



## **Minutes of the Bernards Township Municipal Alliance /Youth Services Commission**

March 8, 2022

### **Mayoral-Appointed Members Attending**

1. Janice Fields - Chair, Township Committee Representative
2. Colin Lochner - Vice Chair, Substance Abuse Representative
3. Karen Gray - BOE Representative
4. MJ Postal - Senior Citizen Representative
5. Rebecca Tritt - Ridge High School SAC, School Representative
6. Ellen Houlihan - Civic Group Representative
7. Catherine Santaiti - PTO Representative
8. Xingyue Huang – Citizen Representative
9. Rabbi Robert Green – Clergy Representative (arr 6:30 pm)
10. Michele Roberts – Citizen Representative
11. Sanjiv Raghupathy - Student Representative
12. Kaitlin Cartoccio, MAC/Health Department Representative

### **Other Attendees**

1. Lucy Forgione - Bernards Township Health Department
2. Stephanie Billitz Somerset County Alliance Coordinator
3. Monica Sprague - Youth Services Commission
4. Todd Edelstein - Public

### **Members Not Attending**

1. Tracy Baldassare – Bernards Township Police Department
2. Phil Jasina, Alternate - Bernards Township Police Department
3. Swapna Uradi - Citizen Representative
4. Madison Clowes – Student Representative

### **Call to Order**

Janice Fields called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. All attendees stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Mission Statement**

The Mission Statement was read by Kaitlin Cartoccio. The mission of the Bernards Township Municipal Alliance Against Substance Abuse is to provide consultation, programs, training, and resources to members of the Bernards Township community with the goal of preventing and reducing the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

### **Three goals of the Alliance: ESP!**

1. To **educate** about the damaging effects of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs,
2. To **support** events & programs that provide healthy alternatives to substance abuse, and



3. To create community wide **presence** in the identification of problems and in designing effective measurable solutions.

### **Staff Comment**

Lucy Forgione commented she was looking forward to events like the Twilight Challenge

### **Minutes Approval**

A motion was made to approve the minutes from October 5, 2021

Motion 1) Colin Lochner

2) Kaitlin Cartoccio

All in favor, motion carried.

### **Reports**

**Somerset County Alliance Coordinator** – (Stephanie Billitz)

- Submitting MA plans soon and don't foresee a lot of changes. Waiting on Q2 report which Kaitlin will forward asap.

**Youth Services Commission** –(Monica Sprague)

- The RFP competitive grant is for new innovative pilot programs or to expand existing programs in amount of \$3K-\$12K

**Community Program Coordinator** – (Kaitlin Cartoccio)

- Annual Grant of about \$5K for youth programs liking Viking, REACH, Grab and Go programs. If there are any ideas for youth services, please bring them to Kaitlin to apply. Competitive grant programs are the ones that can launch a program and then there are other ways to keep them going.  
Monica Sprague commented that Bernards Township has been a model for assessing needs in the community and finding creative programs that engage our youth. Other examples of programs: RISE (Reaching, Inspiring, Supporting Each other) at WAMS - students meet 2x's/ month with youth counselor focusing on Kindness/ Drug & Vaping Presentation/ Respect initiatives; student led initiatives; creative corner in media center (bean bag chairs, light filters, iPod for music in the am); Kindness challenge; 8th grade run meetings for 6th graders. Lucy Forgione suggested a program for the elementary schools? Catherine Saintaiti mentioned she could make connection with student counsel to support them. Kaitlin closed out the discussion mentioning it would have to be for identified to provide programming for "at risk" youth and must be ongoing. Will send out email with details including qualifying programming.

## **Agenda Items**

### **1. Welcome New Members**

- Michele Roberts – Citizen Representative
- Sanjiv Raghupathy - Student Representative

### **2. Youth Services Program Updates**

#### ***REACH (Ridge Education Action & Community Health).***

- a. Working on newsletter – “outREACH” Focus on Drug Use, Mental Health, LGBTQ+, Environment).
- b. Making sure website is fresh and up to date.
- c. Grab and Go Teen Outreach - Feb was bath balms; No bags for March Next bag is focused on stress relief around college entrance exams. Pick up April 13 and 14; May will be coordinated with Earth Day - possible “decorate a reusable bag”; Hoping to bring it back in person as time goes on - activities in the park; movie nights, etc. In 2023 when grant runs out, there may be money in the library budget to continue this program in some way.

