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Volume XV Number 6

# Northern Berkshire Community Coalition NEWS

## Hundreds Support Martin Luther King Day Celebration

About 200 people attended the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration Jan. 15 at the First Baptist Church in North Adams. "Together We Can Make a Difference" was the theme of the day. The guest speaker was the Rev. Wesley Williams, who has been serving as a pastor in the urban ministries of the United Methodist Church in the New England area since 1976 and is currently based in Boston. His talk was excellent and this was confirmed by the standing ovation he received.

"He was a true prophet," Williams said of King. "He was a prophet in the old, ancient, prophetic traditions of Israel in that he was always telling us the discrepancy between God's law and our actions." "Dr. Martin Luther King, yes, was a drum major for justice and so much of what he did was made manifest through the political system in bringing people together, but he was first and foremost a preacher. He was a preacher of the Gospel," Williams said. "In fact, he came from a long line of preachers." "He accepted the call to the ministry when he was 17 years old. And so he couldn't help it. He couldn't run from it. Like Moses, he kept a vision of the promised land before us, but like Moses he probably knew — he did know — that he was not going to get there with us. Because like the prophets he knew that wherever the people were convicted by the truth, the messenger was probably going to be killed."

Williams recommended his listeners to the documentary on the civil rights movement *Eyes on the Prize* and Taylor Branch's book on the movement called *Parting the Waters*. But his knowledge of King was more direct. "I knew him. I knew him personally. My earliest years were formed with Dr. King sitting around our breakfast or dinner table," he said. Williams' father was in 1953 one of a number of black seminarians who were studying at the Boston University School of Theology, and they hung around the Williams household in Boston.

"King didn't necessarily stand out in my mind, because all I could remember were the ones that brought me things," Williams said. "But I do remember one afternoon we were sitting around the table, it was a Sunday afternoon. Someone had just come back from attending a concert at Symphony Hall. And all this person could talk about was how ugly the performer was, and she went on and on and on...much to my delight. I thought she was funny, I thought she was entertaining." But King didn't agree and launched a diatribe on how "she had missed the essence of the spirit of the singer because she was so focused on the way he looked."

Said Williams, "So the rest is history, and the man was catapulted into the international arena as an icon for justice. "He used what God gave him for the situation he found himself in to demonstrate God's power to change the negative forces that marginalize, that dehumanize, that crush people," he said. "It was a spirit of God that gave him the strength to carry off this ministry even in the face of

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## FEBRUARY COALITION MEETING :

**"APPRECIATING THE  
IMPORTANCE OF  
CHILD CARE"  
First Baptist Church of  
North Adams  
131 Main Street,  
(Eagle Street entrance)  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9  
10 AM to NOON**

The monthly meetings of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition are open to the public, and offer wonderful opportunities for networking and sharing information. The meeting will open with introductions and announcements, followed by a discussion of child care in Northern Berkshire, its legacy, challenges, and its future. Join us for this important discussion.

## NBCCoalition INFORMATION

The mission statement of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition is *"organizing people and resources dedicated to improving the quality of life in Northern Berkshire."*

The nbCC is supported by the Northern Berkshire community, with funding from a variety of sources from Massachusetts including the Department of Social Services, the Cultural Council, and the Department of Public Health. The Coalition is a member agency of the Northern Berkshire United Way and the Williamstown Community Chest. The Coalition is also supported through grants from the Campaign for Human Development, City of North Adams and town of Adams, and through the contributions from its many supporters. Printing of the Coalition NEWSletter is supported by the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

## To Submit to NBCCoalition NEWS:

The NEWSletter is a publication of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition. It goes out to our mailing list of about 700. The Newsletter works because so many contribute. Articles for the March NEWSletter are due February 14th. To submit articles for the NEWSletter :

E-Mail : [albash@bcn.net](mailto:albash@bcn.net)  
 Fax : 413 663-9877  
 Mail : NBCC  
 85 Main St #332  
 North Adams, MA  
 01247

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ignominious shame, danger, and frustration. He inspired then, and judging by the size of this audience today, he inspires today." If we are honest with ourselves, we know that there is discrepancy between King's dream and where we are headed today as a society," Williams said.

He next talked about the particulars of the King himself. This included how King took a pastorate of a church in Montgomery, Alabama. Rosa Parks at this time refused to give up her seat to a white man on a city bus. This sparked a successful non-violent boycott by blacks of the Montgomery bus system, led by King, that desegregated the system and propelled King into national and international fame. "Can we do this thing together?" Williams asked. "We can do this thing together because, don't forget folks, the institutions are still driven by numbers — city hall, big business, they all take a poll — believe me." "So you can do it, and an old African proverb has it that 'In many, many spider webs you tie up an elephant.' So don't think that your effort is not strong enough. Collectively you can do this. You can make a change," he said.

"One of the things that I just implore you to do here in North Adams...this is a lovely, storybook town...I don't want you to use this setting to isolate yourselves," Williams said. "I want you to get outside of yourselves and I want you to learn, go beyond the media, try to understand about other cultures, other people. That's what he taught."

Williams gave King's four steps in launching a non-violent campaign: first, collect the facts, determine whether injustices are alive in your community; second, after collecting those facts, gather people with you to negotiate with the powers that be; "Go in and try to reason with people, armed with facts, and try to appeal to their better nature."; third, determine your personal motives, what do you feel about people, can you endure the ordeals of jail, if it should come to that; and fourth, non-violent direct action, "which seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue." "Never give up on love, never resort to violence, because Martin's dream has to be our dream. Violence begets violence," Williams said. "That's why the skin heads, that's why the militia are not going to prevail."

