

# NEWSLETTER

Coalition News

Vol V, #8

**Coalition Coordinator** : Al Bashevkin 664-4511 x519; 802 442-5200.

**Coalition Address** : NASC Box 9075 North Adams, MA 01247

The Northern Berkshire Health and Human Services Coalition is supported by the Berkshire Area Health Education Center with funding from UMASS Medical School. The Coalition is hosted by North Adams State College.

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April 1991  
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April Coalition Meeting

**First Baptist Church of North Adams 131 Main St No Adams**  
Please Enter via Eagle St Entrance

Friday April 12th 10:00 AM to Noon

Meeting Agenda

- I. Welcome
  
- II. Introduction of Participants : **Who's here today**
  
- III. What's Happening : **Announcements by Coalition Membership of interest to all**
  
- IV. Coalition Topic : **Franchising the Disenfranchised : *As information about the growing gap between social classes becomes clearer, Coalitioners will discuss the ways and means of bridging our social classes.***
  
- V. Other Business
  
- VI. Adjournment and Conclusion

**Coalition News** is the newsletter of the Northern Berkshire Health and Human Services Coalition. Its function is to keep the mailing list informed of what's happening around the Northern Berkshire area. It's a service to the entire COALITION membership and friends (over 280 at this point). Announcements submitted to the newsletter will reach our entire mailing list. So, take advantage of this unique, free mechanism for informing our membership of news important to all. Please submit these announcements to Al Bashevkin, Coalition Coordinator, P.O. Box 1417, Bennington, VT 05201. For insertion into the May newsletter, your announcements should reach Al Bashevkin by April 25th.

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## **What 's Happening !**

- March's Events

### **February Meeting**

March's Coalition meeting featured a discussion with State Senator Jane Swift and State Representative Shaun Kelly about the state of the state. The meeting was attended by over sixty Coalitioners and on top of that, two social services classes at the Conte Middle School observed and watched democracy in action. Needless to say, our meeting space at the Baptist Church was packed.

Education, local aid, and health and human services did not fare well in the Governor's budget. Coalitioners are concerned for the future. Senator Swift and Representative Kelly were elected on platforms that stated that the next years of state government were not going to be growth years, and by stating that the tax on business services should be repealed.

The meeting touched on many issues. Coalitioners expressed concern about the repeal of the tax on services that both Senator Swift and Representative Kelly worked for. Questions were asked about where the loss in revenues from the tax on services would come from, but there were no clear answers. The legislators both felt that the tax on services was bad for state business and would be a detriment to the Commonwealth in the long run. There was discussion about taxes and the plight that local schools are experiencing. In the last ten years, the State has helped local towns make up lost revenues due to prop 2 1/2 through local aid. The state is cutting back on local aid, and the questions pops up, "Who will pay for our schools?" There was debate about the issue of the future of education, particularly poignant with school children present. Another theme of the meeting was the need to include the service providers, consumers, and other professionals in statewide committees that are planning for statewide budget cuts. Lastly, Coalitioners are concerned by what they see as a centralization of services.

It will be Northern Berkshire that will have the most to lose as statewide decisions about health and human services are made far away from Northern Berkshire and with little input from the area.

It was a difficult meeting. It's timing, shortly after the Governor's budget was released, saw our legislators defending the Governor's budget while Coalitioners had grave concerns about its social costs. Yet, it was an honest discussion, and everyone had an opportunity to state their views. These forums, allowing for interchanges in viewpoints are what democracy is about and are important for Coalitioners and community members to continue to support. Our thanks go to Senator Swift (who was fighting a horrendous cold) and Representative Kelly who both attended the meeting after working until the wee hours the night before in Boston, and also to the Coalitioners who through their honest participation helped the meeting move forward. We all look forward to seeing our legislators continue their work with health and human services in the area.

### **Government Transition Information**

Remember to work with our local legislators. Decisions are made daily in Boston that will affect the quality of life for Northern Berkshire residents. We must let them know, as voters and citizens, how we feel.

Rep Dan Bosley	-	3 Elmwood Ave	North Adams	01247	663-7486
Rep Shaun Kelly	-	30 Florence St	Dalton	01226	684-4418
Sen Jane Swift	-	8 Bank Row	Pittsfield	01201	442-5240

### **Task Force about Volunteerism**

The Task Force on Volunteerism will have its **Volunteer Fair** at the Concourse, 85 Main Street in North Adams, on **April 25**. There will be tables at the Concourse from 11 AM to 2 PM. Presently, there are about a dozen organizations that will be part of the Volunteer Fair. There will be a final planning meeting for participants at the Volunteer Fair, Friday, April 5 at 9:30 AM at the office of AdLib, 85 Main St, North Adams. If you haven't signed up yet to be part of the Fair, this meeting is your last chance. Whether you're participating or not, come on out to the Fair on April 25 to help celebrate our volunteers.

