

NEWSLETTER

December 1995

Volume X Number 3

Meeting Asks Question: How Can We Better Exchange Information?

The November monthly meeting of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition offered participants an opportunity to talk about what's happening today and to look ahead to issues that the Coalition should pay attention to this coming year. Once again, thanks to Wendy Krom for her assistance in writing down Coalition announcements and keeping track of what issues are strong during the second part of the Coalition meeting.

Among the announcements offered during the meeting, Larry Stalvey of United Cerebral Palsy announced that his organization is working with Congressman John Olver to present a community forum to address changes in the Medicaid program from new legislation. As we all understand, the Medicaid Program is undergoing major revisions, yet perhaps even more significant is how little we know about what these changes will be. (see later in newsletter for more info re. Medicaid) Communication and information are themes that re-occurred during the course of the Coalition meeting.

Chip Joffe-Halpern talked of programs available to help all children in Northern Berkshire receive health insurance. "No child in Northern Berkshire should be without insurance," Chip told the audience, "as there are programs in place to help all children." It is estimated that there are 1000 children in Northern Berkshire without health insurance. For information about health insurance, contact Eco-Care at 663-8711.

Eileen Lincourt spoke with the Coalition meeting about surveys she is

December Coalition Meeting

First Baptist Church of North Adams

131 Main Street, North Adams (enter via Eagle Street entrance)

Friday, Dec 8th 10:00 AM to Noon

1. Welcome, Introductions

2. Announcements : Let's hear from each other. A time for networking and hearing about what others are doing

3. Communications : The November Coalition meeting offered lots of thoughts about the importance of good communications throughout the community. How well do we do ? How can we do this better ? This meeting will focus on communications and look to actions the Coalition can take to enhance information the community receives.

The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition is supported by the Berkshire Area Health Education Center with funding from the UMASS Medical School. It is also supported by contributions from Coalition members. The Coalition is hosted by North Adams State College.

developing for both parents and providers of service in the community. A survey for service providers is included in this issue of the Newsletter. Please complete and return to Eileen as soon as you can. Information from these surveys will be used to drive the action plans for the Healthy Schools Program.

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Exchanging Information . . .

There was a somewhat lengthy discussion about the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program (MTCP) resources that Governor Weld is proposing to divert to other programs. This diversion of resources was a fear of both proponents and opponents of the cigarette tax. It was suggested that Coalitioners make their opinions known to their legislators about these plans. Still on the topic of tobacco regulation, the FDA has extended its comment period to January 1st for the restriction of tobacco advertising to teens. Later in the newsletter is an article that offers an address to pass your opinion on.

Al Nelson of the Northern Berkshire United Way told the Coalition audience that the campaign is going well. There will be a Volunteer Appreciation Celebration on December 6th at 8 AM at the North Adams Holiday Inn. In addition, surveys are available for community members to help with the NB United Way allocations process. To receive a survey, or to register for their celebration, call Al Nelson at 663-9062.

Shirley Davis offered Coalitioners a taste of the "I Have a Dream" contest, showing those at the meeting a quilt designed and made by a class at Brayton Elementary School. The quilt is quite amazing and will be on community display, along with the hundreds of essays, poems, drawings,

sculptures, and other representations of community dreams during the coming months.

After a networking break, the Coalition meeting turned to a general discussion of issues the community is facing. It didn't feel good to be part of that discussion. Providers are being asked to do more with less. Community residents seem to be having a harder time. Rising community violence, loss of jobs, changes in our educational system have all added to the stress level in the community. There's fewer resources to go around. There seems to be a backlash against the poor.

A lot of this discussion was about social responsibility and how both society and individuals have given it up. The new government talks about individual responsibility and has created social programming that changes the role of government as a social force. Fewer citizens are engaging in activities that promote social responsibility (voting, voluntary associations, serving on local Boards, etc.). Michael Quinn, a student at North Adams State College, asked a question that framed the discussions for the rest of the day, "How do we, as a community, promote social responsibility?" Sometimes, the questions we ask can be so simple, yet so helpful.

The meeting discussion winded its way around the issue of social

responsibility, with a general feeling of discomfort for the changes that are evident in today's world. We talked about the media and how we can enlist their help in increasing our communications. We looked back at the issue of how little we know about so much that is changing in federal government and wondered if we can use our present day technology better? With the loss of HailLine, we lost our central place for people to turn when they are in need of services. Jane Wilson offered information about a trip to Savoy and how little residents knew about what services are available for Savoy residents.

Perhaps one way to approach the question about social responsibility is to look at the issue of communications. What can we do to better communicate with each other, better communicate with area residents, and have an impact on broader issues addressed by government? Our means of communicating with each other and the broader community might begin to address this question.

