

Press Release

Coalition Focusing on Positive Youth Development

The December meeting of the Building Communities for Children Coalition (BCC), highlighted the Game Loft, recent recipient of a #1 Exemplary Community Afterschool Program award. Board members, staff and a youth member shared the presentation about the programming at the Loft and their hopes to expand offerings to communities outside Belfast in the near future. The mission of the Game Loft is "to promote Positive Youth Development through games." They are currently serving an average of 15 youth per day, 200 unduplicated youth per month, with more than 400 visits per month. More information can be found at www.thegameloft.org or by calling 338-6447.

The January 3rd BCC meeting will feature a presentation by two Waldo County youth who participate in the Youth Empowerment and Policy Project (YEPP). Ellen Marlow of Belfast, currently a University of Maine - Farmington student and Alex Knight, a home school student from Northport will describe their work. YEPP members, supported by AdCare Educational Institute of Maine, have worked over the last several years to bring a youth voice to reduce underage drinking. Their Project conducts research through surveys, interviews and other methods and generates reports to better inform communities about underage drinking. The Project has issued reports on School Policy, Athletic Policy, Alcohol Advertising and has developed, in collaboration with alcohol retailers, a Code of Conduct encouraging responsibility in sales and marketing. The current YEPP project is to gather information about "social hosting", when adults provide a place and sometimes provide alcohol for minors to consume. More information at www.neias.org/YEP/ or by calling 626-3615. BCC has agreed to provide local support to the project.

Coalition members have been working closely with two groups at Mt. View High School. One group has been working to bring awareness to the problem of youth homelessness. They have developed a Homeless Youth Resource Guide and have created the "Backpack Project" to gather and distribute backpacks filled with supplies for youth who find themselves homeless. The second group, 09 In Action, is a youth philanthropy group supported in collaboration with the Waldo County Fund of the Maine Community Foundation. The youth gather information about local community needs, develop a Request For Proposals, review grant applications and allocate \$5,000 annually to support non-profit groups who will conduct project activities addressing priority needs. Last year 09 In Action made grants to the Brooks Park Boosters, Waldo County YMCA, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters of the Midcoast.

All are invited to attend Building Communities for Children coalition meetings on the first Thursday of the month beginning at 9 am in Room 306 at the Belfast Center. Contact Sheila Muldoon, coalition Chair at 338-5158 or Patrick Walsh, BCC staff at 338-2200 ext 109 for more information.