### **3. Upcoming Programs**

- LMTI Camp (<https://njlmti.org/>) will be in person. Aug 22 - 26 at Camp Mason. YACS go up a day early; At this point, all participants must be vaccinated, and have a neg COVID test 48 hrs. prior to arriving.
  - Email went out yesterday for nominations for REACH members to attend as a camper/ participant; also, YAC (Youth Advisory Council) - previously attended LMTI and will attend this year in a leadership position. CATS - College Aged attendees
  - Usually, 15 eighth grade students per team at middle school will be nominated for LMTI; looking for a variety of leaders with different strengths. Kaitlyn sends a letter to those nominated to attend an information session. Grant money is available to provide about 10 students \$250 partial scholarship as needed to offset their cost: 3 full scholarships available for those in need.
  - If there is a student who is not nominated but would like to attend, they or parent should reach out and we can work on getting them signed up
  - Would take up to 30 students including YACs.
  - (MJ) Favorite program we do!
- **Charter Day – May 21st - MA will have a table**
  - Typically have REACH and MA members working table
  - Sell water bottles
  - Advertise for Twilight Challenge; Give aways for those that register at the table
  - Fatal vision goggles and activities



- For free or for donation of \$1 or more - spin wheel and answer questions for a prize.
- MA Members - at least one other adult at table at all times; 1 person selling; 1 person on twilight challenge; 1 person to answer MA questions; typically have had more students than adults at table working wheel; Need more age appropriate questions for younger children as alternative to specific drug/alcohol related trivial;
- Heavy lifting needed for set up and clean up; pack up the night before at the Health Department. Kaitlin will send out volunteer sign up.
- **Twilight Challenge 5K – June 5th**
  - 32nd Annual
  - All set with Parks and Rec to set aside Pleasant Valley Park
  - Starting in Lot 2 - 2 loops for 5K
  - Set up at 2:30pm and done by 8:30pm
  - 5K at 6PM
  - 1mile health walk at 5:30 led by Lucy Forgione
  - 6:30PM - Lollipop Loop - race for kids in soccer field
  - 7PM awards ceremony
  - Having 3-fold brochure
  - Early bird registration until May 1 (\$20); May 2 - Race Day \$25; Race Day \$30; \$15 for the 1-mile health walk; Registrants and volunteers get t-shirts; no swag bags; no donations accepted.
  - Metal awards for overall top male and female and every winner in each age group.
  - Sponsorship forms went out over email to all members detailing the different sponsorship levels.
  - Orgs can give checks, gift cards, Due by Friday May 15.
  - Will hang posters advertising twilight challenge; MA members are asked to take a few and ask them to ask local businesses.
  - In the past Wegmans has donated water, cups, bananas, etc; 7-11 and Subway donated sandwiches; Deans has also donated oranges and bananas
  - Will have 30 - 40 volunteers from 3-8pm.
  - Will have a sign up for volunteers to take specific jobs.
  - T Shirts have been picked; Mama's Stew Classic Rock Band will be there;
  - LC EMT will be there unless they are called away
  - Police presence will also be there to help
- **Spring DEA Drug Take Back Day is coming up in April;** Looking at value of having volunteers there to help with a drive through or just promote the drop box



- **Update on RACE to be Human that ran on February 24<sup>th</sup> 7pm**  
Excellent presentation and discussion; covered a lot and defined a lot; used all different ages and backgrounds; great response from those in group that attended. Interest in overall response and attendance as well as township attendance.
- **Bernards Township School District Pride Survey**  
The PRIDE was administered in December to Bernards Township 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Response rate was very low due to some confusion surrounding the survey and the COVID-19 Omicron surge. The survey will be readministered in the next school year.
- **Hope & Healing Support programs – Resiliency Workshops**  
Family Support Services in Camden offers statewide resiliency workshops through the FEMA Hope & Healing Support programs. Can offer resiliency workshops to teens and adults. Hoping to partner with the schools. Can also provide resources for seniors.
- **LGBTQ ATOD Prevention Programs – Partners in Prevention/Lindsey Meyer Teen Institute**  
Monies have been encumbered to provide LGBTQ ATOD Trainings to REACH students and a community-wide workshop.

#### **4.Subcommittee Discussion**

Colin Lochner and MJ Postal are interested in senior mental health; do we want a formal mental health fundraising committee? Are there any county or township initiatives for seniors for Silver/ amber alerts?

Lucy Forgione commented that the Health Department has relationship with local senior centers; but not Municipal Alliance specific, Health Department monitors all infectious disease outbreaks not exclusive to COVID; close working relationship with Ridge Oak and VNA Nutrition Site; BTPD has intervention response for silver alerts;

Colin Lochner is interested in outreach for seniors that are isolated; MJ Postal brought up the Office on Aging is a county program that organizes volunteers to help seniors living on their own. The County Mental Health Board - Dial 988 for mental health first aid (<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/current-events/the-lifeline-and-988/>)

Robert Green mentioned that the clergy often keep list of people in need to be checking on.

Lucy Forgione commented that Peapack/ Gladstone has a model that they do wellness checks on seniors. Group agreed that looking into that model would be a good idea, but we would need someone in the group to take the lead on this type of effort.



### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No members of the public present at this time.

### **LOCAL EVENTS / MUNICIPAL ALLIANCE MEMBER COMMENTS:**

Lucy welcomed back Kaitlin - first day back after breaking foot

Janice Fields commented that they were looking for someone with a finance background to join the library board

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45pm

Motion (1) Kaitlin

(2) Colin

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine Santaiti

*Municipal Alliance Secretary*