Along with the keynote by Wes Williams, there was a presentation to the North Adams Public Library of a check to purchase books relating to the themes of Martin Luther King's life. These monies were made available by the Martin Luther King Day Committee. Dramatic dance by students of Karen's Dance studio provided the celebration with very moving pieces that connect with the songs and speeches of Dr. King's time. State Representative Dan Bosley gave an inspiring few words about how Martin Luther King touched his heart. Yes, Dan, we have come a long way, and continue to have many roads to travel. With all of our help, we can continue to ensure that all have access to the "unalienable rights" of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

After the presentation of the Peacemaker Award by Erin Egan and Mayor Barrett to Rosalie Girard, the group convened for the traditional pot luck lunch downstairs in the Baptist Church. An afternoon of workshops was followed by an ecumenical service commemorating the words and life of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. .

*Our thanks to Mark Rondeau of the Advocate for providing us with the essence of this story on the Reverend Wes Williams' speech. — Al Bashevkin*

## Northern Berkshire Legislative Contacts

|                     |                                     |          |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| Rep Shaun Kelly     | 399 Main Street Dalton 01226 .....  | 684-5133 |
| Sen Andrea Nuciforo | 74 North St Pittsfield 01201 .....  | 442-6810 |
| Cong John Olver     | 78 Center St Pittsfield 01201 ..... | 442-0946 |
| Rep Dan Bosley      | 3 Elmwood Avenue NA 01247 .....     | 663-7486 |

# NEWS FROM AROUND THE COALITION

## February Coalition Meeting to Host Discussion on Child Care

The February meeting of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition (Friday, February 9<sup>th</sup> 10 AM to noon at the Baptist Church in North Adams) will have a focus on childcare and its importance in our new economy. One cannot underestimate the importance of a reliable child care system in our future in Northern Berkshire. As we talk about building an economy that supports families, child care has been mentioned as a key component of the infrastructure that supports the local economy. Families who work hard to support themselves need an accessible and affordable child care system for their children while they are away at work. Child care experiences are often the first educational settings for our youngsters who will soon be going to school. Yet our child care system is fragile and needs attention. Demand is often greater than the supply. The needs for off-hour care cannot be easily met without supports for that flexibility. Financial support for child care is limited, making cost a barrier for some parents. In addition, turnover among staff can be high due to the low paying and lower status (both undeserving) for workers entering the child care field.

There are programs in Northern Berkshire to serve as supports for the child care system. The Northern Berkshire Community Partnership offers subsidies for child care and support for increasing the quality of childcare programs. They have served nearly two hundred children through their subsidies this past fiscal year. Child Care of the Berkshires supports both center based and family based child care programs in the region. At present, the total capacity for child care in Northern Berkshire County is 1421. Our friends working in the child care systems will be present to help facilitate this discussion about child care.

*Join us for the February Coalition meeting and a discussion for what is necessary to make the local child care system accessible, affordable, and one that offers quality care.*

## Transportation Study Proceeds

Transportation remains a key issue for the residents of the Northern Berkshire region. At present, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and its staff, Zoe Neaderland, is getting surveys out to the community to assess how transportation impacts peoples' lives. In addition, the surveys hope to provide information necessary for Northern Berkshire to make changes to the transportation network that will work for local residents. Chuck McNeil of the BRTA, along with representatives of the Coalition are active in this process.

Examples of how important transportation is arose twice in the past couple of days. At a recent meeting of the Northern Berkshire Youth Collaborative, a topic was the need for after school programs for children of middle school ages. Transporting children home after these meetings was seen as the greatest barrier to these programs. If parents are unavailable to transport, how would the children get home? Transporting could be as great an expense as providing the programs. In discussions with local day care providers, transportation was the greatest challenge to providing accessible care to all families of Northern Berkshire. Quite simply, without a car, you may be able to get to your job via public transportation, but how do you get your children to and from day care?

Enclosed in today's newsletter is the survey for individuals to complete who may be in need of some transportation services. Please help us to get these surveys to the right people. Our work in molding a useful transportation resource depends on getting information from people without cars. For information, contact the Coalition office. – *Al Bashevkin*

## Lifestyle Training

Save the date! February 28<sup>th</sup> from 2 to 4 PM at the Baptist Church in North Adams, there will be a training and discussion about families who are in jeopardy of losing their housing because of their inability to keep their houses in sanitary condition. For the past few months, Mike Sarkis of the North Adams Health Department has engaged many in the community in discussions about families that are not maintaining their homes. For many, this is a lifestyle, and results in dangerous living environments. The reasons for this lifestyle are many, and the need is to reeducate and support families in helping them to maintain their homes and its refuse. The local health department is involved because of their job in code enforcement. Ray Burke, Area Director of the Department of Social Services, and Carolyn Burns of the Berkshire Center for Families and Children have been helpful in devising short term and long term strategies for this issue.

Charlie Kaniecki of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has seen this issue in many communities. He has prepared a presentation on "hoarding behavior" in families and what can be done. This may be part of our solution and this presentation will be helpful for us in helping to devise local strategies and resources that can help families who do not have the capacity to keep up their homes.

This is an opportunity for service providers and program funders to think together about a solution to a chronic issue for our communities. **Join us on February 28<sup>th</sup> from 2 – 4 PM.** For more information, contact Al at the Coalition office, 663-7588.

