

THE NEXT FULL
COLLABORATIVE
MEETING WILL
BE:

Wednesday, Dec. 9

Renville Co. Office
Building; Olivia, MN

11:45 am to 1:45 pm

Cost: \$5.00

RSVP requested:

(320) 235-8938 or

Email:

shawna.steffen@
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Executive Board Elections

Executive Board elections will take place during the December Full Collaborative Meeting in Olivia. There are three Board terms expiring in 2009: a Social Services Director position currently held by Jerry Brustuen of Renville County; a Member-At-Large position currently held by Debi Brandt of Heartland Community Action Agency; and a Parent of a Child Diagnosed with SED (severe emotional disturbance) position, currently held by Becky Romosz. All of these current board members will be running for another term in their respective positions. In addition, Kelly Roschild is running for the position of a parent with a child diagnosed with SED. At our December Full Collaborative meeting, each candidate will introduce him/herself and their reason for running. We will also take nominations from the floor.

The Executive Board of PACT 4 Families sets the direction and focus for the collaborative and is important in the running of your collaborative. Please plan to attend the December meeting and vote for your choice of candidates.

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**The Chemical Health Coalition of Yellow
Medicine County wants to wish
everyone a safe and healthy
holiday season.**



Some tips for parents to keep kids alcohol free:

1. Take time every day to listen to your kids.
2. Be a good role model. Use alcohol moderately and don't drink and drive!
3. Talk early and often. Let your kids know what the rules are and repeat them often. Ask open-ended questions.
4. Be present in your kids' lives. Take an interest in their activities and friends.
5. Know where your kids are going and who they will be with at all times.
6. Teach your kids to choose their friends wisely.

Funds provided by MN Dept. of Human Services, ADAD and PACT 4 Families



"PACT 4 Families**Mission:**

"As a collaborative, we will work together to reduce duplication and provide a family-driven continuum of quality, innovative, and cost-effective services for children and their families. These services will be culturally sensitive and strength-based."

Director's Corner



Holiday Stress—A Perfect Solution

The holidays can be wonderful, but they also can be more like a comedy or even tragedy than a Hallmark card event. In doing research for this article, I found lists of do's and don'ts for holiday stresses and it is almost like making out Santa's list—checking who and what is naughty or nice. So instead of a laundry list of suggestions, I would like to focus on one stressor that perhaps defines stress—that is the expectation of perfection.

I remember the first Christmas I hosted for my husband's family—it was going to be perfect. I had a turkey roasting in the oven, an exquisitely prepared dining table with seasonal flowers, the house was impeccably clean and even the hint of evergreen was in the air. When everyone arrived I thought it was going to be a faultless occasion. I checked the turkey one more time and somehow spilled some juices in the bottom of the oven without knowing it. Within minutes billows of smoke came out of the oven, the smoke detector went off and the entire house became a choking environment. Everyone decided this would be a great time to take a walk while the house aired out. I stayed behind and cried while fighting the smoky intruder and my expectation of being the perfect hostess.

My experiences around this holiday event are not unlike those we often make at this time of year. We set ourselves up to be a shining example of a Christmas musical, placing expectations on ourselves

that are just not reasonable. Parents try to create experiences that are memorable for the entire family, but sometimes the added stress derails our most fervent hopes for connecting with loved ones and creating memories.

Most people dread the holidays because their inner experience is so different from what is being hyped. We don't trust our own instincts and put pressure on ourselves to make everyone around us astounded by our ability to not only be a perfect hostess but to create an event that is superlative in every way.

Of course, like preparing a perfect feast, our expectations are set so high we cannot possibly meet them. We lose sleep, become irritable, and make ourselves – at least temporarily – into someone nobody wants to spend time with. Ultimately we turn the event into something it was never intended to be – a mad scramble of gifts, food, and activities.

To conclude the story I started with, after the smoke-filled adventure, I took the turkey out of the oven and it was no worse for the wear, the rest of the meal was fine, but my image of the perfect family feast was forever tarnished...well, almost. That day I learned a critical lesson – my in-laws didn't care if the meal was perfect. When they returned from their walk, they were happy to enjoy my company more than my ideal dinner. Their expectation of a family gathering was just that – the family coming together to share their love, some sustenance and a day of our lives.

