

February 2011 E-Newsletter

From The Director, Joe Valentine:

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the development of rural communities across the country solved the problem of scarce resources when building community institutions by employing the practice of “barn raising”. With many hands working together, elaborate structures were created in relatively short periods of time. As resources for human services continue to shrink at all levels of government, public agencies and private non-profit community organizations are finding it increasingly important to work together in order to both develop new resources as well as choreograph existing human service programs so that duplication is reduced and coordination improved. The Department sees community based programs as an integral part of its publicly administered human service system of services, both extending their reach and improving their responsiveness to the needs of a diverse population.

Recently, I've had the opportunity to tour all of the “partner” child development centers that our Community Services Bureau contracts with for Head Start and state funded preschool services. What originally started out as an experimental model for our Head Start program has now grown into a large and diverse network of contracted child development centers. Of the 2,000 children now served by Community Services child development programs, fully half, over 1,000 children, are now served in our partner sites. Our newest partner for example, the *Dainty Center* in Brentwood, creatively combines early childhood education with environmental education and fosters in their children both a love for learning and a love for nature. For the center director, Adrienne Guinn, early childhood education is a labor of love. I saw this same devotion to quality early childhood education at all of our other partner sites as well, including centers operated by: First Baptist Church [our Head Start delegate], the West Contra Costa School District, Antioch Kids Club, Cambridge Community Center, Concord Child Care, Crossroads, Martinez Early Childhood Center, the Richmond College Prep Preschool, the YMCA programs including those at Richmond and Kennedy High Schools, and We Care Services for Children. Visitors to any of these centers will readily observe creative environments, innovative teaching methods, caring staff, and engaged children. We are proud of the evolution of these partnerships, and now see them as a core part of our early childhood education system. These partnerships have not only increased the number of children we can serve, but have also brought additional services and resources to the partners themselves.



From left: Community Services Interim Director Camilla Rand, Community Services Bureau Interim Division Manager Katherine Mason, Brentwood's Dainty Center Director Adrienne Guinn, recently retired Community Services Director Pat Stroh, and EHSD Director Joe Valentine

Extensive systems of agency partnerships characterize many of the other programs the Department administers as well. We invest over \$38 million in contracts with over 80 community based organizations, school districts and other local public agencies serving every population that the Department's public fund sources target.

However, as funding continues to get tighter, the need for these kinds of partnerships will increase – there simply won't be enough capacity in the publicly administered human service systems to meet even the most

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critical needs. Consequently, the Department and the Human Services Alliance have agreed to step up their efforts to work together in seeking funding that will support collaborative public/private efforts in order to provide critical services to those populations that have been the hardest hit from successive years of budget cutbacks. Some of the service areas that in particular need shoring up include seniors, families at risk of child abuse or neglect, and families attempting to lift themselves out of poverty. By working together in fund development, and being willing to create new types of service structures, I believe we can apply the time honored strategy of "barn raising" to turning the current crisis in funding into an opportunity to reinvigorate human services in Contra Costa County.

Joe Valentine, EHSD Director

Community Parenting Program Provides Much Needed Support

The Community Services Bureau supports the involvement of both parents in their children's educational experience that will ultimately help the children to reach their full potential. Regardless of living arrangements, it is our goal to include both parents to the maximum extent possible in the family partnership process and ongoing communication with the child's teacher. The goal of male involvement is to provide fathers and other significant males with opportunities to improve their lives so that they can improve the lives of their children. Activities and support for fathers and involved men are determined locally through communication with site or comprehensive services staff in a variety of ways.



Resources and referrals are offered that support fathers in different aspects of their lives including parenting/fathering, mental health services, employment/training opportunities, and child support services. Links to resources are provided based on the unique needs of each father. Additionally, learning opportunities and family strengthening activities are provided to those who wish to participate. CSB uses the 24/7 Dad curriculum which includes topics such as modern gender roles, communication with co-parents, child development, discipline and much more.

CSB partners with the Supporting Fathers' Involvement (SFI) Project which aims to positively increase fathers' involvement in the life of a child and the lives of their families. It combines the best thinking from UC Berkeley and Yale University on how to improve co-parent's relationships. Hiring well qualified staff from the community, the program's goal is to build on existing strengths within the family to improve relationships and increase children's success and well-being. Couples and co-parents who participate will benefit through: improved communication between the parents, co-parents, and caregivers around difficult issues of family life, couple relationships, parenting, managing finances, and other issues. The increased bond between the child and father or father figure, and an improved sense of partnership will provide the necessary tools to manage the many challenges of family life.

Contra Costa County

Aging & Adult Services

A Bureau of the Employment & Human Services Department

The Contra Costa County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) will be holding a public hearing on March 16, 2011 from 10:30 a.m. – noon regarding the Area Plan for services for 2011-12. This hearing will be held in the first floor conference room at 500 Ellinwood Way, Pleasant Hill, CA.

This Public Hearing will offer the opportunity to inform the public about proposed activities and to provide a forum for comments to the Contra Costa County AAA and the Contra Costa County Advisory Council on Aging regarding contracted services, Area Agency on Aging Direct Services, Program Development and Coordination (PD & C), administration and advocacy activities, outreach, area plan goals, community service areas and focal points, estimated number of seniors to be served, estimated units of service, adequate proportion for priority services, and the estimated grant allocation plan.

Copies of the Area Plan summary will be available at the hearing. If you wish to have a copy in advance, please contact the Area Agency on Aging at (925) 602-4172.

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