## READING Brings Northern Berkshire Youth Books to Local Neighborhoods Collaborative Proceeds

READING is a family literacy program designed to bring fun and innovative literary experiences directly to neighborhoods in North Adams. The Brayton Hill Neighborhood will be the pilot site with the hopes of adding on others in the future. Each month all children and adults enrolled in the program will receive one free book. There will be an array of books to choose from which will be displayed at the neighborhood community room. There will be a one to two hour program for each age group with story hours, individual reading sessions, book discussion clubs, and literacy board games on a monthly basis. Throughout the month there will be special events such as library trips, pajama parties, camp outs, journal writing workshops and many more. We have received partial funding from two local agencies and are in the process of applying for other grants. If anyone would like to help out, we are looking for adult best sellers that are in very good condition to be donated. You can drop them off at the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition office or call Sue Daugherty at 663-7588 for pick-up. — *Sue Daugherty*

## New Toy Library Available

North Adams is a town where there may not be many accessible public places for children to play — especially for children who do not have an even chance for growth and development. Yet, thanks to Karen Charbonneau and the Early Intervention Program (EIP) in Northern Berkshire, there will be a place for local children to play and even take out toys on loan. This new place is called the Northern Berkshire Toy Library, which opened Monday, Jan. 15, at 25 Marshall St. in North Adams. It is committed to providing all families in the community who have young children from birth to four years of age, with opportunities for learning and socialization through play.

The Northern Berkshire Toy Library at the Early Intervention Program officially opened Jan. 15. It is open to the public for everyone to enjoy free of charge. However, to take out the toys on loan you must have a membership. For more information or for library hours, call 662-3315. *By Amy Verrier*

Are you a youth worker in Northern Berkshire County? Feeling like you're working alone? Then you ought to join the Northern Berkshire Youth Collaborative for a warm meal and the opportunity to gather with others working with youth. These monthly meetings are held at the Coalition office the fourth Tuesday of each month (through May) at noon with lunch being provided. "Can't lose with that system," says one local youth worker.

The January meeting of the Northern Berkshire Youth Collaborative offered youth workers an opportunity to hear about each others' programs with an ear towards what's missing for youth in the region. Outside of the Girl Scouts, the 4-H Youth Development office, and Conte Middle School, it appears from our conversation that middle schoolers are lacking the opportunities for activities that other students have. In addition, the lacrosse program at the Williamstown Youth Center and the Swim Team sponsored by the Northern Berkshire YMCA might benefit from a more regional approach. The Adams Youth Center is sponsoring a trip to Springfield on February 22<sup>nd</sup> to see the Harlem Globetrotters. If interested, call Jaime at 743-3550.

The next meeting of the Northern Berkshire Youth Collaborative will be **Tuesday February 27<sup>th</sup> at noon** in the Coalition Conference Room. Call us (663-7588) so we know how much pizza is needed if you are interested in attending. — *Al Bashevkin*

## Out of School Time Fair Planned for February 8

Join parents and organizations for the Out-of School Time Fair, February 8<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:30 PM at the second floor of 85 Main Street in North Adams. Thanks to the leadership of the UMASS Extension 4-H Youth and Family Development office, this fair has included the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and the Northern Berkshire United Way as its co-sponsors. The purposes of this program are many. One is to provide parents with information about programs from many local organizations that offer out-of-school time activities. Secondly, this will be a unique opportunity for out of school time programs to come together and consider what is available for North County youth. Third, there will be food and activities for children available. Come hungry, and come hear about the programs of 4-H, Kidspace at MASS MoCA, UNITY, the COTY Center, the YMCA, the Grooove, Conte Middle School, the Adams and Williamstown Youth Centers, and others. If your name is not part of this list, call Erica at the Coalition office (663-7588) to sign on.

**SURVEY OF TRANSPORTATION NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS  
\*FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH LIMITED TRANSPORTATION\***

***This is a survey for people without cars OR with limited access to a car & who live in Adams, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Florida, New Ashford, North Adams, Savoy, or Williamstown.***

*Please fill out only one survey per household. If possible, have the household member with the greatest unmet transportation needs complete this survey. Return surveys by **March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2001** to the address on the back of the page.*

1. Are you:  Female  Male

2. How old are you?

3. If other people also live in your household, how many are:  
 Under 18  18-34  35-65  Over 65

4. In what town or city do you live? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you currently employed?  No  Yes  
If yes, in what community? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Does your household have a car/truck?  No  Yes  
If no, do you have a friend or relative who regularly gives you rides or loans you a car?  No  Yes  
Do you have enough access to a car to meet your transportation needs?  No  Somewhat  Yes

7. Do you live within a 10-minute walk of a Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) bus stop?  No  Don't know  Yes

8. Has access to transportation limited what you or your household members could do in the past year?  No  Yes

*Please explain your answer, especially regarding transportation for getting to jobs and medical care.*

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See Over....