The December meeting of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition will be held Friday, December 8th at the Baptist Church in North Adams from 10 AM to noon. Join us for networking, announcements, and a discussion about communications that can assist in an action plan for all of us.

- Al Bashovkin

Northern Berkshire Habitat For Humanity Celebrates the Holiday Season

Roberts Company, Main Street in North Adams will be the site of Habitat for Humanity's sixth annual Christmas Tree Showcase, Dec. 9 from 6 to 9 p.m. The Showcase features dozens of tiny trees that are decorated and donated by crafters, businesses and friends. The trees are raffled at the event at 50 cents a chance. Habitat invites members of its geographic area to take part in the

event by decorating a tree, donating a raffle item or displaying or demonstrating a craft. Proceeds from the tree raffle will benefit Habitat's building projects. Please call the Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity office at 664-4440 if you wish to participate or have any questions.

On Saturday, Dec. 9, 1995 from 5

NB Legislative Contacts

Rep Dan Bosley	3 Elmwood Avenue NA 01247	663-7486
Rep Sham Kelly	488 E Housatonic St #12 Dalton 01226	684-4418
Sen Jane Swift	8 Bank Row Pittsfield 01201	442-5240
Cong John Olver	78 Center St Pittsfield 01201	442-0946
Gov William Weld	State House Rm 360 Boston 02133	617-727-3666

p.m. to 9 p.m. Habitat for Humanity and the North Adams Centennial Committee will co-sponsor "Welcome Home to North Adams for the Holidays" - a community celebration similar to the holiday walk held in Williamstown over the past few years. Plans include the closing of the north side of Main Street and possibly Eagle and Holden Streets to allow pedestrians to walk along the businesses that will remain open for holiday shopping, and to enjoy the carolers and musicians who will supply entertainment along the route. Everyone is encouraged to participate to produce some real old fashioned community spirit.

- Judy Hutchinson

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COALITION

December Coalition Meeting to Discuss Communications

The December meeting of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition will be the last monthly Coalition meeting until February. During January, Coalitioners turn their attention to events celebrating the life of Martin Luther King. The December Coalition meeting will be held Friday, December 8th at the First Baptist Church in North Adams from 10 AM until noon. All are invited to attend.

After our introductions and announcements, the monthly Coalition meeting will look at the issue of communications in our community. These communications take place through the Coalition, through our existing media (newspapers, TV, radio, etc.), by using modern technology (internet), by word of mouth, through community bulletin boards, and perhaps in other ways, yet to be thought of. It was clear to us during the

November Coalition meeting that there exists a vacuum in relaying of information. People and programs are becoming more isolated. Neighbors may not know their neighbors. There is an abdication of social responsibility by both government and citizens. We can be more conscientious citizens if we are better informed. Government can work better for the people if the people can do a better job of communicating their values to government. The discussions about tobacco control for teens (see later article) is a wonderful example of how the lack of communications works against sensible policy.

So, what can we do? Some during the November Coalition meeting looked at the effect of boycotts during the 60's and 70's as a means of influencing policy. Some at the meeting were concerned that residents of Savoy know so little about available social

assistance. The issue of how we communicate with each other and the public is essential for the future. We need to communicate better with each other, and can use the December Coalition meeting to look at the issues and discuss ways we may actually do this. Join us for what should be an interesting discussion.

During the months of December and January, the Coalition looks to MLK day, and activities that support his ideas. Look for the Transcript supplement to be printed in January that offers a multitude of community ideas about MLK. Look for displays in area store windows and at Heritage State Park that will show off some of the work and dreams of our young people. Be sure to come out on January 15th for the events that will celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King.

- Al Bashevkin

Coalition Steering Committee Seeks New Members

The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition would not be able to do what it does without its steering committee. The steering committee meets monthly to talk about the previous month's meeting; to help set the agendas for upcoming meetings; and to make some of the hard decisions that organizations like the Coalition need to confront. Generally, these meetings are on the Tuesday following the monthly Coalition meeting from 1:30 to 3 PM at the office of Northern Berkshire United Way.

The membership of the steering committee for the Coalition is fluid. It changes. Three of our members came on in the last year. Except for those of us who have worked for the Coalition since its beginning, there are no members of the steering committee who have been members of this committee throughout the history of the Coalition.

So why are we writing this in the newsletter? As you can guess, we are looking for residents who are interested in sitting with us on the steering committee. A nominations committee

for steering will be meeting shortly. If readers of this newsletter are interested in serving on the steering committee, then contact any member of the steering committee about your interest.

