

BFNC News, Summer/Fall 2002

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New Program Offers Direction for High School Dropouts

If you drop out of school and want to get your life back on track, who do you turn to? How do you complete your G.E.D.? How do you find work? And where can you find social supports for your family?

The BFNC will help answer these questions as a partner in the new **Life and Career Directions Program**. The program begins this month with collaborators People Inc. (lead agency) and Suburban Adult Services. It is funded by a \$260,287 grant from the Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board, through the Youth Opportunities program (YO Buffalo!). The goal is to give high school dropouts ages 14 to 21 academic and vocational counseling, job readiness training and placements, mentoring advice and other help towards finishing high school and starting careers. The staff of Career Directions will also offer each youth a range of related support services.

The young adults will come to BFNC first for entrance interviews, case management assessments, and enrollment into the YO Buffalo program. Case managers will link them to support services including housing, financial, or health assistance that will booster their success as they reenter school and/or work. Suburban Adult Services and People Inc. will be responsible for educational counseling, tutorial support and job placement services.

Yolanda Wood is directing BFNC's involvement in the program. Because this is the program's first year, she says the coalition wants to be open when marketing to young adults. "Although age and residency requirements exist, we don't want to rule out many folks," she said. "Even if one person may not be eligible, they can pass it on to a family member or friend."

Wood explained that the 250 youths accepted into the program must live in Federal Enterprise Communities — neighborhoods targeted by the City of Buffalo for education and quality-of-life improvements. They must also have dropped out of Buffalo Public Schools. The coalition will actively seek youths from special education or special needs programs. And Career Directions will work hard to help students whose first language may not be English to hurdle any language barriers to meaningful employment.

Since there will be youths of varying ages, the focus will be different for different age groups. Career Directions service teams will encourage 16 to 18-year-olds to complete a Regents diploma or G.E.D., and to look at further education or training. Coalition staffers will offer job development, paid and unpaid work experiences (internships), and job coaching for young adults 19 to 21.

Counselors with Life and Career Directions plan to make regular visits to Grover Cleveland, Seneca, Kensington, and South Park High Schools to do their advisement work. Life skills workshops will be spread out between the offices of BFNC, People Inc., Suburban Adult Services, the Father Belle Center and the JFK Center.

For more information about the program, please call Yolanda Wood at 842-0531. •

Business First Selects BFNC As "40 Under 40" Beneficiary

Business First, Western New York's business newspaper, has selected BFNC's Summer Fun Days program as the financial beneficiary of its 11th Annual "Forty Under Forty" Awards Luncheon. The event takes place on Thursday, November 7 at the Buffalo Convention Center.

The luncheon annually honors 40 professionals under the age of 40 for their career and community leadership. BFNC's summer program was nominated by a group of former 40 Under 40 winners.

Summer Fun Days provides safe, structured, and educationally-enriching supervision for 350-450 children each year. The day camp is located at Masten Playground, and specializes in serving children from low-income families.

Please show your support for the program and its 40 honorees. Tickets are priced at \$35 per person, and can be reserved by calling 854-5822. •

Annual Report Now Available

Printed and online copies of our 2001 annual report are now available. The report includes consumer stories, program narratives and a financial summary. For a personal copy, please call our public relations office at 852-5065. Online versions may be seen at www.bfnc.org. •

Thank You Summer Fun Days Friends!

Summer got a lot more fun for Buffalo's kids thanks to the efforts of some thoughtful neighbors and volunteers.

We offer our most sincere thanks to everyone who generously responded to our 2002 Summer Fun Days campaign letter, or who attended the June 21 Citibank

Summer "Soul"stice Happy Hour at D'Arcy McGee's Irish Pub. Together, your efforts raised \$11,000 to support activities, workshops and field trips this summer.

As of August 12, 360 participants were enrolled in the eight-week program. Families paid just \$2 per day per child for a full 10 hours of safe, structured supervision. Mornings were spent hard at work on math, reading and writing exercises. And in the afternoons, it was time for fun!

Favorite activities included Art Attack!, African storytelling, drill team, computer lessons, roller skating, and trips to the Buffalo Zoo, the Buffalo Museum of Science, and Martin's Fantasy Island.

We offer our additional thanks to the 2002 program's primary grant supporters — the **United Way of Buffalo & Erie County**, the **Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo**, the **Erie County Public Benefit grant program** and the **Buffalo Bills Youth Foundation** for ensuring our success! •

Memories Made at Day of Caring

On Wednesday, August 14, BFNC welcomed 50 United Way Day of Caring volunteers with open arms to its program sites. At Masten Playground, employees from **Praxair** led the children in games, field trips and exercises. Meanwhile, the **Erie County Sheriff's Department** landscaped flowerbeds at our licensed group homes, and the **Erie County Health Department** served breakfast at the Moot Senior Center. BFNC's Day Training program also got in on the act, with an activity fair hosted by **Upstate New York Transplant Services**. •

Summer "Soul"stice a Smash!