9. Please mark how much you use each of the following transit services.  
If you're not familiar with a service, check the last column.

| Service   | Use at least monthly | Use a few times per year | Do not use | Not aware |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------|
| BRTA buses  |                      |                          |            |           |
| BRTA half-fare program for people 60+ or disabled   |                      |                          |            |           |
| Tickets/vouchers for vans, taxis, or chaircars provided to disabled or elderly people by BRTA |                      |                          |            |           |
| Taxis or chaircars (without BRTA tickets)   |                      |                          |            |           |
| Access to Jobs transportation for people leaving welfare                                      |                      |                          |            |           |
| Council on Aging vans   |                      |                          |            |           |
| Transportation by other groups (state agencies, schools, churches, other)                     |                      |                          |            |           |

10. Please circle and/or write in practical improvements that would most help you or members of your household with transportation needs. This might include (but is not limited to) changes or improvements in:

- BRTA bus routes, hours, or transit for elderly & disabled people
- Transportation provided by human service or other organizations such as Berkshire Community Action Council or councils on aging
- Taxis and other private services
- Walking or bicycling facilities, such as sidewalks or crosswalks
- Getting and keeping a car

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**Thank you for filling out this survey!**

**Feel free to attach a page and write more -- we want to hear from you!**

*If you would like to receive the summarized results of this survey, write your name & address here:* \_\_\_\_\_

**HELP, INFORMATION, & ADDRESS FOR COMPLETED SURVEYS**

Zoe Neaderland, Senior Planner, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission  
33 Dunham Mall, Pittsfield, MA 01201, Phone (413) 442-1521  
Fax (413) 442-1523, E-mail [BRPC@rnetworx.com](mailto:BRPC@rnetworx.com), Web site [www.BerkshirePlanning.org](http://www.BerkshirePlanning.org)

## Volunteers Needed for Community Activities

**AMERICAN RED CROSS.** seeking volunteer drivers for county and state. First Aid and CPR training provided. Also seeking members for their Disaster Action Team. 442-1506, (800) 322-2030.

**BENNINGTON MUSEUM.** W. Main St., Vt. volunteers needed for genealogy library, help w/special events, office and gift shop or to meet and greet bus tours act as gallery guide or docent. Training provided. (802)447-1571.

**BERKSHIRE CENTER FOR FAMILIES and CHILDREN** volunteers needed for Homework Club and Mentoring Moms. High school students willing to tutor elementary school students, 443-1609. Women role models for Redfield House program for pregnant and parenting young mothers 448-2997.

**BERKSHIRE MUSEUM.** 39 South St., Pittsfield. Volunteers needed in most areas of the museum. Also looking for interns. 443-7171, ext. 20.

**BERKSHIRE TEEN NETWORK** seeks volunteers and camp counselors. 448-2279.

**BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS** seeks responsible adults to spend one-on-one time with kids each week. The kids are great; whether you spend your time shooting hoops, baking, taking walks, or going for ice cream, you're sure to have fun. Make a difference in the life of a child. 663-7588, or [bbbs@bcn.net](mailto:bbbs@bcn.net).

**COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES** for child abuse and neglect. CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to research and advocate children's cases. Guardian Ad Litem volunteers assure children reach homes. Seeking volunteers for fall training program. 445-6877, [www.casanet.org](http://www.casanet.org)

**ELDER SERVICES VOLUNTEER ORIENTATIONS.** Elder Services, 66 Wendell Ave., Pittsfield. Orientation sessions for prospective volunteers. Volunteers to assist elders with budgeting, reading mail, check writing, or to meet with and address the concerns of residents in area nursing homes, 1 hr./ month. Grocery shopping aides needed. 499-0524.

**FRESH AIR FUND** program, bringing inner city N.Y. children ages 6-12 to the country for a two-week summer vacation, needs host families for summer 2001. Host families may select the gender and age of their guest. (800) 367-0003, [www.freshair.org](http://www.freshair.org).

**GIRLS INC. LOOKING FOR BIG AND LITTLE SISTERS.** Women 18 and older who can make at least one-year commitment encouraged to apply. 442-5174.

**GOODWILL INDUSTRIES.** Volunteers needed for a number of tasks. Please call 442-0061.

**HABITAT FOR HUMANITY** immediate need for volunteer project supervisor for next building project, coordinated with NBHfH and McCann High School. Will work on site. 664-4440.

**IMAGES CINEMA.** Volunteers in exchange for free admission. 458-5612, email or stop by after 6:30 p.m.

**PARENTS HELPING PARENTS.** Volunteers needed to facilitate support groups for parents who are at risk for child abuse. Training and support provided. Call (800)882-1250.

**RECORDING FOR BLIND AND DYSLEXIC.** Williamstown Studio needs more volunteers. 458-3641.

**UNITY** seeks volunteers to help chaperone Grooove, (a local teen coffehouse) events. If you can help, call Erica Schmitz at 663-7588 .

## Medical Interpretation Available

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, Inc. is asking for assistance in their outreach efforts to the local immigrant and refugee population. Currently, The Federation operates four integrated programs for the immigrant community. The New American Citizenship Coalition offers services related to attaining US citizenship. The Immigrant Education Project provides education and social services to children and acts as a liaison between schools, teachers, children, and parents. The Medical Interpreters Program aims to eliminate the language barrier in order to encourage immigrants to access health care. The Refugee Resettlement Program assists Jews from the former Soviet Union to relocate to Pittsfield.

Last year services were provided by the New American Citizenship Coalition to over 300 people from thirty-seven different countries - a clear sign that the Berkshires is continuing to diversify and the immigrant population is growing. These services are available free of charge to the entire immigrant and refugee population regardless of ethnicity or religious affiliation.

If you need an interpreter (in any language) for any medical appointment or procedure, PLEASE CALL in advance to: New American Citizenship Coalition 1-413-445-4881 or Advocacy for Access 1-413-528-5045. An interpreter will be provided at no cost.

### Younger Americans Act

The Purpose of The Younger Americans Act is to mobilize American communities to assure that all youth have access to the competencies and character development they need to be fully prepared adults and effective citizens. Senator Kennedy is a sponsor.