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression. Additional ways to cope with holiday stress can be found at www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress/MH00030. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you may find that you enjoy the holidays this year more than you thought possible.

*Debb Sheehan, Director
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Would you like to receive this newsletter in full color via email? Please contact Shawna at (320) 235-8938 or shawna.steffen@co.kandiyohi.mn.us to request your PACT 4 newsletter be delivered via email.

Yellow Medicine Co. Chemical Health Grant Update

What's on your to-do list this holiday season? Buy gifts, put up the tree, clean the house, make reservations, prepare the meal, etc. Although the holidays are often described as a time for happiness and joy, they can also be a time for an incredible amount of stress; financially, emotionally, and physically. Now is a good time to think about how you are going to deal with that stress.

Parents are a HUGE influence when it comes to their kids' behavior. They listen to what you say, and even more importantly, they watch what you do! Pay attention to the ways in which you handle the stress in your life. Have you ever come home from a rough day at work and said "I need a drink!"? Although seemingly harmless, it may be giving your children the idea that the best way to deal with a stressful situation is to use alcohol or another chemical to "cope". Do you have alcohol at EVERY family get-together? This may be telling your children that alcohol needs to be involved in order to have fun with family and friends.

- There are few simple ways to show your kids healthy ways to deal with stress this holiday season.
- Get enough rest and exercise. You will not only feel better, but your body will be better equipped to fight off illness.
- Plan ahead. Start holiday shopping early. Make lists before shopping to avoid having to make extra trips. Leave early and drive carefully to get to your destination on time.
- Have a positive attitude. Remember what the holidays are for: family, friends, and fun.

- Ensure there are activities for all age groups. Play games, sing songs, or volunteer. The focus should be on the holiday.
- Be flexible. Keep in mind that things don't always go as planned. If you expect the unexpected, you will be better able to "roll with the punches."
- Ask for help. There's no need to be a Super Hero and including others in the preparations will make them feel as if they contributed as well.
- Don't overextend yourself; physically or financially. Kids will remember the TIME you spent with them, not the toys they got!
- Talk with your kids. Let them know what to expect and what you expect of them.
- Be a good role model. Drink in moderation (if at all) and pledge to NOT drink and drive. The consequences may be serious!

The Chemical Health Coalition wants to remind everyone to have a safe and healthy Holiday Season.

Ann Orren, Coordinator; (320) 669-1460; annorren@frontiernet.net

Did you know almost three out of four children ages two to five spend at least part of their day in childcare?

As one of ten pilot programs around the state, PACT 4's Birth to Five Mental Health grant is working to develop an early childhood (birth to five years) mental health infrastructure to support children, their families and caregivers. The focus of the grant is to develop a referral system that targets childcare providers. Through them, we intend to identify at-risk children and connect their families to resources for early and appropriate intervention.

Within the past two months, we have met with childcare providers and preschools to understand the social-emotional needs of our children and families. Six focus groups were held throughout the four counties; participants were from Bird Island, Buffalo Lake, Danube, Granite Falls, Litchfield, Morton, Olivia, Porter, Raymond, Renville, Spicer and Willmar. The input at these sessions was very insightful and is being used to develop a training curriculum for childcare providers.

In tandem, we are strengthening existing partnerships and resources with Early Childhood programs in our schools, Head Start, Childcare

Birth to Five Mental Health Grant

Resource and Referral Network, United Way's GrowMobile and the Interagency Early Intervention Committees (IEIC) in Kandiyohi, Meeker, Renville and Yellow Medicine counties. We are connecting these organizations to county public health nurses and mental health professionals at Lutheran Social Services and Woodland Centers. To date, we have received referrals for almost a dozen children, helping their families and caregivers understand and support their individual social-emotional needs.

For more information about the referral system or available social-emotional screening tools, feel free to contact me.