On Friday, June 21st, more than 225 guests stopped by D'Arcy McGee's Irish Pub to soak in soul music, conversation, and sweet potato pie at the Second Annual Summer "Soul"stice Happy Hour. Our deepest thanks are extended to all in attendance, lead sponsor Citibank, and the rest of our corporate and individual supporters. (See page 4 for a list of all sponsors.) Mark your calendars today for our third annual event, tentatively scheduled for June 20, 2003!

M&T Moot Senior Awards To Pay Tribute to Older Americans on Sept. 14

On **Saturday, September 14**, BFNC will honor some of the elders who helped put Buffalo on the map.

Approximately 250 seniors, BFNC staffers, and other Buffalo residents are expected to attend the 23rd Annual Moot Senior Center Awards Dinner to celebrate the achievements of 10 older adults. The seniors will be honored for their many contributions made in their careers, churches, families, and neighborhoods. Our thanks to the **M&T Charitable Foundation** for once again sponsoring the dinner this year.

The dinner begins at 2 p.m. at the New Golden Nugget, 2046 Fillmore Avenue in Buffalo. All proceeds will support the Moot Center's daily programming and operations. Don't miss this special afternoon! For tickets, or to make a contribution, please call Faye Fuller today at **882-4637**. •

Art for the Community's Heart: Artist Bill Cooper Brings Life to BFNC's Offices

Orange-skinned girls jump rope as thick as the gaps in their teeth. Elders proudly strut to church in summer-sky blue, and a man resembling Martin Luther King, Jr. sheds some light on the minds of the kids filling a bright yellow classroom.

If art is food for the soul, William Cooper's vibrant new mural on the side of BFNC's Moot Center can take a serious edge off one's spiritual hunger. But Buffalonians have been gazing (and grazing) on Cooper's creations for a long time.

Since his first showing at the African American Cultural Center in 1969, Cooper's paintings have traveled the Western Hemisphere, beyond just Western NY. His African-styled visions have appeared at Buffalo's Albright-Knox gallery, the African American National Art Competition in Atlanta, GA, the Niagara Artists' Company in St. Catherine's, Canada and the National Art Gallery in Accra, Ghana.

Cooper is also one of the core members of the Tri-Main Center's Buffalo Arts

Studio, where he teaches visual arts to youth. And to bring the arts even closer to the community, he has donated works to the Langston Hughes Center, and painted murals at Boys & Girls Clubs and BFNC sites.

Besides the mural on the side of the Moot Center (his third there in 12 years), Cooper's paintings spark conversations in BFNC's blue conference room at the Tri-Main Center. Clients and staff alike give compliments to the chef for making their living spaces so spiritually nutritious. •

Support Groups Engage Teens

Honest discussions on "real life" issues help students cope with everyday challenges

BAPPS hosted a parenting class for teen moms this summer on Monday afternoons at BFNC's Tri-Main office, and support group workshops on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Outreach workers also hosted Tuesday support groups at the Seneca-Babcock Community Center.

Besides making trips to the bowling alley or Darien Lake, teens got to talk about topics like rape, sexual harassment and puberty at the workshops.

At a recent Tuesday session, the teens at BAPPS' Summer Support Group got a little "male chauvinism-prevention" with their personal responsibility pep-talk. LaSonia Gidney, a guest speaker from Crisis Prevention Services, had to explain to one high schooler that a male biology teacher really *was* sexually harassing a female student by repeatedly referring to the size of her breasts during his human anatomy lecture.

"But if she ain't said anything about it, she must like it!" argued one male participant. The group then discussed both sides of the issue, and learned about the legal definitions of harassment.

BAPPS case manager Naomi Deas says the main goal is "to get these kids through high school without getting pregnant, and if they *do* get pregnant, to keep them from getting pregnant again."

Patricia Carter, her partner at the Seneca-Babcock workshops, added that

programs like BAPPS work best when counselors can catch students early, before they get sucked into high school popularity contests and self-esteem issues. Carter is proud that, out of 65 freshmen in her South Park High School support group last year, only one girl became pregnant (1.5%) — a percentage much lower than the national statistic of nine percent for girls ages 15 to 19 (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy). •

Consumer Profile

2002 Grad Looks to a Brighter Future

Gary may have had some rough times with his family over the last year, but that didn't mean he couldn't drop a tear when his recruiter came to take him to boot camp.

"He's had more than a plateful of things in his life that haven't gone down too good," said Dan Ferloin, describing his 19-year-old stepson's departure for basic training in Ft. Knox, Kentucky. "But I said, 'Gary, this is a good idea, a new beginning and a new life for you.'"

In September of 2001, Gary found himself in free-fall after his parents threw him out of the house following an argument. Once his Junior ROTC advisors at South Park High School referred him to BFNC, BAPPS staffers helped restore some stability to his life.