#### Its Objective:

To create a single, comprehensive **National Youth Policy** which mobilizes and supports communities in planning and implementing strategies that link existing community-based organizations, local government, volunteer centers, schools, faith-based organizations, businesses and other segments of the community to ensure that all children have access to:

- ongoing relationships with caring adults;
- safe places with structured activities during the non-school hours;
- healthy starts;
- marketable skills and competencies through education and youth development; and
- opportunities to give back through community service.

#### The Approach:

- Compliment the work that many organizations already undertake to meet the developmental needs of youth.
- See character and competence as outcomes best acquired through a comprehensive, collaborative, community-based series of experiences and relationships.
- Use Federal resources as an incentive to mobilize community participation and leverage broad community support.

## Recommended Reading

A recent reading gave me pause to consider the many cultures here in Berkshire County and our approach to helping them when there is a need. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, by Anne Fadiman is an excellent read about one Hmong family and their struggles with cultural interpretations of illness. A young child is afflicted with a serious seizure disorder, which to the Hmong people is an "enlightened" illness. The family's struggle with western medicine and social services in trying to help their daughter is a sad misunderstanding of our cultural differences. Read it, I strongly recommend it.

Within the book, there is a fascinating model for a cross-cultural medical interview that was developed by Arthur Kleinman from the Harvard School of Medicine. These questions are designed to elicit a patient's "explanatory model" of their illness. Understanding how we feel about a particular illness and its treatment can have a significant impact on the path of the illness. The questions can serve us all well in trying to understand a different culture's understanding of their afflictions.

The questions follow : • What do you call the problem ? • What do you think has caused the problem ? • Why do you think it started when it did ? • What do you think the sickness does ? • How does it work ? • How severe is the sickness ? • Will it have a long or short course ? • What kind of treatment do you think the patient should receive ? • What are the most important results you hope they receive from these treatments ? • What are the chief problems the sickness has caused ? • What do you fear most about the sickness ?

- Al Bashevkin

## MLK Essay Contest Winner

"Together We Can Make a Difference" provided the theme of a new essay contest that the MLK Jr. Committee held in all of the area schools. There was a first, second, and third place winner chosen in the high school and grammar/middle school categories. The winners in the grammar/middle school: first, Lizzie Fox; second Jennifer Vanuni; third, Casey Costa. High school: first, Michele LaPine; second, Joan LaValley; third, Emily Morris. *What follows is the essay by Lizzie Fox.*

Martin Luther King Jr. was a wonderful person. He participated in and led many marches to stop segregation, including the March on Washington and the Bus Boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. He changed the way black people could vote, ride busses, drink at water fountains—basically everything had to be changed to make black people equal to whites.

He used "love force" to make his changes. "Love force" is a way to change something without using violence. He worked hard to achieve the goal of making black people and white people love each other—he wasn't trying to make it so that black people were better than white people. People tried to kill him, and he stayed calm. He went to jail once almost every week, but he stayed calm.

Martin Luther King had many accomplishments. At only 17, he preached his first sermon upon becoming a minister at Dexter church in Montgomery, Alabama. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 at age 35. He fought to bring down that invisible wall of stone that separated people. He would make a difference.

But there are still changes to be made today. You can help by just taking a look at your town, school, or neighborhood. Segregation has not stopped everywhere, and you need to stop it. Get together with your friends and fix something that is important to you—something that could affect you. Martin Luther King JR's assassination on April 4th, 1968, might have removed his physical body, but his spirit is still lingering, asking you in his deep, strong voice to say to your friends and family: "Together we can make a difference." - *Lizzie Fox*

## Coalition Bulletin Board

- **Volunteers needed!!** 4-H is always looking for adults willing to get involved with youth (6-18) in our community. Interested? call Angelica at 413-448-8285.
- The **Children's Medical Security Plan** is pleased to announce **dental benefits**. As of May 1, 2000, members will be eligible for: exams, X-rays, cleaning, fluoride treatment, sealants, fillings, extraction's, full or partial root canals, crowns and space maintainers. For more info call 1-800-531-2229.
- Free, **confidential HIV testing** is offered at North Adams Regional Hospital on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 11 a.m. Those interested should arrive at NARH's Emergency Department waiting area at 11 a.m. and may have to wait briefly to be seen. For info call 664-5140.
- For **inclusion in the Coalition calendar**, be sure to get your announcement into the Coalition office. E-mails are the best way, [albash@bcn.net](mailto:albash@bcn.net)
- **Northern Berkshire Reads'** An Adult Library Literacy Program based in the public libraries in Adams, N. Adams, and Williamstown is looking for tutors and adult learners. The program provides tutors to individuals over 16 years old who need help with basic literacy or English as a second language. Please call Dedee Hynes at 664-0078.
- **The New World Fund**, founded last year, invites applications for grants between \$100-500 for new immigrants and programs that serve them. Call Abby Pratt, 413-274-6257 or Maeve O'Dea 800-969-2823.
- **Northern Berkshire Domestic Violence Task Force Meetings** are held the third Wednesday of every month at 2:00 p.m., 85 Main Street, third floor, room 311. The meeting for February will be on the 21st (Weds) 2:00 p.m., 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. For information, please contact Liz at 663-9709.
- The new website with current social and economic information about Northern Berkshire County is up and running. Visit the site at <http://lanfiles.williams.edu/jbacon/nbcweb>. Contact Jean Bacon 597-2566 to answer any questions.
- **CHOICE (Children Helping Others In Caring Environments)** A community service learning program for 8 & 9 year olds who recycle bottles and cans with deposit value and donates the money to agencies that provide food for the less fortunate in our community. Call COTY Youth Center (663-3133) for a pick up. Funding for this program is provided through the Massachusetts Service Alliance.
- When you're running off flyers to announce programming and community events, send one to **Northern Berkshire Community Television**, by fax, 663-3924 or by e-mail, [nobctv@bcn.net](mailto:nobctv@bcn.net). NBCTV will post the information on their Video Bulletin Board.
- For a complete listings of **Native American Pow-wows**, look up the website, [www.wanderingbull.com](http://www.wanderingbull.com). According to Walking Catamount, the next pow-wow in North Adams will be March 17th at the Eagles Hall.
- Congratulations to our hometown and official donut maker for the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, **Neville's Bakery**. In January of 2001, Neville's Bakery celebrated their 50th anniversary in business.
- Congratulations to **Gail Bobin** on her new job as the Shelter Director of the Safe Passage Program in Northampton.
- There is a new **parent group** that has formed at the Parents Place, 107 Main Street in North Adams. The group runs from 3:30 - 5 PM and childcare, transportation, and dinner will be provided. For information, call Wendy Dickinson at 413 499-3556.
- **Courage to Heal Adventure Programs** offers programs for women survivors of abuse. These outdoor adventure programs have been running safe and successful programs since 1996. For information, call at 413 586-1125 or email at [couragetohealadventure@hotmail.com](mailto:couragetohealadventure@hotmail.com)