Present members of the steering committee are: Maggie Bitman, Chris Meenan, Neil Novik, Tom Wolff, Al Bashevkin, Al Nelson, Janice O'Keefe, Mary Sugden, Steve Green, Paul Hopkins, Maureen Hegan-Gigliotti, Lisa Rondani, and Diane Weinstein.

Operating principles for the Coalition look to the steering committee as the decision making mechanism for the Coalition. We are particularly interested in new steering members who affiliate with the Coalition as a NB community resident.

The mission of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition is to organize people and resources which are dedicated to improving the quality of life in Northern Berkshire.

Consider joining us! For more information, call the Coalition office or talk to a steering committee member.

- Al Bashevkin

This Newsletter is a publication of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition. Its function is to keep readers informed of what's happening around the Northern Berkshire area. It is a service to the entire Coalition membership and friends (over 425 at this point). Announcements submitted to the newsletter will reach our entire mailing list. Take advantage of this unique, free mechanism for informing our membership of news important to all. For inclusion in the February Newsletter, please submit announcements to Al Bashevkin, Coalition Coordinator, NASC Box 9075, North Adams, MA 01247 by January 15, 1996. Coalition Coordinator: Al Bashevkin (413) 662-5519; NB Neighbors: Natalie Cain 662-5415; UNITY: Claudia Williamson 662-5519; Healthy Schools: Eileen Lincourt, 663-9886.

Coalition Bulletin Board

• The Children's Medical Security Program which has a free health care program for children ages 0-12, no longer has a waiting list. This is a comprehensive health care program for families who are ineligible for Medicaid. Call Chip or Jane at Ecu-Care 663-8711 for information on how to apply. This is a terrific program, we encourage all to apply. Ecu-Care will assist in the application process. It is an easy process.

• Childcare of the Berkshires has space available in the Haskins Community Center. We have two large classrooms and one smaller office. Call 663-6593 for details.

• The Department of Social Services is looking for adults/parents who are interested in being foster parents. There is a critical need for foster parents for adolescents. For more information, call the Department of Social Services, Pittsfield office at 1-413-499-7370 and ask for the Family Resource Unit.

• We have heard from Kate Hill, she is living in Cochabamba, Bolivia and is doing very well. She would love to hear from you. Write her at Amanecer Casilla 2431, Cochabamba, Bolivia. If she follows her plan, then we may be seeing Kate in January.

• A videotape of the "AIDS in Rural Communities: Education for Prevention" teleconference broadcast on September 28th is now available at the Mass Prevention Center in Northampton. If you are interested in previewing this video, call Gail Wierick at 584-3880.

• Mental Health Services of the Berkshires has new brochures available. Come get some at Northern Berkshire Mental Health Association in the North Berkshire office of MHSB.

• Western Mass Legal Services has available materials from the Attorney General's office on self-help for tenants with lead paint removal problems (this is for cases where there has not been physical harm yet). Contact Susan Deeley at 499-1950 for these flyers.

• Western Mass Legal Services has available several new flyer/pamphlets on various aspects of the new TAADC welfare reform which went into effect on November 1, 1995. Please call our office and ask Janice Broderick for these materials.

• The Tobacco-Free Environment of Northern Berkshire reminder - the FDA deadline has been extended to January 1st for taking comments on Clinton's proposal to restrict tobacco industry advertising to teens. Sample letters are available by calling 458-8024.

• Be aware that Governor Weld is leaning toward dramatic reductions in allotment of tobacco tax monies - diverting to non-tobacco issues in order to fund his proposed tax cuts. Let him know your opinion about this important issue.

• The Northern Berkshire United Way "Volunteer Appreciation and Campaign Report Celebration" will be held Wednesday, December 6, at 8 AM Holiday Inn in North Adams. Due Baci Restaurant is serving a buffet breakfast for a cost of \$6.00. For reservations, please, contact the NB United Way at 663-9062.

• The Rape Crisis Center of Berkshire County presents "The Shannon Faulkner Case: What the Citadel Won't Tell You," a lecture by ACLU attorney Sam Mandelbaum. This lecture will take place on Sunday, December 10, 1995 from one to three PM at the Lenox Community Center in Lenox. A donation of \$5 to \$10 is requested. For more information, contact Judith A. Russo at 442-6708.

• Thanks to a Public Health Incentive Grant from the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, the North Adams Elementary Players will present a play, "Trouble at Home" on December 13, 1995. This play will help to educate the community about problems we can have with alcohol and other drugs. For information, call Kathy Gzwozdz at Greylock Elementary School.