### **Neighborhood Focussing**

The River/Hall/Bracewell Neighborhood Association's March meeting had a good turnout. Information about code enforcement, building inspections, and health and sanitation was discussed with city officials. The Neighborhood Association is now planning for its Spring Clean-up, scheduled

for April 15th from 9 AM until noon. Should be a high spirited occasion. For more information about the Neighborhood Association, contact David Dunn, Neighborhood Organizer (663-8808) or Al Bashevkin.

### **Task Force About Violence**

Solutions will continue to come through community discussions. The task force is discussing corporal punishment in a variety of settings and is considering taking a stance about it. Congratulations are in order for the first recipient of the "Unsung Heroes" Award, an award that is meant to commend individuals and programs that are working hard to find alternatives to violence. The first recipient are the parents who compose the organization, Parent's Anonymous. See later in newsletter for a description of the work they have done. The next meeting of the Task Force About Violence is scheduled for **Thurs, April 25 at 10 AM** at Haskins in North Adams. For more information, contact Maggie Bittman (664-6104).

### **Upcoming Events for the Coalition**

The May meeting for the Coalition will be an opportunity for Coalitioners to hear about the Family Health Plan from the organization, Health Care for All, advocates for universal health care from Boston. Should be an interesting meeting. On **Sat, April 27** from 9 AM until noon, Dan Bosley will host the second meeting for his Economic Summit at NASC. Contact Al Bashevkin or Dan Bosley for more information. Save the date, **June 7th** for the Coalition's 5th Annual Meeting. Presently, plans for the Annual Meeting are for this to be another in our successful audience participation meetings. This year is hoped to be a musical gala, with Coalitioners from all walks of life singing about the times. So practice your voices, and write those songs. It'll be an event.

### **UNSUNG HEROES AWARD THE PARENTS OF PARENTS ANONYMOUS**

The struggle to be a positive parent is difficult even under the best of circumstances. For many of the members of Parent's Anonymous, the struggle is intensified by circumstances beyond their control.

It takes incredible courage, strength, desire to change and love for their children, to come to a Parent's Anonymous group. "I was embarrassed to tell everyone my problems, I was sure no one would help me", stated Marie, a recent member to the group. Mary added, "It was awful hard for me to open up about my real problems, I was sure no one else would have the same problem and think I'm no good, but when you sit back and listen, everyone has basically the same problem, so it's easier to discuss."

The majority of the parents in this group were severely abused as kids. Learning to be different than their parents is an extremely difficult task, especially when their own wounds from their past haven't healed nor have they realized that much of what they learned as a child was negative and destructive.

Elisa spent her entire childhood being sexually abused, beaten, and tortured constantly. The pain and anguish from her past still interferes in her everyday relationships, parenting, self-respect, and self preservation. Still being harassed by her perpetrator, she is making incredible strides in her personal and community life. Elisa still struggles with her parenting and has improved drastically. As well as working on her own parenting skills, she is a major support for other members of the group and is presently serving her second term of group chairperson. She has done much to help the community by educating the public (including NBC News) about the issues of child abuse. She has also helped gather residents of the River / Hall / Bracewell area together to work on their neighborhood.

Anne, the first member of this group six years ago, is still wrestling with the physical, sexual, and verbal abuse in her own childhood while endeavoring to cope with the mental illness of both her sister and youngest child. Day to day living requires constant vigilance to keep her home safe and on an even keel. There is very little energy leftover for herself. Yet as with Alisa, Anne is a support for other members of the group and a former chairperson. She is a frequent advocate for other parents who are bewildered with similar parenting and personal issues. Her outreach to potential group members has never been matched.

Ashley, another core member of the group is a single parent of two small children, one with serious learning disabilities. She has no supportive family in the area except for the group. Ashley's parenting stress is intensified by the fact that she is terminally ill. Even though her illness frequently renders her unable to do a simple task, she can be counted on by other parents during times of stress to listen and suggest useful strategies to get out of difficult situations. She is also one of the five parents from the North Adams group to talk with NBC News.

Margret has taken an incredible step of courage and love by placing her children in foster care while she tries desperately to heal from her atrocious childhood. Not an easy step for anyone. Margret is motivated by her love for her children and her sincere desire to become the best possible parent for them.

Twenty-six year old Mary, mother of four, is still physically abused by her mother if they are together. "I'm trying everything I can not to be like her. My kids will never hurt like I did. But it's not easy, I'm afraid to discipline my kids."

Having several children with epilepsy, Marie finds the constant supervision and arguing with her children to take their medications very difficult. The side-effects caused by these medications just add to the pressure.

