Committee Reports

Nominations/Development – No report at this time.

Public Relations – Sandy reported that the Logo Contest is not generating entries and we will give it a little more time in a couple of different venues, and then we may have local adult artists work on it. Soon we will have Children's Commissioner Packets, with our

Logo on the outside, and Fact Sheets, Business Cards, Crisis Cards, and other key information on the inside. These will be for Commissioners to carry with them to events that they attend in their part of the county, in order to spread the word about the Commission and to be identified locally as a Children's Commission contact.

Data Analysis – No report at this time.

Legislative Analysis/Advocacy – Don was not in attendance. No report at this time. It was decided that the Children's Commission should join the Children's Alliance as a member organization. Dan will follow up on this.

Study Group Updates

0-5 Group – Bess stated that there has not been a meeting of this Study Group since last full Commission meeting. She did have information to pass along, however.

1) The Partners in Island County for Early Learning (PICEL) recently received a grant through Born Learning, based upon the principle that early learning happens in everyday moments. This grant will support a local Children's Art Celebration in which 58 pieces of children's art are being framed and displayed along with information about the importance of early brain development and creativity.

2) PICEL also received a grant from the Department of Early Learning to support building collaborations with business and community leaders throughout the county in order to strengthen services and supports in early childhood.

3) Monies from the Department of Early Learning are also supporting a parent/kindergarten survey to determine what children are doing previous to kindergarten, how kids are learning, supports parents receive in parenting, etc. This lends to the "readiness to learn" issue. The survey is being implemented at kindergarten registration throughout the county.

4) On June 16th, 2008, Early Learning Partners of the Health Department are presenting a "State of Early Learning in Island County" report to the Board of Health. That will be at the BOH meeting at 1:15 PM that day.

Primary Group – No report at this time.

Secondary Group – Rod reported that this group met just previous to this full Commission meeting. They are planning focus groups of youth in Island County High Schools. They will go in teams of two Commissioners. Their focus group topic is to be that of "connection", to get at how connected youth feel to family, school and community. Connection, or lack of it, is seen as being at the root of many other problems that youth may have, and corresponds to what Risk and Protective Factor research and the Social Development Theory have to say. These survey results will be used to develop action plans to address identified needs.

Current Projects

Sandy and Tomi reported that the Teen Crisis Resources Cards have gone to print. The Sno-Isle Libraries are producing/printing these cards as a good faith community collaboration for kids. They will be available for the Youth Fair on May 10th, and for other strategic distribution. Dan will draft a letter of appreciation to the Sno-Isle Libraries for their kind support.

The Healthy Youth Fair is happening on the 10th, and this Commission will have a booth there. Hillary, Rod, Sandy, Tomi, Dan and perhaps others will be there to person this booth. We will have tri-fold Children's Commission flyers, Crisis Cards, Logo Contest Flyers, and perhaps a teen survey at the booth, as well as a fun game to draw in youth. Additionally, we will have a booth at the Camano Island Youth Arts Festival on the 17th. Carol and Colleen will be there to work the booth.

Housekeeping

Dan did not bring evaluation forms, so members will receive an email request to comment on how this meeting met the needs of members.

Time for this meeting came to a close. Adjourned at 6:30 PM