• The next meeting of the Community Health Network will be Monday, December 11 from 10 AM to noon at the Community Room at the Berkshire Mall in Lanesboro. The agenda for the meeting includes a review of a report about the link between health/social problems and the use of alcohol and other drugs, and a look at a mini-grant for CHNA's by DPH.

• Elder Services of Berkshire County is seeking proposals from individuals and organizations interested in providing in-home consultation and education about Alzheimer's Disease in North Berkshire County. Funding, provided through Title III of the Older Americans Act is available through September 30, 1996. Interested individuals and organizations that serve the elderly are encouraged to apply. Applications and information concerning program design can be obtained from Lisa Fletcher-Udel at Elder Services, 66 Wendell Avenue, Pittsfield, or by calling her at 499-0524.

• North Adams Regional Hospital's Transitional Care Center passed a recent state survey with no deficiencies, one of only ten skilled nursing facilities to pass at that level since July. The 20-bed Transitional Care Center opened in July of 1994 to provide sub-acute hospital care and was the first hospital-based skilled nursing facility in Berkshire County. The TCC has served more than 400 residents since its opening.

• The local chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-Flag) meets the 2nd Sunday of the month at the Congregational Church in Williamstown. Meetings are open to parents, siblings, spouses, children, friends, and members of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community.

• A reminder, the State clinic has re-opened its HIV antibody testing clinic at North Adams Regional Hospital. The group meets the first and third Tuesday of each month at 12:30 at the employee health department office of North Adams Regional Hospital.

• As of 10/1/95, Berkshire County had a total of 61 reported AIDS cases.

• The VNA of Northern Berkshire is offering holiday gift wrapping at Wal-Mart beginning the day after Thanksgiving and continuing until December 24 on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, only. All proceeds raise will benefit the VNA's charity care account. Relieve yourself of holiday stress, let someone else do the wrapping and support a good cause in the community.

NBCC Supporters 1995-96 Year :

Organizations

- Family Life Support Center
- Specialty Minerals, Inc.
- Willi-Net
- Adams Co-Operative Bank
- Northern Berkshire United Way
- Adams Housing Authority
- Williamstown Housing Authority
- VNA of Northern Berkshire
- Northern Berkshire Community Action
- St John's Church of North Adams
- Support Network for Families of Berkshire County
- Abortion Rights Fund of Western Mass
- North Adams Housing Authority
- First United Methodist Church of Wmstm.

Individuals

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Bob Rottow | Stephen Botsvert |
| Marcia August | John Howland |
| Sue Bims | Anthony Siracusa |
| Mike Urquhart | Susan Pecor |
| Bob / Kris Buckwalter | Warner Smith |
| Susan / Marc Gold | Martin Greenstein |
| Steve Green / Sue Walker | Mary Sugden |
| Hillel Lambert | Anna Singleton |
| Shirley Davis | |
| Al Bashevkin | |
| Maggie Bitman | |
| Len Radin | |
| Elizabeth Levenson | |
| Kathy Gwozdz | |
| Jani Keep | |
| Julia Janowski | |
| Janice O'Keefe / Clark Billings | |
| Lorraine Maloney | |

So far this fiscal year, we have raised over \$2700 for the Coalition. Our Goal is to raise \$4500.

**Your
Support is
Appreciated!**

Berkshire Prevention Alliance to Begin its Mission

The next time you hear from me, this will be called the Alliance Update, rather than the Partnership Update, as the Berkshire Partnership is completing its evolution into the Berkshire Prevention Alliance. The act of formally joining forces with the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition (NBCC), Berkshires Against Drugs (BAD) and the Southern Berkshire Task Force on Families and Children (SBTFCC) is an exciting prospect. It also presents a great opportunity to reach out to youth groups, neighborhood groups, other coalitions and agencies to build a strong network and create a true county-wide strategic plan for prevention.

The "initial" partners, Al Bashevkin of NBCC, Jonathan Lothrop of SBTFCC, Dan Dillon and Gerry Downing of BAD, and Bill Norcross, co-chair of Partnership Steering Committee, have met once to discuss

structure, hiring of staff and budgetary issues. We are now soliciting participation in a number of committees (Steering, Public Awareness, Program, Sustainability and Policy). We are also interviewing candidates for Youth Organizer, Community Organizer and Project Assistant. We anticipate that a kick-off event for the Berkshire Prevention Alliance will be held in January.

The last issue of *Partnership News* under current funding will be mailed mid-December. Please send any news articles or letters to the editors to Kathy Guertin, 20 Washington Avenue, North Adams, MA 01247. Deadline for submissions is Dec 31st.

