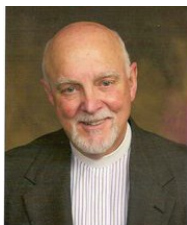


Muskegon Opportunity MESSENGER

Vol. 2 • Issue 1 • January 2012

Featured Member



Recalling the words of Jane Johnson, DHS Director, “every-thing affects everything!”

This is especially true of formal and informal dropout prevention activities we all do. Take for example the impact of the some of the following dropout prevention activities we already do:

Reading to a pre-school child every day, instituting quality early childhood education, identifying at risk-children early on and providing them with early intervention strategies and follow up, striving to increase parental involvement because it pay rich dividends, engaging in personal relation activities such as mentoring or tutoring, increasing graduation and GED completion rates through part time enrollment, increasing awareness about state scholarship programs such as TIP... The list goes on, however, more can be done.

For example, a broader definition of success for high school is needed. Providing students real life work experiences may make school more relevant.

Most importantly, a commitment by the whole community to increase the graduation rate. Educational, business, social service, religious, and civic organizations should set a graduation goal and accept this challenge. *It takes a community to educate a child.*

John Brown

Pastor

The Ripple Effect of Dropouts

By Lisa Tyler
VP Community Impact
United Way of the Lakeshore

MUSKEGON— The Muskegon Opportunity Dropout Prevention subcommittee, made up of more than a dozen people passionate about keeping kids in school, is committed to keeping the issue of high school drop-outs in the forefront. As I like to say, “We’re going to be in your face about it in a nice way.” Though there are many programs throughout the country aimed at preventing drop-outs, we don’t pretend to have the resources (either financial or time) to develop or offer one single program.

What we will work toward is a consistent message about the importance of staying in school and getting a diploma which is the gateway to further training or education and therefore success.

Other benefits of increased graduation rate, according to many studies, include: longer lives, less likelihood of becoming teen parents, less likelihood of committing crimes, less reliance of government assistance & increased likelihood of voting and volunteering.

Here are some sobering statistics about dropouts from the Alliance for Excellent Education’s (AEE) November 2011 Issue Brief:

- Close to 7,000 students drop out every school day
- Only about 72% of students graduate nationally
- The average annual salary for a high school dropout in 2009 was \$19,540. For a high school graduate, it was \$27,380.
- Salaries rise to \$36,190 with an associate’s degree, and \$46,930 with a bachelor’s degree.
- Unemployment for high school dropouts was 14.3% in

Aug. 2011; it was 9.6% for high school graduates, 8.2% for those with some college, and 4.3% for those with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

See **RIPPLE EFFECT** on Page 2

Program Updates

January is National Mentoring Month! This is a great opportunity to recognize the huge impact a mentor can make on the life of a young person- academically, of course, but also socially and emotionally. If you’re an educator or a tutor, you already know; mentoring relationships give youth the consistent encouragement, skills, and motivation to succeed and make good choices. Mentors serve to connect their mentees with information and opportunities that make goals

like graduation and post-secondary education realistic and attainable. Thank you to those serving directly with our youth, that give them a listening ear and a helpful hand. Thank you to the program staff that work hard to build and grow meaningful relationships and create possibilities. There are programs all across Muskegon County that strengthen the mentoring movement. We are proud Muskegon Opportunity is one of them.

See **UPDATES** on Page 2

Counselor & Adviser Corner

Food for Thought:

Don’t visit your school counselor much? Well you should & here’s why. They will help you:

1. Understand ALL high school academic options beyond traditional classes (Advance Placement, Dual Enrollment, Career Tech).
2. Select high school classes based on your college & career interests.
3. Determine which “college” option is right for you (vocational training, military, associate or bachelor degree programs)
4. Start your FAFSA as early as RIGHT NOW (for seniors). It’s all about the FAFSA!!!
5. Search local, regional and national scholarship searching & provide financial aid guidance.

See **CORNER** on Page 2

Save the Date

- **Friday, Jan. 20:** Advisory committee meeting—8 a.m., Muskegon Community College.
- **Friday, Jan. 20:** Lumberjack Mentor Appreciation Night - 7 p.m., L.C. Walker Arena.
- **Wednesday, Jan. 25:** Dropout Prevention webinar—noon to 1:00 p.m., MAISD.
- **Sunday, Feb. 12:** College Goal Sunday— 2 p.m.—4 p.m., Muskegon Community College.

