

Health Advisory Council Meeting

September 27th, 7pm

Health Conference room 106C

Minutes

In attendance: Asa Fanelli, Matt Stafford, Aric Parnes, Brenda Pring, Deborah Youngblood

Visiting non-members: Michelle Drolsbaugh, Murali Vemula

Initiative Updates:

- a. Mayors Summer Internship Program
 - i. Over 210 applicants. Accepted 100 students. 94 students completed the program
 - ii. 37 businesses/organizations offered 51 placements
 - iii. 47 students from NNHS, 39 from NSHS, 5 private schools and 3 middle school students participated
 - iv. 69% of businesses were in the STEM fields

- b. Community Connections MRC initiative
 - i. Recruiting new volunteers for Medical Reserve Corps to be HHS community ambassadors sharing information about HHS initiatives in the community

- c. Badges and Ball event
 - i. Friday October 13th, 4:30 – 6:30 Newton Centre Playground. The goal of the event is to promote dialogue and positive engagement between law enforcement and young people.

d. Social media, smartphones and adolescents

- i. Following the recommendation from HHS council member Lisa Terrizi, the HHS department will be participating in a joint committee with the school department developing guidelines for parents and schools around the use of smartphones specifically.

Group Discussions:

PATH event (Gather for Hope):

Event on 11/16 designed to offer support and community building for people struggling with a loved one's addiction.

Group discussion question: How can we make Newton a place where people feel safe and comfortable acknowledging challenges in their lives around addiction?

Ideas from the group:

- Make the issue more visible through banners, perhaps window decals in businesses, resource posters in businesses (think restroom posters on DV)
- Create designated “safe spaces” where people know it’s ok to acknowledge the issue without fear of judgment or stigma
- Develop events such as races or walks where people can fundraise and create recognition in walking in support of someone’s recovery
- Make Narcan (overdose reversal drug) more widely available – consider a voucher program for free distribution

- Develop a letter writing campaign for the TAB or other media site for people to share their stories and encourage more open dialogue.
- More forums for people to come together, share their stories and find others to identify with.

Early Education

Preschool Fair hosted at Newton South High School on October 28th from 10-2. Designed to assist parents in learning about various preschool options in Newton in one easy to access location. HHS staff will be on hand to help answer questions and reinforce the importance of preschool attendance for positive outcomes for young people.

Discussion Question: Is access to and affordability of preschool a significant issue in Newton that needs to be addressed?

- Very significant issue
- Extremely difficult even for two working parents to be able to afford
- Not enough FT slots making it difficult for working parents and often requiring that they pay for both preschool and an additional caregiver to cover working hours.
- Not having full day kindergarten is also a significant issue that needs to be addressed both in terms of academic success for students and in terms of the scheduling needs of parents
- “Early release” school days, lack of consistent after school options for all ages, inconsistent school end times all speak to a lack of planning that takes into consideration the overall needs of families and assumes that the most well resourced will be able to effectively manage their kids needs effectively while others will struggle.

- Overall belief that this is an important issue that needs to be addressed in the community.