On a personal note, it has been a tremendous privilege for me to have served as Coordinator for the Berkshire Partnership for the last two and a half years, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue on as the Coordinator for the Berkshire

Prevention Alliance. I would like to publicly acknowledge and thank all the northern Berkshire Partnership supporters, particularly Al Bashevkin who served in an advisory capacity to me and the Steering Committee. Also, Steering Committee members from Northern Berkshire, including Bill Norcross, Kathy Guertin, and Natalie Cain, had nearly perfect attendance and actively participated in other ways, from serving as Co-Chair and Secretary of Steering Committee to facilitating neighborhood organizing courses and producing the *Partnership News*. Amy Hall has also been tremendously supportive as a member of the Gathering Committee and a "sounding board" for data interpretation. Thank you all for your energy, enthusiasm and commitment to building healthy communities in Berkshire County.

- Wendy Krom

7. What does your agency do to address this?

8. How many parents do you feel understand what is going on with their child's :

education?

service program?

___ more than half

___ more than half

___ half

___ half

___ less than half

___ less than half

9. The Right Question Project is a nationally recognized set of four, two hour workshops that support collaboration between parents, agencies, and schools. It teaches among other things, "The right questions to ask, the right people to ask, the right time to ask."

Would you be willing to take this workshop with the staff where you work?

Yes No

10. If yes, when would you like to see it offered?

___ during school day ___ evenings ___ weekends

11. What skills or talents do you have that you would be interested in sharing with others?

Please feel free to write any other thoughts you have.

CEPA Taking a Lead in Health Promotion

Taking the Lead in Health Promotion was the title of a discussion at the Strength in the Neighborhoods Conference facilitated by Carmen Claudio of the Center for Education, Action, and Prevention (CEPA). CEPA is located in Holyoke, MA and works primarily with the Holyoke Latino community in the prevention of the spread of HIV and AIDS. The Holyoke community has been devastated by this disease and is taking a neighborhood development approach to try to prevent its spread.

CEPA involves residents in their own design of neighborhood programs. The focus of each of these programs must include HIV/AIDS in some way. To involve residents in writing these programs, CEPA offered door-door

outreach of the neighborhoods they are working in and then followed up with an eleven week leadership training session for all who would like to get involved. Participation in leadership trainings is a requirement for residents interested in creating their own programs.

The idea behind the leadership training is simple. CEPA wants to bring people together to talk about what they can do to make their neighborhoods better places to live. CEPA works in four high risk neighborhoods in Holyoke. Participants in the leadership trainings can apply for program funding for neighborhood programs. These resources are not available to agencies; rather they are only available to grassroots neighborhood based

groups. CEPA's hope is that through this program they can foster individual behavioral change and affect social change.

Projects that CEPA funded this past year include two theater troops that offered drama about the issue of HIV/AIDS; a summer program for young children; group educators that talk in family homes about HIV/AIDS; a local church group that wants to do preventive work; and Youth Against AIDS, a forum similar to the Latino Community Coalition for youth. For more information about CEPA, you can contact Carmen Claudio at CEPA, 66 Essex St, Holyoke MA 01040

- Al Basharkin

Berkshire AHEC Continuing Education Schedule December 1995

DECEMBER

4th Annual Berkshire Conference on AIDS Friday, December 1, 9:00-4:30 Berkshire Hilton Inn, Pittsfield, MA Co-sponsored by the Berkshire AIDS Coalition FEE: \$45 includes lunch CREDIT: 3 hrs. Clergy, 6 hrs. CAC/PSYCH/SW (Category II/CNA), 7.2 hrs. Nurse

Pharmacology Update for Nurses Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2:00-5:15 BMC Auditorium, Pittsfield, MA FEE: \$20. CREDIT: 3.6 Nurse

Topics in Radiology Saturday, Dec. 9, 8:30-12:45 Berkshire Medical Center Auditorium, Pittsfield, MA FEE: \$25 CREDIT: To be determined

PLEASE CALL THE BERKSHIRE AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER AT 413-447-2417 TO RECEIVE A CONFERENCE BROCHURE AND TO CONFIRM ALL DATES, TIMES AND LOCATIONS.

Bill Berkowitz Offers Unique Ideas to Strengthen Neighborhood Life

The Strengthening the Neighborhood: Building a Healthy Community gathering was a triumph for the neighborhoods of Northern Berkshire. Over fifty residents of the Northern Berkshire area gathered together at the Notre Dame Church in North Adams on a snowy Saturday to share some thoughts and hear stories about local neighborhood development. It was a day that left many with a taste of what's been done and a hope that the future will hear more about neighborhood development. What follows are ideas of Bill Berkowitz, a long time neighborhood watcher, as he spoke with those in attendance about his observations in the neighborhood.