Case manager Patrice Carter watched over Gary. She arranged for him to receive the free lunch program, and bus tokens to get from school to his temporary home. Carter even solicited coats, clothing and bedding for the teenager from other BFNC staffers.

Gary still ran into trouble at South Park, and was forced to transfer to the night school program at Bennett High School. But Carter and the ROTC recruiters from South Park gave him as much encouragement as they could to push him through to graduation.

And he made it! After crossing Bennett's stage on June 26, Gary decided to enlist in the Army. But before departing on July 10, he surprised his mother and his new stepfather by marrying his high school sweetheart.

Now Gary sees his future in the military, or in a later career in the building trades. "He's really, *really* looking forward to it," said Ferloin. •

Abstinence Education: What Have We Learned?

FACES Program Completes 5 Year Contract. Study Sheds Light on Outcomes.

Can abstinence education programs make a difference in a sex-saturated culture? Or are they a waste of taxpayers' dollars?

It's a topic that has received a lot of press coverage. And one that has received renewed attention under the Bush presidency. But while the country has been divided on the debate, scores of programs have been quietly going about their work, bringing a variety of messages to America's children.

FACES' History & New Research

In Buffalo, BFNC has been active in early abstinence education. The Family Abstinence Comprehensive Educational Services program began a five-year program in 1998, armed with a \$191,634 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. At the time, "FACES" was one of only 44 similar programs under the department's sponsorship.

This September marks the end of the pilot grant, and the results are in.

Professor Henry J. Durand, Ph.D., of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work, has completed a pre-test/post-test study of FACES' 2000-2001 program. The initial survey was administered to 686 5th and 6th grade Buffalo Public School students. Most of the students had been exposed previously to at least one risk-avoidance program such as DARE while only 92 students had no prior training. The post-FACES survey was completed by 204 students who had participated in the "Managing Pressures Before Marriage" curriculum, alone, or in combination with the DARE risk aversion training.

Repeated Exposures are Key

Durand found that among students with no previous training, there were only

minimal changes in their attitudes. Among students who had been exposed to more than one risk-avoidance training, however, Durand noted a significant increase in positive responses.

"What it tells us is that, while short-term abstinence education programs, on their own, may have a minimal impact on knowledge, beliefs and decisions, the impact can be magnified significantly by repeated exposures to similar messages," said Ellen Trautman, BFNC's BAPPS/FACES Project Director.

Large Percentage See Sex as "Acceptable" for their Age

One astounding outcome that surfaced from the study was that 17 percent of 5th and 6th graders felt that sexual intimacy was acceptable behavior among their age group. Sadly enough, these young people also indicated that they acquired more sexual awareness from TV and other media than from their families as a whole or from their church communities. These factors highlight that these young people are at high risk and demonstrate the need for adults to clarify their own values to their children.

Over five years, 16,932 children graduated from the six-session FACES program (and seventh booster session). Although the contract for the program has not been renewed for the coming year, the agency plans to seek new funding streams to continue its work in the field. •

Fruitbelt Study Undertaken by BFNC & Citigroup

As the nearest neighbor to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and its evolving Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics, the "Fruitbelt" sits at the heart of one of the area's biggest economic investments in history. But how much do residents know about the Center? What are their feelings about their current quality of life? And what services do they feel the neighborhood is most in need of in 2002 and beyond?

Thanks to a \$5,000 grant from Citigroup, BFNC is about to find out. The grant was awarded through the **Citigroup Summer Internship program** to study residents' perceptions of their neighborhood's assets and needs. Gregory Giles, a graduate planning student at UB, has been hired to complete the project.

The door-to-door meetings with neighbors are also hoped to increase awareness of current social services available through BFNC and other community agencies. •

Officers Elected at Annual Meeting

The BFNC Board of Directors installed six officers, and inducted one new member at its Annual Meeting, held on June 25 at the agency's new Tri-Main Center office.

Elected for the July 2002-2003 term were **Daryl Rasuli** (Niagara Frontier Transportaion Authority), president; **Vergie Mingo** (Buffalo Psychiatric Center), vice president; **James Morrell** (Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority), vice president; **Joseph Eicheldinger** (Citigroup), assistant treasurer; **Herbert Cadle** (University at Buffalo), secretary, and **Lawrence Shulman, Ed.D.**(UB School of Social Work), assistant secretary.

Jerry McGrier, Sr., Assistant County Attorney in the Erie County Attorney's Office, was newly named to the board. McGrier brings valuable legal expertise and community organizing experience to the agency. He has served as Chair of the Humboldt YMCA's Board of Managers, is a founding member of Grace Manor, and currently serves on the board of the Community Action Information Center.

Thank you to all our volunteers for their continued leadership! •

Thank you for reading this issue of *BFNC News*. If you would like a printed copy mailed to you, please call the public relations office at 852-5065, or e-mail jcsenall@bfnc.org.