Not every parent in Parents Anonymous has such severe circumstances as the ones mentioned. Many parents find they just need support and ideas around parenting. Others come because they fear they are getting too angry about their life situations or children's behavior. Sometimes it takes much more courage for these people to come to group and sit among the members whose lives have been so terrible and still share the stress they are under. Often we hear, "I feel so bad taking up your time, things have been so bad for you." This is always answered with a resounding "Your problems are just as serious to you as ours are to us."

The North Adams Parents Anonymous group is facilitated by volunteers. Sybil Moreau has facilitated the group both by herself and with a co-leader for four years. She has become the mother many of the parents have longed for. Taking stress calls, making tea, teaching sewing, babysitting, taking parents to workshops and meetings whenever possible are only a few of the ways Sybil has made a serious impact in child abuse prevention.

For every Parents Anonymous parent's chapter there is a children's group. This group is made up of children of various ages, skills, and problems. These children often need extra attention, help with social skills, and a boost to their self-esteem. The North Adams chapter has been extremely fortunate to have Virginia O'Rorke as the children's group leader. We could never say enough about "Ginya", as the kids call her, her dedication, patience, understanding, and love! For the past three years, she has been a priceless part of the Parents Anonymous family.

There have been many other volunteers who have made tangible differences in the effort to prevent child abuse. These include Erica Forrest, Lila Ethier, Ginny Walsh, Sue Green, Mary Kurpaska, Paula Meczyor, and Karen Pagano, to name a few.

**Congratulations to the parents of Parents Anonymous for the  
Unsung Heroes Award!**



## Berkshire AHEC

*Area Health Education Center*

*Berkshire County Partnership for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse*

*725 North Street • Pittsfield, MA • 01201*

*413-499-7008 • FAX: 413-499-0170*

Al Bashevkin and I agreed that since the Partnership task forces are now off the ground, all communications as to their directions, tasks, meetings etc., would be directed through the Coalition NEWSLETTER. The NEWSLETTER also offers the opportunity to pass along some of the current information on alcohol and other drug abuse prevention. Hopefully this will be accomplished on a monthly basis.

On March 13, the North Berkshire Partnership met at AD-LIB. Two task forces emerged from this meeting, one focused on Hard to reach parents, the other on high-school/college age students.

Those interested in working with the high-school/college age group will meet on Monday, April 1 at 3PM in Room 324 of the Campus Center at North Adams State College. The "Hard-to-Reach Parents" group will meet on Friday, April 5 at 9AM at the office of AD-LIB, Suite 304, 85 Main Street, North Adams. We hope you will be interested in attending one of these task force meetings.

Last September, the National Commission on Drug-Free Schools issued its final report: "Toward a Drug-Free Generation: A Nation's Responsibility". The 81 page report spoke about the responsibilities of school and community task forces in leading drug prevention efforts. Though there is a shared responsibility by the task forces, each has specific tasks. I would like to share those with you.

### The school task force should:

- \* represent the school community;
- \* understand drug dependency;
- \* inventory and evaluate school policies and programs and recommend changes as appropriate;
- \* develop drug education and prevention goals and strategies for the school;
- \* help develop school antidrug policies;
- \* align drug education and prevention needs with resources by linking schools with law enforcement and community services;
- \* identify people who deserve recognition for their prevention efforts;
- \* survey student attitudes and use; and
- \* publicize drug prevention activities.


### The community task force should:


- \* represent schools and the community;
- \* understand drug dependency;
- \* assess community policies and practices regarding alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs;
- \* inventory community programs for drug education, prevention and treatment;
- \* help develop a drug education and prevention strategy for the community, including assigning responsibilities to all agencies and organizations;
- \* provide support for school policies and programs;
- \* identify and target support for high-risk youth;
- \* coordinate delivery of community services; and
- \* publicize its activities.


I thought the above would provide an interesting mirror to reflect the situation within our own communities and school districts. Until next time ....


Robert R. Hulse  
Prevention Project Coordinator



## NEWS AND VIEWS



 **News from Habitat for Humanity** Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity is offering the possibility of making home ownership a reality for someone. The volunteer organization's Family Selection Committee is currently encouraging the public to submit applications for consideration in the partnership process. Applications are available at religious institutions about town, libraries, NBCA, NB United Way, and the Berkshire Food Project. According to Richard Dassatti, chapter president, "Fund raising, building, site selection, family selection and support, and public relations committees have been meeting and putting in place their plans of action. We are now anxious to hear from those interested in becoming Habitat homeowners in Northern Berkshire. For more information about Habitat for Humanity, call 663-9062.



 **Wanna Rap ?** . . . The Rap Line (664-7988) has opened up and is for consumers of mental health services who want to talk with other consumers. We C.A.R.E. (We, the consumers' Association for Recovery and Empowerment of Berkshire County) is sponsoring the Rap Line. The line is available Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday evenings from 6 PM until 10 PM.


