

# West River Valley Thrives Community Coalition Meeting 5/16/2018

**In Attendance:** Nick Plante, Steve Tavella, Michael Roj, Karren Meyer, Ron Millette, Susan Gunther-Mohr, Carol Young, Janis Hall, Shelly Huber, Emily Long



## Introductions

**Steve Tavella** - WRVT director

**Nick Plante** - WRVT project coordinator

**Deputy Michael Roj** (Windham County Sheriff's Office, representing the law enforcement sector in our coalition) - currently conducting the Enhanced Teen Driver Safety Program with student driver education classes throughout Windham and Windsor Counties. Mike supplements and supports the classes with a highway law enforcement perspective to help teach students to have a safe interaction with driving. Mike runs the only comprehensive enhanced teen driver safety program of its kind throughout New England, south to New Jersey.

**Karren Meyer** (Leland & Gray Driver Education instructor, representing the parent sector in our coalition) - currently teaching Driver Education and coordinating the Refuse to Use program at Leland & Gray that combines reduced annual ski passes for 9-12 grade students who agree to attend substance use education presentations throughout the fall and winter months. She has an 18 year-old son and a 13 year-old daughter.

**Ron Millette** (Pastor at Calvary Chapel in Townshend, representing the faith-based sector in our coalition) - Ron has been a pastor for 30 years, 15 of which have been in Vermont. He works with the volunteer community group, Community Hope and Action, whose objective is to build positive community relationships and resilience through the sponsorship of monthly substance-free events in the upper West River Valley. He has seen the effect of the positive outreach in the people in our community, changing people's lives. He is excited to work with WRVT to reach out and change lives, bringing hope to the West River Valley.

**Susan Gunther Mohr** (Social Worker at Leland & Gray, representing the school sector in our coalition) – Susan is an advocate for students, with her main responsibility at Leland & Gray to assist students with mental health issues. Susan was instrumental in assisting WRVT conduct a school-wide substance use and perceptions survey this school year.

**Janis Hall** (Co-founder/coordinator, along with Jim Zoller, of 3Generations Collaboration, representing the civic/volunteer sector of our coalition) - Janis and Jim connect youth, adults, and older adults (3 generations) in the West River Valley through volunteer partnerships that are mutually beneficial. This year's onset of L&G's student community service requirement has allowed for an ideal situation to start this program in the area. Challenges have been getting the word out to different people who receive information through completely different sources. A larger part of 3GC's goal is to strengthen communities.

**Carol Young** (Owner of West River Camperama, representing the business sector of our coalition) – Carol has a son at L&G. She is concerned about vaping and marijuana (especially with upcoming laws that may affect perceptions of her campers around substance use in her campground).

**Shelly Huber** (Incoming president of Valley Lion's Club). Valley Lions is celebrating their 50th anniversary in the area this year, and 100 years as a national/international organization. Valley Lions serves Newfane, Brookline, Townshend, and Wardsboro. Its mission is youth, vision/eyes, and diabetes focused. They offer gifted glasses to those who cannot afford them. Shelly emphasizes that the club is all about community and providing services to those who cannot afford them. Shelly also serves on the Newfane select board. She is excited to work together with other organizations.

**Emily Long** (Windham-5 State Representative and board member of Leland & Gray). Emily was born in Townshend and grew up in Newfane. She is a passionate supporter of public education and has served for 20 years in many capacities on local school boards. She is a member of the House Committee on Education.

## **WRVT Presentation**

West River Valley Thrives made a short presentation on the following topics. If you would like a copy of the presentation, email Steve at [wrvtdirector@gmail.com](mailto:wrvtdirector@gmail.com).

1. How it uses the Strategic Prevention Framework to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate its programs;
2. The concept of the public health approach to building capable, resilient communities;
3. The role of a coalition in achieving community-level change; and
4. The importance of having an accurate and up-to-date community-wide assessment to better understand issues, protective and risk factors, and resources, to name a few.

Lastly, WRVT briefly engaged the coalition in a discussion around building cultural competence, what it means, and why it is important. Future training for the coalition may address this topic.

How can we all benefit and support a common mission of creating healthier communities? The coalition brainstormed the following items. The coalition can discuss how we would like to use this list to frame future conversations and collaborative work.

- I have resources – how can our coalition help each of us in this group?
- Where are the needs for volunteers?
- How do we reach our youth/adults in the communities? How do we help them find purpose and hope?
- Be patient with change!
- Remember collaboration – we are a group that can draw on each other’s expertise.
- Parenting help! What are the good parenting programs? Parenting Wisely was mentioned as one program/curriculum.
- Using required community service at Leland & Gray to get our youth more involved.
- Form focus groups (funding needed?)
- Find viable public transportation throughout the valley (funding needed?)
- Young adults (18 – 25+)
  - Training for those not going to college
  - How to keep youth in the community and contributing positively
  - How to use resources like BDCC and the career center more effectively.
  - Work apprenticeships
- What are we doing right?
- What are identified barriers?

## **What topics would you like to learn more about?**

The following topics were listed as potential future areas to discuss and learn about in future meetings:

- Healthy Valley 2040
- Cultural competency
- More in-depth presentations from members of our coalition

## **Best time to meet?**

The group felt for the most part that Wednesday was the best day of the week to meet, between 3 and 4:30 in the afternoon.

## **Next coalition meeting?**

Last week of June (details forthcoming – stay tuned!)