## UNO Receives Grant

*It's great to see community organizations supporting the children of our neighborhoods. Here's one example :*

At the Jan 29th meeting of the Hoosac Valley Vietnam Veteran's of America, Chapter 54, Shirley Davis, organizer for UNO, was awarded \$500. This money is specifically to be used to allow children in the UNO neighborhood the opportunity to attend events that they would otherwise be unable to attend. These include theater trips, ball games, summer camp, and also for activities in the neighborhood such as field days, outdoor movies, and Holiday parties.

## "Buckster" Moves On

Way back in the early 1990's a group of local middle school students came to the Coalition office looking for a way to say something about smoking. They founded an initiative, called STEPP (Student Tobacco Education Prevention Program). Allison Buck, Breanna Robinson, and Carrie Millard were among the founders of this group who worked with Amy Hall to speak out against tobacco use.

Allison continued her involvement with the Coalition, as a founder of UNITY, to eventually working at the Coalition office as a high school Senior and College student. In January, the Coalition staff said good luck to Allison who is now enrolled at Pine Manor College. She has influenced many young people and adults, and her success speaks to the power and importance of youth leadership development. We'll miss her at the nbCC office.

## Is Hunger a Problem in Massachusetts?

Despite our thriving economy, one in five children live in households that struggle to put food on the table each month. Typically they are children of low-income families, most of them working families, who live one paycheck away from a financial emergency. For those families, an unexpected medical bill or car repair can easily force terrible choices – choices between making rent, paying the heating bill or buying groceries. Too often, the food budget has to give way. We need to solve this problem because children who are hungry can't learn, and they can't pay attention in class. Hunger also has serious negative effects on children's physiological, behavioral, and cognitive development.

### How Can We Eliminate Child Hunger?

Child hunger is a problem that can be solved, and the tools to end it are already well within our reach. The key is to make better use of a wide range of federal resources that are already available. These resources can provide healthy meals throughout the day where kids live, learn and play, through school meals, WIC, summer meals and food stamps. Project Bread's new legislation, **An Act to End Child Hunger in Massachusetts**, proposes innovative approaches to ending child hunger by increasing participation in these important programs.

## Rosalie Girard Wins Peacemaker Award

*Erin Egan gave a speech to present the Peacemaker award at the Martin Luther King Day Activities. What follows is the text of that speech.*

At its most basic level, the message of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the life-affirming concept that all people should respect and care for one another. This notion should not make exclusionary judgments based on race, culture, sex, or religion. Rather, it should be upheld for all people, due to the simple fact that they exist. This vital message must continue to be heard; it must not be forgotten. Some relay this message not so much verbally as through their behavior toward others on an ongoing basis. It shines through in their dedication and commitment to the lives of those in their communities.

I would like to nominate a woman in our community who affirms life on a daily basis, helping children and their families whether they're rich or poor, black or white, gay or straight, Jewish or Christian. They all benefit from education about and training in the art of breastfeeding, one of the healthiest advantages an infant can have. This is not always an easy task for families as they enter what is frequently a harried period of life.

Rosalie Girard, a certified lactation consultant, has been assisting families for the past 16 years. She provides support, education, and her endless supply of energy and warmth to those in need. In so doing, she has touched the lives of thousands in the Northern Berkshire community. She will travel to any home - no matter where that home is, or the condition it may be in - in order to provide her incomparable assistance. She offers her support whenever it's needed - 24 hours a day, seven days a week. What makes her even more remarkable is that she has been doing this for so many years with the bare minimum to support her work. She's certainly not in this for the money. Instead, what drives Ms. Girard is her belief that all children deserve to come into this world with the best-possible start, even despite the many strikes they may already have against them.

I am asking that we acknowledge the wonderful work this extraordinary woman has done, and that we recognize that although she's not speaking out against intolerance and oppression, she is, through her actions, carrying out the message of Martin Luther King, Jr.