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Kandiyohi County Community Circles

Kandiyohi County Community Circles is now providing Transition Circles. In the past, we have only offered Sentencing Circles as an alternative to the traditional court sentencing process. In June of this year the Steering Committee began discussing options for expanding our program.

This discussion led to Transition Circles for youth who have been placed out of the home because of illegal behavior and need help to return successfully to the community and refrain from further crime. Like Sentencing Circles, Transition Circles consist of community

volunteers, the youth, and their support person(s) – usually parents or other family members. The group meets on a regular basis to help the youth set goals, develop skills, increase competence, and learn how their behaviors impact the community. Any youth in need of extra support in returning to his/her home environment may be referred to a Transition Circle.

As a bonus, Transition Circles provide support to the families of the transitioning youth. Families are helped to connect to community resources, to know how to relate to and set

limits for the returning youth, and in setting goals for future success as a family. Transition Circles allow youth and their families to be active participants in addressing their own needs.

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21st Century Community Learning Center

RCW Program Update

Greetings from Renville County West! Our “Know Your World” (KYW) program continues to grow. As of last week we now have 38 participants in the elementary program and 24 in the high school program. Our programming days are on Tuesdays and Thursdays. At 3:00 students go outside or they go to the gym for unwinding; 3:15 is snack time and conversation; and 3:30 to 4:00 is homework time. The remaining hour is a fun activity planned around our unit of study for that month!

We launched this KYW year on September 5th. Our focus for the month was on science. Our topic of study was space exploration. The Exploradome from the Minnesota Planetarium was viewed by students in grades K-7. They

researched planets and chose one. Planet creations with paper mache’ made for a fun but messy family night. Both young and old got their hands dirty constructing their planets. Galaxies were visited with Power Point presentations followed by solar system artwork. Our space saga ended in an out of this world presentation at South West State University’s Planetarium.

November saw the introduction to acting and Readers Theater. Students were able to ham it up while improving reading fluency and expression in their various roles. Six groups of students performed six different plays complete with costumes and props. The finale to our reading unit was a trip to the Children’s theater in Minneapolis for an interesting version of “Cinderella”.

December is community service month. Students will be visiting the local nursing home where they will play bingo, read to, and visit with residents. Christmas cookies will be made and distributed to shut ins and soldiers abroad.

The New Year will welcome in more learning fun and exciting experiences in KYW. Do you “Know Your World”?

*Carrie Freiborg, RCW
“Know Your World” Coordinator*



Guía Program Update

Celebrating its first year of service in July, the Guía program has been able to provide many intervention services to Hispanic/Latino youth including individualized coaching, goal setting, the “Creating Lasting Family Connection” curriculum, and team planning.

Over the first year, the Guía program received 43 referrals from school systems, family services, treatment providers, and others (parent, Wraparound teams, self and Corrections). Out of the referrals received, 31 youth and their families participated in the program.

In the last quarter, 27 youth and their families received individualized coaching, which accounted for 428 contacts totaling 470 hours. The three largest amounts of contact hours fell in the scope of: planning and goal setting (115 hours), followed by relationship building/mentoring (111 hours) and education/vocation planning (87 hours).

Twenty-three youth were able to complete case plan goals over the last quarter. Youth were most successful in the areas of school

completion (some youth obtained credits and others graduated), social development (relationship improvements), positive community living, and obtaining substance abuse assessments.

During year one of the Guía grant, the program struggled tremendously with getting the “Creating Lasting Family Connections” curriculum started. The team felt that the content was excellent, but struggled to get youth and their parents together for implementation. The team has recently decided to implement the entire curriculum on an individual basis with both youth and their families.

Guía staff began co-keeping the first Talking Circle on September 23, along with the Restorative Justice Coordinator. One Wraparound team is currently meeting on an ongoing basis under the facilitation of the Wraparound Coordinator. We are expecting to expand these services this year.

Guía kicked off summer programming with a trip to the MN Zoo. The youth had been working hard meeting with their coaches, and were rewarded for their efforts

with this trip. The youth were also able to experience Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center. Our group learned about communication, cooperation, creative problem solving, and courage. Finally, Guía ended summer programming with a trip to the Science Museum. The youth were able to get a hands-on science learning experience.