In his remarks, Bill Berkowitz commented that in today's society, events that draw people together are important for all of us. Neighborhood development has a number of positives in favor of us: it's fun, it enriches us, it's a crime deterrent, and it's good for our health. Many recent studies state that individuals who have strong social networks live longer. Bill quipped that perhaps neighborhood development should be part of our National Health Policy. In strong neighborhoods, kids are watched; the job of parenting is shared by many.

Yet people are moving away from contact with their neighbors. Why is this so? People are working longer hours, so have less time in their neighborhoods. In addition, the arrival of consumer electronics (TV, radio, computers, etc.) into our lives takes up

time that we could be spending with others. People are afraid to become involved because of the obligations they fear that involvement will bring to them. Americans are becoming more isolated and are choosing activities that bring them away from others. In fact, according to Robert Putnam, although there is an increase in bowling, 40% of Americans are choosing to bowl alone instead of in leagues. At the same time, there is a decrease in membership in voluntary organizations, and in levels of volunteerism. This phenomena of a loss of community life is not unique to America. In France, cafes (often a gathering spot for French residents), are closing at the rate of 4000/year.

To maintain our community life, we will need to find and identify new resources. Some of these resources exist; it is our job to uncover them. On a national level, we rarely hear of politicians who campaign to strengthen our neighborhoods. However, we all know of some wonderful people who live in our neighborhoods and really do make a difference. Many who live in our neighborhoods may want to make a difference, but may not have the tools or support to do that. Bill talked about an "Institute for Social Inventions" that offers prizes for social inventions. Imagine the creative social ideas that could evolve if we supported them in the same way that we support creative business innovations.

Berkowitz offered a sequence of activities that connote higher neighborhood development. If you can

see your neighbors, then you may get to know them. If you know your neighbors, then it is more likely that you will like them. If you like your neighbors, then it is likely that you will trust them and in turn act a different way towards them. For us to see our neighbors and to begin this turn of events, we need public spaces for people to meet. Whether these spaces are in our churches, schools, parks, or sidewalks, we need to have these public spaces attractive for people to mingle. Most people want to get involved in their community, it may be our job to make this involvement easier. A new consideration of public space may be a good start. Dick Dassatta, in his comments as a letter carrier, remarked that the way people shovel the snow says something about the paths they follow. Perhaps we need to develop a stronger neighborhood consciousness about the paths we build.

At the conclusion of his remarks, Berkowitz pointed out that there are all kinds of wonderful possibilities for neighborhood life. Neighborhood Newsletters, block parties with live music, neighborhood-skills exchanges, and neighborhood working-bees, are but a few ways we can get together on a neighborhood level. It starts with the gatherings. Neighborhood life doesn't have to cost anything. The resources are within our neighborhoods.

If you are interested in helping out in future neighborhood events like this, contact the Coalition office.

- Al Basharkin

Changes in Medicaid Could have Dramatic Effects On Our Most Vulnerable Residents

At the November Coalition Meeting, there was considerable discussion about the changes in Medicaid, yet little was known of the exact plan. According to HandsNet, here's some potential effects of the Medicaid plan discussed in Washington.

The 10 Most Drastic Effects of the House and Senate Medicaid Plan

1. **No guarantee of basic health care for our most vulnerable.** The House bill eliminates the guarantee of basic health insurance coverage which currently protects 36 million women, children, elderly, and disabled people. The Senate bill adds some protections, but they are inadequate. For example, it claims to protect children, but it only guarantees vaccinations.

2. **Millions more uninsured.** Drastically reduced funding (cuts of \$18.7 billion in projected spending over 7 years) for Medicaid will push an additional 12 million low-income people into the ranks of the uninsured in the year 2002.

3. **Delayed emergency care.** Consumers of all income levels will be

at increased risk of delayed emergency care. Deep cuts in both Medicaid and Medicare payments to hospitals, combined with increased use of emergency rooms by the growing number of uninsured, will force widespread closings of emergency rooms, trauma care centers, and hospitals.

4. **Children lose health care.** The bill shatters America's goal of guaranteeing health coverage to all poor children and could deny as many as 7 million more poor children coverage by the year 2002.

5. **Less access to nursing homes.** The elderly and disabled will no longer be assured of Medicaid coverage for nursing homes or at home care, no matter how poor or how sick they are.

6. **Families of nursing home residents will face financial ruin.** Husbands and wives of nursing home residents could face unlimited charges (such as 50 percent copayments) even if they are supposedly protected against "spousal impoverishment." States will be allowed to turn to adult children of nursing home residents to pay the bill.