MESSENGER

Ripple Effect (Cont'd from page 1)

Locally, we are not immune to the dropout phenomenon and could reap significant societal gains if we were to reduce our dropout rate by half.

According to A.E.E., if 50% of the nearly 1,000 students who dropped out of the class of 2010 in the Muskegon-Norton Shores metropolitan statistical area (MSA)* had graduated with their class, these 500 "new graduates" would:

- Have \$6.6 million in increased earnings in a year
- Spend an additional \$5.1 million and invest \$1.5 million more
- Have future home purchases of \$19 million more, and \$500,000 more in automobile sales
- Contribute to \$8.3 million in economic growth.
- Add \$700,000 in tax revenue at local and state levels each year.

Clearly, this is an issue for our entire community – not just educators or nonprofits.

United Way Worldwide, in partnership with the American Human Development Project, created an interactive online tool - the [Common Good Forecaster](#) - that

shows the impact on health and financial stability through increased education rates. Using the hyperlink, click on Michigan, enter Muskegon County and then move the education attainment rates, on the left, to see changes in life expectancy, murder rates, obesity, poverty and unemployment rates and other indicators. There are pre-set scenarios (1/2 without high school, all without high school, moving all up one education category, etc.) or you can just move the percentages yourself. It is a great visual and should be shared widely.

The Dropout Prevention Subcommittee looks forward to working closely with Parent Engagement and Business Engagement, as well as the entire community, as we forge ahead with efforts geared more toward information and message strategies relating to increasing our county's graduation rate. We welcome your ideas, and invite you to join us – or at least help us stay "in people's faces" as we try to help our youth reach their fullest potential. This goal is too important; we need help from ALL of you!

**In this MSA, 34% of high school students do not graduate from high school on time with a regular diploma.

Alliance for Health Works with Muskegon Partners on

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant

MUSKEGON— Lody Zwarensteyn, President of the Alliance for Health announced a new grant received from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) initiative. The grant provides funding for a Population Health Project entitled "Muskegon Healthy Grad." The grant will focus on the close link between health and wellness and a student's ability to learn and graduate.

between stakeholders, including health care providers, consumers, payers, and partners from other sectors—especially public health—to improve the health of AF4Q communities and the care provided to residents.

Local coordination of the project will be handled by the Muskegon Health Project. Additional collaborative partners include Muskegon Area Intermediate School District, "1 in 21" Healthy Muskegon County – Rotary Club, The Department of Public Health, Muskegon County, Muskegon Opportunity, and the Corp for National & Community Service.

The project links several partners and initiatives with the mutual goal of increasing high school graduation rates. The project will explore opportunities to improve student health through supporting Community Health Workers in school, enrollment services for Medicaid/MI-Child if eligible, developing a comprehensive coordinated school health program and improve the screening process for the state-funded Tuition Incentive Program that provides aid to students based upon Medicaid eligibility.

AF4Q aims to help targeted communities across the country set and achieve ambitious goals to lift the overall quality and value of health care, reduce racial and ethnic disparities in care, and provide models for national reform. West Michigan is one of only 16 communities participating in this effort.

The AF4Q Population Health Project aims to promote further coordination and collaboration

UPDATES (cont'd from page 1)

Dropout Prevention Lunch & Learn - As members of the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPN), a clearinghouse on issues related to dropout prevention that offers strategies designed to increase the graduation rate in America's schools, Muskegon Opportunity has access to resources such as a radio webcast series entitled "Solutions to the Dropout Crisis." This series highlights effective practices in dropout prevention and is led by national experts.

From this series, the dropout prevention subcommittee has created an entire year of *Lunch and Learn* events that will explore some of the beneficial infor-

mation that the NDPN "Solutions to the Dropout Crisis" has available. These lunch events are open to the public; attendees are asked to bring their own lunch. Attendees are also asked to come prepared to listen, review and open up dialogue about ways to employ these strategies.

Our first *Lunch and Learn* event is Wednesday January 25, 2012 from noon- 1:00pm at the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MAISD). Additional *Lunch and Learn* events have also been scheduled through 2012 and information can be found on the Muskegon Opportunity website.

CORNER (cont'd from page 1)

5. Set-up college visits or phone interviews with advisors/counselors at the college of interest.
6. Plan your college visit to get the most out of it. Map out who to see, where to go & the questions you should ask.

*** FYI: You're more memorable in person than on paper!

Spring Break is the perfect time to plan a college visit, sit in on a class/lab within the college major you are most interested, meet the financial aid and admissions reps. **For more info, see your counselor today!**

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