

# COMMUNITY ALLIANCE OF SARASOTA COUNTY

*“Partnering Assets Together for Human Services”*

Health and Human Services, 2200 Ringling Blvd.

January 26, 2009

## Meeting Summary

### STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ken Alexander	Sarasota Memorial Hospital
Dave Beesley	First Step of Sarasota
Karen Bogues	Community Youth Development
Dorothy Carlin	Young Professionals Group
Rose Chapman	Jewish Federation of Sarasota and Manatee Counties
James Duplantier	Friendship Volunteer Center (for Dennis Stover)
Carolyn Eagen	Mental Health Community Centers
Larry Eger	Public Defender - Twelfth Judicial Circuit
Len Gutoski	Department of Juvenile Justice (for Ginny Donovan)
Jennifer Highland	Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota County
Janet Kahn	Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County
Chief Terry Lewis	City of North Port
Bill Little	Sarasota County Health Department
Leslie Loveless	SunCoast Workforce Board
Erin McLeod	Senior Friendship Centers (for Bob Carter)
Janice Mee	SCOPE
Alana Monge	Twelfth Judicial Circuit
Bryan Pope	The Salvation Army
Mark Porter	Sarasota Family YMCA
Steve Queior	Sarasota Chamber of Commerce
Sherri Reynolds	School Health Advisory Council
Kathryn Shea	Florida Center for Child and Family Development
Brena Slater	Department of Children and Families – SunCoast Region
Stewart Stearns	Community Foundation of Sarasota County
Capt. Paul Sutton	City of Sarasota
Benny Weaver	Loveland Center
Karen Wilkinson	CHIP
Alex Young	United Way of Sarasota County

### STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:

Diane Andrews	Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County
Steve Brett	United Way of South Sarasota County
Kirstin Fulkerson	Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice
Sandy Gallagher	Catholic Charities
Kay Glasser	Community Planning
Stanley Godleski	Seniors Advisory Council
Sarah Hickey	Vocational Interagency Council
Ben Kunkel	Manasota 2-1-1

Curtis Lavarello	Sarasota Coalition on Substance Abuse (SCOSA)
Dale Lux	National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
Richard Martin	Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness
Capt. Richard Montemagno	Sarasota County Sheriff's Office
Diana Olivieri	St. Jude's Hispanic Center
Tom Pfaff	Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity (SURE)
Chief John Reed	City of Venice
Jerry Thompson	Coastal Behavioral Healthcare
Marjorie Tick	NAACP
Caroline Zucker	School Board of Sarasota County

#### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Sarabeth Kalajian	Sarasota County Library System
Andrea Kenzig	Sarasota County Library System
Bob Mahlborg	4 Generations Institute
Ed McBride	Safe Children Coalition
Kevin McKenney	Safe Children Coalition
Susan Magers	Sarasota County School Board
Sarah Pappas	Selby Foundation
Kameron Partridge	Easter Seals

#### **STAFF PRESENT:**

Wayne Applebee	Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Nancy DeLoach	Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Kathleen Marie Hall	Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Pam Meunier	Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Tammi Poswiatowsky	Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Chip Taylor	Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Pauline Tracy	Sarasota County Health and Human Services

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

The Community Alliance of Sarasota County met on January 26, 2009 at the Sarasota County Health Department, 2200 Ringling Blvd., Room 226, at 1:30 p.m.

#### **Appointments by the Nominating and Membership Committee**

Sherri Reynolds announced that Janet Kahn has agreed to Chair the Nominating and Membership Committee. Sherri noted that the Legislative Advocacy Committee Chair position is vacant and the committee is in need of additional members.

#### **Draft Revisions to Bylaws**

Pauline Tracy reported that there was a [draft](#) of the Bylaws in the members' packets for review.

***Stewart Stearns moved, Leslie Loveless seconded, to approve the revisions to the Bylaws dated January 12, 2009. The motion passed unanimously.***

Pauline noted that at the January 21 Community Alliance Executive Committee meeting members requested additional changes to the Bylaws:

- Change the name of the Planning and Outcomes Work Group to the “Planning and Outcomes Committee”
- Add a seat to the “Funder” category for the Selby Foundation.
- Combine paragraphs “A” and “B” on page 4 under “Vacancies”.
- Change the language in the first paragraph under the Developmental Disabilities Committee, the COAD, and the Planning and Outcomes Committee sections to read: “shall be comprised of no fewer than seven members”.

## **Committee and Work Group Updates**

### **Developmental Disabilities Committee**

Susan Magers reported that the January Developmental Disabilities Committee meeting discussions focused on:

- The composition of the committee and the vacant seats.
- The continuing dialogue with SCAT regarding capacity issues. The next step will be to create two work groups: *Transportation Model Work Group* and *Eligibility Component Work Group*.
- The continuing dialogue on the 18 – 30 year old age group, with the next step being to identify a volunteer from a local university to assist with collecting data.
- The “Aftercare” Survey results.

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Stakeholders’ Consortium**

Bill Little reported that there was a [monthly summary](#) in the members’ packet for review. Chip Taylor gave an update on the IDEAS “Tapestry” Initiative. The Disaster Assistance module is in place; the Manasota 2-1-1 database conversion will be completed by the end of April; and the HMIS linkage to the *Tapestry* software will hopefully be completed by July. Several work groups are working diligently on other *Tapestry* applications that could be implemented into the system, including a transitional housing module, a disaster volunteer and donations module, and a case management module.

Staff recently appeared before the Board of County Commissioners to describe the progress of the system, the protocols for sharing information, and the master agreements. The Board endorsed the system and the use of the case management module that will be connected to the mortgage foreclosure program. Bill noted that *Tapestry* has the capacity to broaden the usage of the system into neighboring counties and staff is in the process of identifying a strategy to show the real potential of the system.

Pauline Tracy mentioned that Jon McKenzie recently met with Janet Kahn, Early Learning Coalition, to discuss the possibility of using *Tapestry* to map early childhood learning sites and to track which sites have vacancies.

### **Planning and Outcomes Work Group**

Karen Bagues reported that the work group has identified senior issues and positive youth development as the two most unrepresented areas in Sarasota County’s outcome targets. Six senior outcomes have been identified and they are hoping to include them in the FY 2010 report.

The current youth development outcomes that are being measured are substance abuse, school dropouts, and suspension rates. In reality, a true assessment has never been completed on youth development. On February 6, the Positive Youth Development Work Group will hold a workshop at the *Gulfcoast Event and Conference Center* to identify additional positive youth development measures. The full report will be presented at or before the March Steering Committee meeting for approval. Leslie Loveless noted that The Department of Labor has a three-year report full of data on the *Juvenile Defender Project* that is specific to improving academics and becoming work ready.

### **Impact of Budget Reductions**

Sherri Reynolds asked members to comment on the impacts to the community due to the budget reductions and the lack of funding:

- Coastal Behavioral Healthcare has experienced state reductions of \$130,000 for adult mental health and \$16,000 for children's mental health services.
- The Department of Children and Families has seen a 16% increase in the number of persons who are eligible for Medicaid. The Food Stamp rate has increased 51% since last year, with one out of ten households now on food stamps in the State of Florida. Sarasota County has the second highest percentage on Medicaid recipients in the state. The good news is that fewer children have been moved through the system this year. It was mentioned that there are approximately 20,000 consumers on the Medicaid Waiver statewide.
- Easter Seals had a loss in their Pre-K Pediatric Therapy Center; AmeriGroup Insurance will no longer serve Spanish-speaking clientele, and TRS (Medicaid billing company) has rejected one case after another on a daily basis due to basing child therapy sessions on an adult model (three-session limit). There is a definite lack of understanding on the needs of young children. Adults on Medicaid have been reassigned to different tiers and many can no longer afford to attend their day program.
- First Step of Sarasota had a direct impact from the special session including the loss of substance abuse jail diversion beds (total of 20). Overall, there has been a decline of private funding while the demand is hitting a high. People are being laid-off everywhere, programs are being cut or being consolidated, and there are fewer treatment resources available in the community. The reality is that even though the budget is being cut, the cost to the community will increase due to more people being placed in jail.
- The Florida Center has taken a \$350,000 cut in their current budget, along with a 4% cut from CMS. Many of their clients cannot pay their co-pays and 70% cannot pay anything at all. The bottom line is that mental health needs and waiting lists are increasing and families are suffering. It has been speculated that next year there will be an additional 4 to 10% across-the-board cut.
- The Healthy Start Program held back 4% in funding at the beginning of this fiscal year. It has been discovered that the program will actually only receive a 1.4% reduction in their funding and will receive a portion of this funding back.
- Jewish Family and Children's Services has seen the waiting lists and the demand of services increase to over 40 calls per day, with fewer staff handling these calls. Counseling requests have tripled; most callers are unable to pay for services.
- The Loveland Center had a 20% cut from Sarasota County, 7.2% in Medicaid Waiver funding, and another 10% cut in other sources of funding. Staff is presently surviving on operational funding only and has had to double up on assignments to keep services and programs running. Many students are no longer able to afford their programs.

- The Public Defenders Office staffing level has decreased by eight attorneys.
- Public Libraries are seeing the high impact firsthand, as staff is assisting many residents with the complex application process for assistance needs at the libraries. The recent Legislative Session cut their state funding by 23%, which resulted in reducing staff and relying heavily on volunteers.
- The Sarasota County Court System has experienced state funding cuts along with position layoffs, including all domestic violence case managers, half of the law clerks who assist the judges, and several administrative positions. Due to the high mortgage foreclosure rate, there has been an increase on the dockets which in turn has slowed down the system due to the layoffs. There has also been an increase in filing fees and clients are unable to file their cases.
- The Sarasota County Police Department's arrests have increased, but law enforcement, prosecutors, and state attorney staff positions have decreased.
- The Sarasota-Herald Tribune had staff reductions and is relying on student interns
- Senior Friendship Centers has seen an 18% increase in seniors seeking health care over the last 3 or 4 months. Last year the center experienced a 4% reduction in state funding and anticipates a 5% reduction this year. Over the last couple of years, the center has cut costs and expenses by reducing staff by 25%. The center was built on the backs of volunteers and they are trying to live by their own mission by building capacity in using volunteers as much as possible.
- The Suncoast Workforce Board has experienced cuts in funding over the last eight years. During the last few years, the Board has reduced facility costs by renegotiating leases or moving to other locations. There has been an elimination of one mobile unit and their client flow has tripled. There is an anticipation of an additional 4 to 10% reduction shortly, which will inevitably result in additional staff reductions.
- The Sarasota YMCA has announced the closing of the Transitional Living Program, Bowman Ranch, and the Character House. There is a great concern for the children involved in these programs and for the staff who will be laid-off.

Bill Little noted that he has been informed that the federal government will increase its share of the Medicaid costs from 54.5% to 68%, which will assist in bringing \$4 billion back into the state funding for medical services. This will be retroactive back to October 2008 and will be a way to stimulate the economy under Human Services. Steve Queior suggested having a member lobby for assistance in restoring some of the state cuts that are in effect.

A discussion ensued on the budget cuts and the idea of networking the Friendship Volunteer Center (FVC) with those unemployed, who could volunteer at one of the community agencies until a job is available. This could be a resource opportunity for agencies that are faced with a loss of staff and a way to keep people engaged through internships, work experience, and a chance to network into employment opportunities. Erin McLeod mentioned that this would be a good story for the newspapers.

Alex Young pointed out that the community does not want to hear about dollar cutbacks; this means nothing to them. The stories need to be personalized and specific by stating the number of families who are laid off or who will be out on the street if this or that program closes. Many have cut back to the bare minimum. This information needs to be shared with the community to show the impact. Members discussed a need for a plan to assist in a marketing strategy. Members concluded that a *Marketing Outreach Work Group* would be put in place and chaired by Erin McLeod. Erin volunteered to contact area TV stations and editors from the *Sarasota Herald-*

*Tribune.* Erin asked members to assist her in coordinating a series of agency stories. Karen Bogues, Stewart Stearns, Kathryn Shea, and Rose Chapman volunteered for this work group.

***Erin McLeod moved, Steve Queior seconded, to approve the creation of a Marketing Outreach Work Group to brainstorm on a series of agency stories that would include personalized and specific information from families, children, and seniors directly impacted by budget cuts within the community.***

It was also suggested that the foundations “loosen up” on their criteria for grants to keep existing services in place. Stewart Stearns stated that over the last year and a half, the Community Foundation has been assisting continued programs. Currently, it is a balancing act in trying to change the system that is not working. Stewart noted that the Community Foundation’s funding is currently down by 25% but on a national level foundations are down by 35%.

### **New Business**

Alex Young announced that the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) begins the first week of February. Alex distributed flyers to the members to assist in spreading the word. Alex noted that if Sarasota County residents take advantage of this service, it could generate \$9.6 million into their pockets. If only 200 families file returns, out of the 6,000 that could, this would generate \$360,000 back into their pockets. Alex asked the agencies around the table to drive the population to file.

Janice Mee distributed an *Invitation for Participation* on behalf of the Sarasota Partnership for Children’s Mental Health. This is their final plea to parents within the agencies to join one of the Partnership’s work groups. Janice asked agencies to contact the Partnership for further information.

### **Public Comment**

None

***The next Community Alliance Steering Committee meeting will be held on Monday, February 23 at 1:30 pm at the Health and Human Services Building, 2200 Ringling Blvd., Room 226—please note change of location.***