7. **Quality of care in nursing homes will deteriorate.** Drastically reduced budgets and complete repeal of federal nursing home standards (House bill) will allow nursing homes to cut staff and quality. More and more parents and grandparents will be neglected and abused.

8. **Fewer benefits.** For the poor lucky enough to qualify for Medicaid, they are likely to find fewer benefits — limited hospital days, inadequate coverage for prescription drugs, little if any choice of doctor.

9. **Medicaid will become too expensive for those it is supposed to serve.** Recipients, who now face only nominal copayments and deductibles, are likely to face financial barriers to health care because states can impose copayments and deductibles that simply make Medicaid unaffordable.

10. **Quality of care will decline.** Reduced budgets will force doctors, hospitals, and other providers to provide only cut-rate care, cutting corners on quality whenever possible to stay within their inadequate budget.

- *Consumers Union 10 / 27 / 95*

The Campaign for Single-Payer Health Care is Here in North Berkshire

Are you interested in learning more about the plan for single payer health care in Massachusetts? The Northern Berkshire chapter of MASS-CARE, part of the state wide initiative to secure passage of a state single-payer health care bill, is looking for people willing to become involved by hosting informal meetings for discussion of the issue. Here's how it would work. A group of neighbors decides they want to learn more about single-payer health care and how it works. One of them hosts a coffee hour, or an evening of talk, or a breakfast meeting at home. MASS-CARE provides informed speakers who will lay out the program, the progress of discussion in the State House, and answer questions. If you want to help, call Kurt Tauber in Williamstown (458-5216) or Diane Parsons in North Adams (664-6480.)

MASS-CARE is also monitoring the progress of state legislation on single-payer health care system. A special legislative committee on health care reform has recommended that the State legislature's joint health care committee study the real costs and benefits of a single payer plan as compared to the current system in Massachusetts. The study would cost \$50,000. Bills S559 and HR33110 which would bring the single-payer system up for a vote are now on hold pending completion of the study.

Please write or call Representative Finneran and Senator Birmingham of the Ways and Means Committees at the State House and ask them to fund the study. We need facts to back up the practicality of a single-payer plan. In addition, call or write Jane Swift and

Dan Bosley to let them know of your interest in the legislation. Write to them at The State House, Boston, MA 02133. The League of Women Voters or the Public Library will also have telephone numbers.

Thank you for your help.

*Elizabeth Wright
16 Cole's Grove Road
Williamstown, MA 01267*

Happy Holidays

**Next Newsletter
will be in February**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MLK (More Love and Kindness) Plans Jan 15 Events

Martin L. King meeting was held Nov. 8, 1995 at Haskins School at 1 p.m. Those present were Maryanne-Santelli, Flavia Mastellone, Rev. Chris Drew, Al Bashevkin, Steve Green, David Landsman, Anne Singleton, Shirley Davis, and from Drury High School, Anne French, Lisett Conal, Joy Fairmony, Stephanie Rondeau and Jennifer Johnson.

Name for our group: Voted on MLK, More Love & Kindness.

Martin Luther King Day Events:

Circle and music, wait for Natalie to get back. Facility, Al will check on the Y.M.C.A. Food, Shirley would like people to call her with what they are bringing. Child care, Stephanie Sheridan and Joy, will call Pauline

Davis, girl scout leader, to see if they can help. Worship service, Rev. Drew has a meeting Nov 9 and will put it on the agenda.

Transcript supplement:

David and Anne will work on together. David has promises of articles from Rabbi Parbes, Rev. Drew, Rev. Yoo-Yun Cho, Rev. Jill Graham Frank, Charlie Toomajian and a maybe from Rev. Warren Savage. Rev. Drew will talk to Phyllis Jarrett about doing a drawing. Steve, Maryanne and Shirley Davis will write articles.

Deadline for all committee info is Dec. 15 for press release. Call Northern Berk. Neighbors with reports. 662-5415 or 662-5519.

On Wed., Nov. 22 at noon at NBN, David, Maryanne and Shirley Davis,

along with the Drury students, will pick out articles for Transcript supplement, which will be out Friday, Jan. 12, 1996.

We will be on Bone Soup, Dec. 18. I will get a date for us to be on Opinion in Jan. 1996, Maryanne, Rev. Drew, Lisett and Joy will be on.

I Have a Dream Project:

Articles have been steadily coming in. We will pick out the ones we will use in the Book of Dreams and type only them. Typist will be Anne, Flavia and me. I got in touch with Rick Hersey, he will walk, with me and whoever else that would like to go, up main street and pick the available windows we want.