Throughout the first year of the program, the Guía staff have learned many valuable experiences. We look forward to utilizing our experiences and knowledge to expand the program and provide exceptional services to the youth in our community.

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Full Collaborative Highlights-November

Heartland Community Action Agency Resources and Programs — The mission of Heartland Community Action Agency is to eliminate poverty and advocate for low-income families. Their services are available in Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville counties. Heartland serves 12,000 unduplicated persons on an annual basis. They are funded by federal, state, local, and foundation dollars and have over 100 employees. Most of their programs are income-eligible, and if anyone is interested in hearing more about one or several programs, they are more than willing to come present the information. Debi Brandt and a few of her program staff presented information on the following programs: Child Care Resource and Referral, Crisis Assistance Funds, Energy Assistance, Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM), Family Based Services, Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP), Food Support Outreach Program, Foreclosure Prevention Counseling, Head Start, Helping People Get There (Transportation Loan/Donation Program), Housing Counseling, Helping Us Grow (HUG), Minnesota Urban and Rural Homesteading Program (MURL), Outreach, Small Cities Development Program, SOAR Project (SSI/SSDI) Outreach, Access and Recovery, Threads of Hope (thrift store), Transitional Housing, and Weatherization.

Committee Reports:

Executive Board – Reviewed this year’s budget and everything is on track. The budget for 2010 was examined by line-item with the goal of retaining all staff at their current levels. The Chief Elected Officials Board met this morning and officially approved the budget. PACT 4 is working on a cultural response plan to retain culturally diverse staff and create a supportive environment for them. Debb Sheehan reviewed a legislative vision statement that was created and established with input from Rod Halverson. This came out of the Board retreat focus discussion of how to position ourselves legislatively. We now get **fourteen percent** of what we used to earn through LCTS funding only five years ago. Most of the changes that have been implemented in the time study have to do within our own Department of Human Services. Sharon Josephson, aide to Collin Peterson, is of the understanding that the department has overcompensated to avoid dealing with audits. Our four county commissioners will bring this vision statement to their county boards to have a resolution made. Debb urged everyone to feel comfortable using this one-page statement when meeting with local and state officials on how to support collaboratives. Amy Wilde, Meeker County Commissioner, added that school boards could also bring the resolution that the commissioners will be writing and perhaps take that to their own school board as well, to have them support this action. The bottom line is that if collaboratives “go away” throughout the State, services to children and families will be compromised, costs will increase as agencies no longer have a vehicle to come together to serve vulnerable populations, duplication of efforts will increase and preventive efforts will be minimized.

Adolescent Services – finished identifying new agenda items and discussed area programs for youth and putting that information on the website. The next meeting is December 9th.

Early Childhood – discussed sustainability regarding the Incredible Years and early childhood screening programs and continued a discussion from last month of the Birth to Five mental health grant and the referral process for it. The next meeting is December 9th.

Elementary/Middle School-Age – finalized the booth for the Brain Conference that will feature a poster made by students and other school connectedness information. A goal of finding ways to connect with kids during tough economic changes was set. The next meeting is December 9th.

Wraparound – started the meeting with success stories and the evolution of Wraparound in our communities. The committee looked at data from youth satisfaction surveys – five of them have been completed with a couple more coming up. The next meeting is December 9th.

Parent Advisory – has not yet met this month. The next meeting is November 9th and will have a potluck supper.

