Update From Commission Chair

In this edition we celebrate the Washington County Commission on Children and Families’ recent successes and look forward to the rewarding work of the new year.

We are nearing the end of our year-long Community Comprehensive Planning process.

In November nearly 100 community members gathered to share their thoughts and concerns around youth development, parenting and family support issues, school readiness and access to health care.

Additional public meetings are scheduled in January and February and I encourage you to participate as we further identify Washington County’s needs and develop strategies to address them.

Please call Pam Bainbridge-Cowan at 503-846-4539 for date, time, and location information for these meetings.

We also continue our work to establish School-Based Health Centers throughout Washington County.

This exciting initiative includes all seven Washington County school districts, the NW Regional Education Service District, Vision Action Network, Washington County Mental and Public Health, Kaiser Permanente, Legacy Meridian Park Hospital, Providence Health System, Tuality Hospital, Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center, LifeWorks NW, Tuality Hospital, Pacific University, and the Commission.

We anticipate the school-based health center at Tigard High School will open by early March.

To date, the Commission on Children and Families has raised some $750,000 in grants to support these efforts.

Of course we could not accomplish this work alone, and wish to convey a huge THANK YOU! to our community partners.

You have worked diligently with us this year to create many improvements benefiting our children and families!

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Washington County is how our citizens, social service providers, health providers, mental health providers, school district administrators, law enforcement agencies, juvenile justice workers, religious organizations, and others who work with children come together to solve problems. Kudos to all.

In 2008, we hope to continue to develop new friends and partners throughout the county.

Together, we will carry forward our efforts in building the infrastructure of basic needs and essential services for our children and families.

Please join us; our meetings are open to everyone, and are listed on the last page of this newsletter. If you have questions or would like to volunteer, please don’t hesitate to call.
With the Community Breakfast in March, 2006 the Commission on Children and Families launched the planning process for the 2008-2014 Comprehensive Community Plan for Children and Families.

In spite of a surprise snow storm that led to many cancellations of school and other community events that day, more than 70 people, representing a wide range of stakeholders, attended.

Those attendees: school personnel, law enforcement, juvenile justice, mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment, health care, early childhood, business and faith communities, elected officials and citizen advocates, said that while there had been significant progress in the county in building critical service and support systems, the next plan should build on the existing plan, working from the same vision and goals to continue to build infrastructure and capacity to improve conditions for children and families.

In the following months the Commission’s Strategies Committee met with over 250 individuals and organizations to develop the plan.

These groups shared their perspectives about the status of children, youth and families and their needs and issues; examined existing services and delivery systems; looked at which strategies would be effective in a variety of settings and communities to address concerns; and discussed how to strengthen the capacity of citizens, schools, and community organizations to support the positive development of all our children and families.

Community profiles of each of the major cities and towns and the county as a whole were developed and in November more than 80 people, representing a broad cross section and the diversity of the county, attended the Community Forum to look at the focus areas that had emerged from the process.

The four focus areas, in no particular order, were:
1) Expand access to and availability of, health care, mental health and substance abuse treatment.
2) Enhance and build parenting and family support systems.
3) Enhance and strengthen supports for youth to be successful in school and productively engaged during non-school hours.
4) Expand efforts to improve school readiness.

Two areas of focus were identified for immediate action and impact analysis. These were:
1) Increase awareness and utilization of existing programs and knowledge of how individuals can become involved.
2) Expand access and availability of health care, mental health and substance abuse treatment.

To view the community profiles visit: www.co.washington.or.us/ccf

The Comprehensive Community Plan for Children & Families in its entirety will soon be available on the same website.

Ways to Get Involved with the Summer Food Program!

The summer food program provides a free lunch (some sites offer breakfast too) for children 1-18 in low-income neighborhoods. Washington County has over 30 sites in Forest Grove, Hillsboro, Beaverton and Tigard.

How can you get involved?
• Participate in Washington County planning meetings beginning in January 2008
• Host activities at Summer Food sites to engage children in positive activities and increase participation
• Host a Summer Food site to distribute lunches to children in your community
• Donate arts & crafts supplies, sports & recreational equipment, games, activities, time and/or money to support Summer Food site activities

For more information on ways to get involved contact Sunny Ross at 503-846-8031 or send an email to sunny_ross@co.washington.or.us
Supporting First Step to Success

First Step to Success is a collaborative program designed to provide early intervention to children, from kindergarten through second grade, who are at-risk for failing in school, delinquency and potentially aggressive, destructive and even criminal behavior.

“The evidence is very clear that the sooner one intervenes with children who are on the wrong path the more likely it is that the efforts will succeed. By spending a few dollars when children enter school, you’ll avoid spending thousands later.” says Hill Walker, director of University of Oregon’s Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior and chief architect of First Step.