## Act to End Child Hunger Proposes :

- A new one-stop shopping system to link all six nutrition programs (Food Stamps, school lunch, school breakfast, WIC, after school snacks and summer food programs) and other assistance programs.
- Support for working families by improving access to the Food Stamp Program.
- Helping kids learn through school meals. The bill proposes to follow the examples of the best breakfast programs in the state by requiring universal breakfast — served after the bell rings — in all elementary schools that are already required to serve breakfast.
- WIC to Six. The bill proposes to expand WIC eligibility by one year, to age 6.
- **Summer Food Program.** The bill proposes to establish summer recreation pilots programs, to provide activities and summer food programs.
- After-School Snacks. Since many school lunches are served at 11:30 a.m., after-school snack programs help close the afternoon nutrition gap for kids who may not eat supper until 7 p.m.

# Northern Berkshire Neighbors

## A Reflection on Community

MLK Day is a touchstone day for Northern Berkshire Neighbors for it was the first community celebration of the day in 1994 that launched the official start of NBN. We had a Dreamers' Brunch on a snowy day and there was magic in the air. One of the dreams was that we continue to have a community celebration of the day. It has been amazing to witness the wonderful Northern Berkshire people honor this dream into year 8 with the appropriate focus on "Together We Can Make a Difference".

Many of the dreams of that day have been realized through the loving efforts of the good people in our communities. Looking at our photo album, we see changing faces. Young folks have grown up and young adults have entered middle years and us middle years folks are gradually emerging into senior status. New people have come into our communities. They have joined us, challenged us, grown with us and become part of the "We" who are today's community. We are people of various colors, ethnic, family, religious, social and educational backgrounds.

Community participation has grown significantly as a result of grass roots community organizing of events. We get to see each other more in these public events that of their very nature get us talking with one another in meaningful ways. It doesn't seem like magic to me any more. It is more like "amazing grace". I know the hard work that goes on behind the scenes that results in changing the scenery of our living together.

As I move about the community these days, I sense somberness amidst the hope. Our streets are hilly. They are veritable mountainsides. I am reminded of the poor native people I've seen in Mexico and Guatemala when I see, from my car, the poor in this community trudging up East Main and East Quincy Streets. Some are pushing carts, others bent over, a sign of their burdened lives. I see the many children in our neighborhoods and some parents who have no significant people in their lives. It makes me realize that amidst all the "progress", our work is always just beginning. I challenge each person who reads this reflection to make an effort to befriend someone this year who would ordinarily not be part of your life. Learn from them. Grow with them. Welcome them into your dreaming.

*Natalie C. Cain*

## UNO News From Shirley's Kitchen Table

The Holidays are over and things are getting back to normal (depending on what you call normal), The UNO Steering Committee met at my house on January 19, 2001 to make plans for 2001. Members present were Gail and Art Nelson, Betty Cahill Corbin, Karen Wallbank, Arlene Palumbo, Carol Clairmont and yours truly.

We discussed our Halloween Party and 10th Anniversary Celebration and all agreed it was a very nice party. Everyone also enjoyed the House Decorating Contests, both Halloween and Christmas.

We will be holding most of our usual events but our big event of the year will be a "Spring Fling" to be held on Saturday, June 9 at the Fraternal Order of Eagles. I know it's early but we are looking for vendors to set up for crafts, tag sale, bake sales or whatever. It's never too early to save a spot!

This will be a fund raiser for UNO to be able to continue its work in our neighborhood. We will be charging \$15.00 for one or \$25.00 for two spots. We can use inside or out, so this event will be held rain or shine. Deadline for people to reserve a spot is May 19th and fee must be paid at the time of reservation. Forms and flyers will be available soon. For more information call me at 663-5516.

*Shirley A. Davis, UNO Organizer*

## Neighborhood People in Profile: Rose McBee

*Rose is the Resident Service Coordinator at Mohawk Forest.*

"It is just over a year that I have been working as an outreach person to the people at Mohawk Forest. I bring my experience of home care and personal life skills to this job. I interact with people of all ages. I like the variety.

I remember what it was like as a young parent and there are times when I get to talk with the parents of young children here, giving them hints and whatever help I can. Our wonderful community center here hosts play groups and other programs for parents. For school aged children, we have the after school program 3 days a week where they get homework help and time in the computer room. One day is for 4H. The Wise Guys program is about to start. It is for boys aged 10-17. We had Cartoon Camp here this summer. It was great! Everyone loved it.

Twice a week we have Bingo at 1pm or after supper at 6. This provides time for socializing and making new friends. Recently two women turned 90 and the bingo group had a birthday cake and celebration for them. I've seen some of our senior residents who never leave the house, flourish as a result of these activities. People are getting together. A garden club has formed. The computer room is available throughout the day. There is an opportunity to learn skills. The resident meetings are well attended and people are finding out that their ideas and suggestions matter.

I know that every day when I come to work, I can make a difference, whether big or little. I enjoy seeing people blossom into what they can really be. A highlight was seeing a woman who attended the smoking cessation classes, quit smoking after 43 years and 3 packs a day. I've learned that I don't have all the answers to the many problems that arise in a large housing development. The greatest challenge is to get people to take advantage of what is available for them here. It will take time."

# UNITY NEWS

February 2001

## Celebrate Winter With the Groove!

All area teens are invited to the Groove Winter Carnival at Eagles Hall, Friday, February 16 from 8:00 to 11:00 p.m. Entrance is \$5.00. The event will include musical entertainment from a new local teen band (to be announced) and DJ Denning. Carnival activities will include face painting, fake tatoos, tarot readings, "fishbowl," dancing contests, a pie-throwing contest (vote for the Groove victim of your choice!), and more.