Grant Report:

Guía, which is Spanish for guide, is a chemical use intervention program for Hispanic/Latino youth, ages fourteen to twenty-two. To date, the program has received 43 referrals, most of which come from schools. Of the youth currently involved, 77% are from Kandiyohi County, 18% are from Renville County, and 5% are from Yellow Medicine County. Services will be expanding to Meeker County soon. The bulk of the work that staff do is one-on-one coaching. Time is spent on goal setting, relationship-building/mentoring, and working on educational/vocational activities. Twenty-three youth reached case plan goals in the first quarter of year two. Staff have started co-keeping a Talking Circle with the Restorative Justice Coordinator, and helped out with a Wraparound team run by the Wraparound Coordinator. This past summer, programming was implemented to keep the youth from getting into risky behaviors. Some activities included a trip to the Minnesota Zoo, Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center, DEMO, Inc., a writer’s workshop, and various outdoor activities at area parks. The end of summer brought a trip to the Science Museum. Moving forward, the program is expanding to serve youth who have experimented with the use of alcohol or other chemicals; are highly suspected of using chemicals; or have friends, siblings, or other family members that repeatedly use; not just those that have been using or are in treatment for their use.

DECEMBER				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
	1 ■ Executive Board; 11:30-2:00; #2055 ■ Bilingual RJ Circle; 4:30-6:00; Lakeland Ctr	2 ■ 21st CCLC Site Coordinators Mtg; 9:00-12:00; #2055	3	4
7 ■ Willmar RJ Circle #2; 5:30-7:00; Lakeland Ctr	8 ■ New London RJ Circle; 5:30-7:00; Peace Lutheran Church	9 ■ PACT 4 Comm. and Full Collaborative meetings-Renville Co Office Bldg; check website for details on committee times ■ Willmar Transition Circle; 5:30-7:30; Lakeland Ctr	10 ■ Restorative Justice Steering Comm; 12:00; The Oaks at Eagle Creek; Willmar ■ Willmar RJ Circle #3; 5:30-7:00; Lakeland Ctr	11
14 ■ Parent Advisory Mtg; 5:30-7:30; YMCA	15 ■ Bilingual RJ Circle; 4:30-6:00; Lakeland Ctr	16 ■ PACT 4 All-Staff Mtg; 8:30-12:00; MPR— OFFICE CLOSED	17	18
21 ■ Willmar RJ Circle #2; 5:30-7:00; Lakeland Ctr	22 ■ New London RJ Circle; 5:30-7:00; Peace Lutheran Church	23 ■ Willmar Transition Circle; 5:30-7:30; Lakeland Ctr	24 Christmas Eve; PACT 4 office closes at noon	25 Christmas; PACT 4 office closed
28	29	30	31	1 New Year's Day; office closed

JANUARY				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
4 ■ Willmar RJ Circle #2; 5:30-7:00; Lakeland Ctr	5 ■ Executive Board; 11:30-2:00; #2055 ■ Bilingual RJ Circle; 4:30-6:00; Lakeland Ctr	6	7	8 ■ Wraparound Orientation; 8:00-1:00; #2055
11 ■ Parent Advisory Mtg; 5:30-7:30; YMCA	12 ■ New London RJ Circle; 5:30-7:00; Peace Lutheran Church	13 ■ PACT 4 Comm. and Full Collaborative meetings-KCHHSB; check website for details on committee times ■ Willmar Transition Circle; 5:30-7:30; Lakeland Ctr	14 ■ Restorative Justice Steering Comm; 12:00; The Oaks at Eagle Creek; Willmar ■ Willmar RJ Circle #3; 5:30-7:00; Lakeland Ctr	15
18 Martin Luther King Jr Day—office closed	19 ■ Bilingual RJ Circle; 4:30-6:00; Lakeland Ctr	20 ■ PACT 4 All-Staff Retreat; OFFICE CLOSED	21	22 ■ 21st CCLC Training—U of MN Extension/Youth Work Institute
25	26 ■ New London RJ Circle; 5:30-7:00; Peace Lutheran Church	27 ■ Willmar RJ Transition Circle; 5:30-7:30; Lakeland Ctr	28 ■ Willmar RJ Circle #3; 5:30-7:00; Lakeland Ctr	29

2009 Executive Board

Arliss Stenger, Parent-Meeker Co. (Vice Chair)
Serves through 2010—3rd Term
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Serves through 2009—1st Term
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George Dubie, Greater MN Family Svcs. (Chair)
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Greg Schmidt, MACCRAY School Dst.
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If you have any questions regarding the content of this newsletter or would like to be included on the mailing list, please call (320) 231-7030.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED