

**Mount Laurel Municipal Alliance Minutes
For April 14, 2009**

Alyse discussed “Pharming Parties”; you show up with drugs and that’s what gets you in. The kids put everything into a bowl and pull them out by color, shape, size, etc. She talked about kids selling drugs they stole from their grandmother’s medicine cabinet (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, etc.) and selling them as some other drug that gets snorted. This discussion was in regards to the Alliance senior citizen’s event; to teach grandparents how to keep their medication and grandkids safe. An interesting fact was added by our committee police representative that adults also take drugs from their parents.

Linda Cushing, from the Burlington County on Aging, was in attendance and briefly discussed her event at the Senior Center the day before the Alliances. About 75 people signed up and approximately 80% were Mount Laurel residents.

Julie from the library, she runs a teen program, said her group would be interested in working with the Alliance. They want to do a try it, before buy it approach. Julie said they have a lot of time in the summer and did not know how we could sell them on something specifically on drug and alcohol. She is confident building type things will work. During the summer there are usually 10-15 kids that show up once a month. On average twice that if there is some type of recreational event.

Lisa talked about setting up a table when the schools have skating events to talk with parents and provide information so they can talk with their kids about drugs and alcohol. She suggested that Marie would be able to provide us with the schedule of those events and where they occur. She also suggested that we split up and go out to the PTO meetings to present and let them know what is going on and how they could get involved.

The homework helper club, a program we would provide, is the responsibility of the teachers and union at Hartford School. Also, the Alliance can not duplicate an existing program. Therefore, that program will be withdrawn from our offering and budget.

Instead of planting tulips and giving out ribbons for Red Ribbon Week, the Mount Laurel School District representatives thought Life Skills would be a more effective replacement. Life Skills uses a moving and talking robot that interacts with students. It is an event that engages students and builds memories – connecting the message with the event.

I introduced the Challenger Day program for Lenape students. This is a program that was brought to my attention from Liza, the SAC counselor at Pemberton School District. It is a program for students to reveal personal information shared with a group of 100 students and faculty. It’s a way for teens to open their eyes and see their peers for who they are and not what they look like or any other attribute. After watching a 15 minute video, the committee was overwhelming in favor of supporting this program. It was suggested by Lisa that the students from Lenape could take this to Harrington. There was a question of support from the Lenape School District. There was a question about training program and the ability for faculty to carry the program back each year. There was also discussion

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on the high value of peer education programs for Lenape/Harrington. But there has been some communication break-down and politics in the past that caused problems. It was suggested that we work closely with Marie to avoid problems.

Lisa thought it was a great idea to get seniors and kids involved with each other. She said there are a lot of seniors with time on their hands and not sure what they can do. Lisa said we could help facilitate Pastor Person's program and bring groups together.

Alyse said the whole cross generation piece is valuable and we are losing it when we send our kids to this place called a "school house" and segregate students by age. Alyse thought the Challenge Day is a good program and hoped to get support from above – she would love to see the kids communicating, personalizing, coordinating and connecting. She also talked about clicks and the separations that exist and the importance of kids of different groups communicating (ethnic, social economic, smart, jocks, etc.). There use to be a program called "mix it up", where students have to sit at different places so there is integration, communication, coordination and the kids have to sit next to someone different who they don't normally sit and eat lunch with. Alyse says that in the past she was not supported by Lenape for this program. She said there are programs out there and would love to see them implemented in the school. She would like suggestions of getting that – support.

Julie's husband said if we try this program out and it is highly successful, we would win support from other schools.

Pastor Person joined our meeting toward the end of the meeting and discussed the Mount Laurel school mentoring program. He also talked about repair and additions. Someone asked if the mentoring program can be advertised on channel 19 – Lenape channel. Karen mentioned the Lenape newsletter as a vehicle to advertise the information. Lisa suggested reaching out to the PTO's of Mount Laurel and Lenape. Pastor Person said high school students would work well as mentors. He said the real problem is engaging people to ask them if they would do it and having the time. He suggested we need a force or a team that could help engage. Pastor Person said he has over 25 mentors now but does not go far when you have 5 or 6 in the school. Cindy suggested NHS (National Honors Society) and Alyse said they could do that. Alyse also suggested older students like BCC. She also suggested Peer Group Connection and Interact (Rotary Club). Lisa suggested having the school board and town council write a letter to employers with the need for volunteer mentors. Rob suggested the superintendent too. Chris said he would talk with the Mayor about writing a letter. Pastor Person said the school district took the mentoring video off the website – maybe because they ran out of room. Alyssa talked about the Holy Cross 20hr community service requirement for the senior year.

Alyse said she is working with a hopeless crew (students) and that the Challenge Day program would bring hope and optimism into kid's lives. She said we are losing our kids and doesn't know how we teach hope and optimism. Alyse said so many kids are seriously depressed, suicidal, cutting – self mutilation is up. Even the kids that are high performance going to college – their struggling and starving themselves and purging

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because there are so many pressures on our kids to do and be something – being who they are is not good enough. She is amazed about the number of kids trying to take care of siblings, get into college, figure out how they are going to get financial aid, sports, clubs and working. Lisa said we push kids from when they are young – kids don't get to be kids; by the time they are ten they are burned out. Alyse suggested that we have a lot of kids who can do algebra and geometry but they don't have a lot of internal skills. As an adult how do you know when you made a mistake, to make an apology; how do you know when to reach out and help someone to show empathy and compassion; that's social and emotional awareness, introspection, and insight? Cindy suggested that not only are there parent problems but teacher problems too. She says she hears about the teachers attacking the kids and the kids reaching out to her – sometimes the adults can't respond because you have to protect yourself. Alyse suggested that just because you're a good math teacher does not mean you have good social connecting.

Alyse suggested a contact list for the committee that includes people like Pastor Person so we can continue to discuss things.

Karen said she had volunteers among the parents and will give out 500 brochures at their required Lenape parent event. Chris asked if we are doing some sort of exercise, healthy choices, at the party. Karen said the party is emphasized as an alcohol free party. But if you start preaching to them they will tell the junior class "don't bother". They are more than jaded; as cynical as they get. We don't want to hammer them so it becomes a failure in the future. Most of the kids graduating now have been through the DARE program. Chris said he was only concerned with eligibility against the grant.

Cindy talked about the art program created by Marcy for Ethel Lawrence over the summer. Ethel Lawrence has a seven week program free for their families – Ethel Lawrence development children. Cindy has an education and sociology background to run it as an enrichment program. It is academics in the morning and science, fun, games in the afternoon. They have Prevention Plus come out and do workshops in the morning. The children have self-esteem and acceptance issues – they talk about themselves racially. Cindy and Marcy came up with the idea of Creating a "Positive Self – Portrait Program". This program meets many of the protective factors for drug prevention provided by John Kriger. It is a program for 1st grade to 7th grade kids. About 23 kids will be enrolled in the art class. It is a 14 hour program during the summer art instruction; one day per week for 3 ½ hours. Curriculum: day one portrait from all backgrounds, two skin tones, three community collage, community portrait on canvas and display the work at the library. Cindy suggested she could contact the newspapers for Alliance publicity.