The First Step program costs $600 per child to implement compared to the many thousand dollars necessary to keep a youthful offender in jail for a year.

Program components are coordinated and delivered in both classroom and home settings by a "coach" who provides 50-60 hours of consultation to the participating student, his teachers and parents or caregivers over a 3 month period.

The Commission has supported the First Step program since 1997 after seeing results of the School Readiness Survey, which yielded a great deal of information about what children need in order to be ready for school.

One of the issues identified in the study was the need to increase transitional supports for children entering kindergarten. A significant number of kindergartners did not demonstrate appropriate social skills for school success.

The Commission currently provides funds to support Washington County teacher participation in First Step training.

Training is provided to K-2 and Head Start teachers as well as school counselors.

It has been documented that First Step to Success has long lasting effects of up to three years beyond the end of the intervention in reducing maladaptive and aggressive behavior and having a positive affect on engagement in academics.

In addition, teachers using First Step to Success express a high degree of satisfaction with the program, remarking that it is easy to learn and implement and has favorable results with their students.

For more information on the First Step to Success program in Washington County contact Pam Bainbridge-Cowan at 503-846-4539.

Integration of Mental Health and Schools

Beginning with an optimistic goal from the 2006 CCF retreat of having a mental health clinician in every school, the community has made huge strides in bridging the gap of mental health services and schools.

The first achievement was working with Forest Grove School District to do a needs assessment, which supported hiring a full time Mental Health Clinician for Forest Grove High School. The position was initially subsidized in part by County Mental Health and will be fully integrated into the district’s budget for the 08-09 school year. They have since increased capacity by hiring a half-time clinician for the middle school.

The next significant achievement was the award of a federal grant to increase the integration of mental health and schools county-wide, with full participation from all seven school districts and the NWRESD.

The Partnership for Student Success was developed through the grant and has provided training to over 1000 teachers, counselors and administrators countywide related to identification of mental illness and how to link students and families to resources for mental health treatment.

The Partnership has also enhanced collaboration and communication between schools and community mental health agencies in a variety of ways.

The Partnership for Student Success Leadership Council is continuing to guide the future of the initiative and looks toward continued opportunities to help all students be in school and ready to learn.
Coalition Building

One of the many activities the Commission on Children and Families engages in is coalition building. A coalition is a temporary alliance or partnering of groups in order to achieve a common purpose.

Some of the collations the commission is active in include: School-Based Health, Alcohol and Drug Prevention Coalitions in Beaverton, Hillsboro and Tigard/Tualatin, Early Childhood and many others.

The benefits of coalition building go beyond gaining increased influence around a particular issue. It may also strengthen the members internally, enabling them to be more effective in other arenas.

Benefits of coalition building may include:

• A coalition can bring more expertise and resources to bear on complex issues, where the technical or personnel resources of any one organization would not be sufficient.
• A coalition can develop new leaders. As experienced group leaders step forward to lead the coalition, openings are created for new leaders in the individual groups. The new, emerging leadership strengthens the groups and the coalition.
• A coalition will increase available resources. Not only will physical and financial resources be increased, but each group will gain access to the contacts, connections, and relationships established by other groups.
• The activities of a coalition are likely to receive more media attention than those of any individual organization.
• Involvement in a coalition means there are more people who have a better understanding of your issues and more people advocating for your side.

We invite you to join the Commission on Children and Families and to participate in coalition building and other activities to positively effect the lives of children and families.

Washington County
Population Growth

Counties with largest rates of growth in Oregon between 2000-2006.
1. Deschutes .........32%
2. Crook ............28%
3. Jefferson .......13%
4. Washington......12%

However...
The population of Washington County (500,000) is more than double the combined population (200,000) of the three counties with the highest growth rate.

Also...
The number of births in Washington County (47,302) between 2000-06 exceeded the combined growth rate of those 3 counties (44,992) *this includes birthrate & in migration.

Consider...
While we have the 4th largest growth rate, Washington County’s population is currently the second largest of Oregon’s 36 counties. it is predicted that within the next decade we will be home to the largest population in the State.

The Washington County
Commission on Children & Families meets
7:00 - 8:30 PM
January 10, February 14, March 13
Room 1411 E
Capital Center, 18640 NW Walker Rd.
Beaverton, 97006

CCF Contact Information
E: washcoccf@co.washington.or.us

Parenting Class Schedule
Washington County
Winter/Spring 2007-08
is now available on the Commission on Children & Families Website
www.co.washington.or.us/ccf
To add classes please contact Sunny Ross at sunny_ross@co.washington.or.us or 503-846-8031