The Groove teen-led concert initiative is a project of UNITY supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The Groove is always seeking teen talent, teen organizers, and adult chaperones. If you would like to help, please call Erica Schmitz at 663-7588 or email the\_groove@yahoo.com.

## Learn About Area Youth Programs at the Out-Of-School-Time Fair!

On Thursday, February 8th, from 5:30 - 7:30 PM, there will be a free "Out-of-School Time Fair" on the second floor of 85 Main Street in North Adams. This event is open to all North Berkshire families and is sponsored by UMass Extension 4-H Youth & Family Development Program, the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition and the Northern Berkshire United Way.

The purpose of this Fair is to inform families about what is available in the area for children and teenagers during out-of-school hours. More than seventeen programs will be represented, including UNITY, the Groove, 4-H, Kidspace at MASS MoCA, the COTY Center, the YMCA, Girl Scouts, Conte Middle School, and the Adams and Williamstown Youth Centers. Food will be available for free, and student volunteers from MCLA will provide activities for any children who attend. For more information, please call Erica Schmitz at 663-7588.



Above: UNITY high school students lead discussion about peer pressure at the December UNITY Middle School Forum at Adams Memorial Middle School.

## CALENDAR

*Feb 1*

### High School Forum

"Anger and Violence," Hoosac Valley High School, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

### CommUNITY Arts Advisory Board

Meeting, 85 Main Street, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

*Feb 6*

### Middle School Forum

"Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs," Conte Middle School, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

*Feb 8*

### Out-Of-School-Time FAIR

5:30 to 7:30 p.m. 85 Main Street 2nd Floor. Come and find out more about all the youth programs in the area! Free admission! Free food!

*Feb 12 & 26*

### UNITY Council

Meetings are the second and last Monday of every month, with the middle school Council meeting from 3:30 to 4:30, and the high school Council meeting from 5:00 to 6:00.

*Feb 16*

### The Groove Winter Carnival

8 to 11 p.m., Eagles Hall, Curran Hwy, North Adams.

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**Feb 1/ Feb 15**

## **Confidential HIV Testing**

Those wishing to be tested should arrive at 11 AM at NARH. Testing is confidential and may be anonymous. There is no charge.

**Feb 5**

## **Bereavement Support Group**

VNAHNB Community Room (535 Curran Highway, NA) from 6:30 - 8 PM. Sponsored by the VNA and Hospice of Northern Berkshire, this support group is free of charge and open to members of the community who have experienced a loss.

**Feb 5 / Feb 9**

## **Northern Berkshire Tonite**

Local Access TV at 7:30 PM (2/5) and 8 PM (2/9). Hosted by Al Bashevkin and Ken Swiatek, this month's show features Anne Nemitz-Carlson and Ellen Kalicki in a show that looks at the importance of child care in Northern Berkshire.

**Feb 8**

## **Out-of-School-Time Activities Fair**

85 Main Street 2nd Floor, 5:30 - 7:30 PM. An opportunity (for providers) to network with other out-of-school-time programs and (for parents) to determine what opportunities exist. Call 663-7588 for more information.

**Feb 9**

## **Monthly Coalition Meeting**

First Baptist Church in North Adams 10 AM to noon. Childcare is the topic. Opportunities for networking and announcements. Call 663-7588 for more information.

**Feb 12**

## **CHNA Meeting**

Monthly meeting for Department of Public Health Berkshire County Providers and others. Legislative Roundtable Discussion. Meeting will be at Hillcrest Hospital from 9 AM to 10:30 AM.

**Tuesdays : 2/ 13 - 3/ 13**

## **A Brake for Smokers**

Free smoking cessation class that also includes the use of a local fitness center (PEP's) for a month. 6-7 PM Register by calling Dave Blanchette at 664--5522. Space is limited.

**Feb 17**

## **North Adams Winterfest**

Sponsored by the Mayor's office of Tourism and Cultural Development and the City of North Adams, this downtown festival offers ice sculpting, a chili cook-off, local music, and other events to liven up the mid winter season.

**Feb 20 / Feb 22**

## **AHA Community CPR Class**

NARH, 2nd floor. Enrollment is limited to 15. Cost is \$15 to cover class and materials. To enroll call 664-5230.

**Feb 27**

## **Northern Berkshire Youth Collaborative**

Noontime at the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition office. This meeting is an opportunity for all youth serving organizations to talk together about youth and their work. Lunch will be provided. For information, contact the Coalition office.

**Feb 28**

## **Lifestyles Leading to Eviction**

Baptist Church in North Adams 2-4 PM. Charlie Kaniecki (DPH) and Mike Sarkis (NABOH) lead us in our understanding of families who need special assistance to conform to sanitary codes. We'll learn techniques about helping these families. A training that will benefit both funders and providers.

**April 6**

## **Forum on School Violence**

The Executive Office of Public Safety sponsors this daylong forum at MCLA to hear about best practices for school violence prevention. Save the date. More info to follow.

## Martin Luther King Day (2001) Snapshots



*Co-Chair Alex Daugherty serves as Moderator for the day's activities.*



*Lizzie Fox reads her award winning essay about the life of Martin Luther King.*



*Rosalie Girard accepting the Peacemaker Award*



*State Representative Dan Bosley was one of our many participants at the Celebration.*



*A view of the Crowd at the Martin Luther King Day Celebration*

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