Next meeting will be Wed. Nov. 29, 1 p.m. at Haskins School, Room 7.

- Shirley Davis

There's Still Time to Take a Stand Against Teenage Smoking

President Clinton is the first U.S. President to take a stand against the behavior of the tobacco industry as a key element in getting our children hooked on tobacco. He has now proposed regulations that could go a long way toward helping to stop teenage addiction to tobacco. According to the Michigan Study, administered in Berkshire County in 1995, 43.5% of the 8th grade students had smoked cigarettes in the month before the survey. This is similar to the trend country wide. These are scary statistics that should motivate us as citizens, as parents, and as service providers to take action.

Nationally, we are in an extended public comment period about having the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulate the sale and advertising of tobacco products aimed at children. This means that the government wants to hear from us about this issue. One way that the residents of Berkshire County could take action is to write to the FDA supporting these proposed regulations. The key elements of the regulations include:

- Reducing the illegal sale of tobacco to minors by requiring merchants to check for identification; eliminate free samples, cigarette vending machines, self service displays, and mail order coupons of cigarettes; and prohibiting sample or "kiddie" packs that contain less than 20 cigarettes.

- Reducing advertising that influences young people to smoke, including a requirement that all tobacco advertising in magazines in which minors represent the less of 15% of the total or two million readers to black-and-white, text only ads; prohibiting all tobacco billboards within 1,000 feet of a school or playground; and limiting billboards to black-and-white only.

- Ending cigarette brand sponsorship of sporting and cultural events.

- Prohibiting the distribution of non-tobacco products with tobacco product advertising.

- Initiating a \$150-million health education campaign to be funded by the tobacco industry.

Unfortunately, we are up against a

large industry who, although they say they do not market to children, still opposes these regulations. At a recent meeting of the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program it was reported that the tobacco industry has sent 15 letters opposing the regulations for every one letter the FDA has received supporting the regulations. This is because they have a huge advertising and lobbying budget. The largest tobacco company spent over \$2,000,000,000 on media advertising in 1992.

If you would like to protect our children from tobacco addiction please take the time to write the Food and Drug Administration at the following address before January 2, 1995:

Food and Drug Administration
Dockets Management Branch (HFA-350)

Room 1-23
12420 Parklawn Drive
Rockville, MD 20857

- Amy Hall

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Nov 29 *MLK Day Committee* Haskins Community Center NA 1 PM
 Dec 8 *All Coalition Meeting* 1st Baptist Church North Adams 10 AM to Noon
 Dec 12 *UNITY Steering Committee* NASC Townhouse 16 3 PM
 Dec 12 *Alzheimer's Support Group* VNA of Northern Berkshire 7 PM 664-4536 for info
 Dec 14 *UNITY* 1st Baptist Church North Adams 9 AM
 Dec 14 *Coalition Steering Committee* NB United Way 85 Main St NA 1:30 PM
 Jan 10 *Healthy Schools / Healthy Communities* Brayton School 3:30 PM
 Jan 15 *MLK Day* Full Day's Events Planned at NB YMCA Information to Follow
 Jan 16 *Coalition Steering Committee* NB United Way 85 Main St NA 1:30 PM
- All Year Donations for Coalition Sponsorships accepted

Writing of the Coalition News is a community project. The News is published and edited by Al Bashevkin, Coalition Coordinator. News about our neighborhoods is written by Neighborhood residents and published by Natalie Cain. Shirley Davis assists with publication. The Coalition welcomes contributions to its newsletter. Articles written in WordPerfect (5.1) for the IBM or in Macintosh format can be mailed (NASC Box 9075) or dropped off to Al Bashevkin at the Coalition Office at Townhouse 16, North Adams State College. In Amherst, articles can be brought to Christine Driscoll at the office of Community Partners (253-4283). Call Al at 662-5519 if you have questions about how this process works. For inclusion in the February Newsletter, articles are due by January 15.



**Yes, I will support the
Northern Berkshire
Community Coalition !**

Name:

Organization :

Address :

Phone :

Please check off the appropriate amount (these are guidelines for giving):

- Organizational Budgets over \$500,000 ----- \$500
- Budgets \$100,000 - \$500,000 ----- (.1% of budget) \$100 - \$500
- Budgets Under \$100,000 ----- (.1% of budget) \$ 25 - \$100
- Individual Contributions can be from \$10 - \$100

Our commitment to the Coalition is : \$ _____

Please make your check out to NBCC / AHEC

Mail to: NBCC NASC Box 9075 North Adams, MA 01247

I would like to help the Coalition with the following :