 **The Berkshire American Red Cross** will offer its Community AIDS Education Program this spring, commencing on Thursday, April 11th. This program trains individuals to become HIV/AIDS educators, and also provides participants with the opportunity to become nationally certified HIV/AIDS educators. Training for the ten 2-hour sessions will cost \$50 for which your organization can seek to be reimbursed from the Berkshire AIDS Coalition, scholarships are also available. If your organization would like to participate in the spring training, please leave a message for Mindy Domb at 442-1506 or 1 800 332-2030 to secure placement by Monday, April 1, 1991.



 **Up With Parents !** . . . On **Thursday, April 11th**, the North Adams Regional Hospital and the Adams / Cheshire Regional School District will co-sponsor a seminar for parents entitled Up with Parents. This seminar focuses on building high self esteem in children and also introduces the Smart Discipline System, a system developed by the program leaders. This workshop is done in a funny, lively, and entertaining way that parents really love. For more information about this workshop which will be held in Adams, contact Maria Rodriguez at NARH, 663-3701.



  **Save Money and donate.** . . The Northern Berkshire Mental Health Association is conducting a dividend card fundraiser. Memberships cost \$25 and benefit the Association. For more information, call Meg LeRay, 664-4541


  **And Now, here's Ken!** **Northern Berkshire Tonight**, the talk show of the Coalition will be airing its April show, **Monday, April 1st** at 7:30 and repeating **Friday, April 5th** at 8 PM. The show's topic is the River / Hall / Bracewell Neighborhood Association. Host Ken Swiatek will have David Dunn, neighborhood organizer for the project, along with Chris Hunsinger of the North Adams CDC, one of the sponsoring organizations for the Neighborhood Association. Tune into **Channel 7** and join thousands of others who watch the Coalition on local access TV.

  The **Alzheimer Information and Support Group of Northern Berkshire** now meets the second Tuesday of each month (note change in date) at 7:30 PM at the Downtown Adult Day Health Center, adjacent to the Center Street Parking lot (rear of 107 Main St). Next meeting will be Tuesday, April 9th. If you need transportation, call Esther Tauber at 458-5216 or Henry Contois at 662-2984.

 **Northern Berkshire United Way Annual Meeting.** . . The NB United Way cordially invites you to their Annual Meeting which will be held Tuesday, April 30th at the Williams Inn in Williamstown. The meeting will commence with a social at 6 PM and the dinner and program will be at 6:30. For reservations (by April 24), call the NB United Way at 663-9062.

  **Walk America.** . . The March of Dimes WalkAmerica for Healthier Babies fundraiser will leave from Pittsfield High School on Sunday, April 28th. For more information, call 499-2291.

  **Social Costs of Economic Decline: Northern Berkshire Region 1980 - 1990.** . . is a publication written by the Coalition. It cites statistics of rising social problems as the area's economy has faltered. For a copy of the report, leave message for Al Bashevkin at 664-4511 x 519.

 **Late Breaking Info.** . . . just finished Dan Bosley's Economic Summit at NASC. It was a truly productive event. Labor, tourism and commerce, education and human services, public officials, and economic development people were all represented at the conference and talked area growth. Next mtg AP 27 at NASC.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- April 1** - **Northern Berkshire Tonight** River/Hall/ Bracewell  
Neighborhood Organization 7:30 PM
- April 4** - **River / Bracewell / Hall Neighborhood Meeting**  
7 PM Salvation Army
- April 4** - **FACT Meeting:** Haskins Community Center Noon
- April 5** - **Volunteerism in the NB's** : Office of AdLib 85 Main St  
Room 304 North Adams 9:30 AM
- April 5** - **Northern Berkshire Tonight** River/Hall/ Bracewell  
Neighborhood Organization 8 PM
- April 12** - **All Coalition Meeting** : Franchising the Disenfranchised  
Baptist Church North Adams 10 AM to Noon
- April 18** - **Steering Committee** NA City Hall 1:30 PM
- April 25** - **Task Force on Violence** : Haskins Community Center  
Conference Room North Adams 10 AM
- April 25** - **Coalition Volunteer Fair** : Concourse, 85 Main Street  
North Adams 11 AM - 2 PM
- April 27** - **Economic Summit** 9 AM to noon Call Dan Bosley/Al  
Bashevkin for more details

**YES, SIGN ME UP AS A COALITION SUPPORTER for 1990-91 !**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Ind (\$10)

Sm Org (\$25)

< \$100,000 budget)

Lg Org (\$50)

> \$100,000 budget)

Checks payable to AHEC/NBHHSC. Mail to Berkshire AHEC 725 North St  
Pittsfield MA 01201

**Areas of Interest :**

**Are you willing to be listed as Coalition Supporter**  Yes  No