



Northern Berkshire Community Coalition



*“Improving the quality of life for people in Northern Berkshire by organizing, supporting, and empowering the community.”*

# 2008

## ANNUAL REPORT



# Deb Rosselli Board President 2007-present

We hear adults frequently say that the older we get the faster time flies. That certainly holds true as I reflect on this past year's accomplishments of our "aging" Northern Berkshire Community Coalition. The amazing side note about that adage is the enormity of what can be accomplished in a short amount of time with the leadership and dedication of committed people.

The Coalition is first and foremost about people. While the Coalition has been known broadly as the "grassroots community organizer," the focus of the work runs so much deeper than simply bringing the people together. This past year has been no different in that respect. The unique and winning formula for the Coalition is the balance between the long established traditions of honoring and recognizing, with a watchful eye that keeps step by continually seeking out future opportunities to address the needs of our North Berkshire community, and beyond! Under Al's leadership, and in the hands of the highly capable and dedicated staff, the Coalition provides an invaluable resource for moving work forward to benefit our community on many layers.

This past year every major program under the Coalition's umbrella has strengthened their work while simultaneously taking the initiative to add new elements. Each month the Coalition Board begins its meeting with the monthly program report, which has evolved to six-to-seven pages of concise headlines of the progress in each arena. The powerful extensions of the Coalition's work serve to fortify the relationships and partnerships in our region that maintain the Coalition's integrity as one of the significant leaders in improving our quality of life. And as we speak, new initiatives are being contemplated, largely in relation to the overwhelming calls to action inspired by the monthly forums.

The Coalition Board feels a profound sense of gratitude to the community citizens, service agencies and businesses that continue to get involved in community life. We would also like to express our deepest appreciation to the Coalition "staff of endless energy" for their tireless devotion to their work.

What keeps me tightly invested in the Coalition activities, both as a board member and as a participant, is the strength of the relationships affiliated with the Coalition's work. I personally believe that a sound reputation can be built on an individual's or group's capacity to demonstrate integrity, diversity of ideas and understanding, reliability, compassion and compromise. The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition certainly exemplifies those characteristics. I have been very proud to serve as the board president for the past year, and look forward with excitement to what the next year will hold!



# Al Bashevkin

## Executive Director

### 1986-present

Spring is settling in, and once again we're getting ready for our annual meeting and the transition from a busy year to a summer for reflection and regrouping. Thanks to the many people who have participated in activities of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition. We're providing a means for the Northern Berkshire community to address issues that impact how people live and work in our region.

Our monthly forums provide the place where it all seems to come together. This year our forums saw an increase in average attendance, and included issues that didn't stop at the meeting. A community program entitled, "Words Can Hurt or Help and You Can Choose" will be launched this summer following our monthly forum addressing community violence. An educational program to support families with children in DSS custody was initiated by the Coalition after our February meeting that talked about community support for families engaged with the Department of Social Services. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for our successful discussion about creating a "greener" Berkshire environment. Our forums are meant to stimulate discussion and action. We're doing that.

This year saw new opportunities for the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition as a community based organization. We've been asked by the Berkshire Legislative delegation to take a lead role in reducing teen pregnancy rates in Pittsfield and North Adams. We've brought other county programs to visit communities in Eastern Massachusetts that have been successful at reducing their teen pregnancy rates and hope that we can integrate some of their successful actions into our programming. We do know however that reducing teen pregnancy rates, reducing underage drinking, increasing the health status of our residents, or building a more peaceful community all depend on effective community programming as well as opportunities for residents to lead fulfilling lives. Our community programming will continue and we will work to develop new community leadership through our programs, Northern Berkshire Neighbors and UNITY. We will continue to advocate for efforts to reduce poverty and its effects on residents of the region, and will support efforts aiming to increase educational and job opportunities for our youth. Lasting change requires efforts in many arenas and by many individuals and organizations.

A new twist to our work is the implementation of an outcomes based evaluation tool. This tool will help us to see how well we are progressing toward our ultimate goals of improving life for local residents. Improving the quality of life is community change, and our new instrument translates weekly event logs into a graph that depicts the progression towards community change. We hope this instrument will help those who do not know us well to better understand the significance of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition.

Thanks to all who participated in and supported our important work in bringing the community together to address issues and offer solutions. A community coalition cannot exist in isolation. Those living and working in Northern Berkshire share our challenges, and our successes reflect the broad participation and hard work of many in the Northern Berkshire community. After twenty-two years as a community coalition, you'd think this work would become routine, but it never does. Your sharing ideas and your willingness to do better is a defining characteristic of our active, healthy community.

# PROGRAMS

## Coalition Core

**The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition Core** works to provide information about community services and resources through its monthly meetings and newsletter, special events, and local television show, *Northern Berkshire Tonite*. Scott Nichols, Coalition Board Vice President, has once again co-hosted our TV show this past year. In addition, the Coalition has a unique role as the facilitator of community conversations that address local issues. This year we were in conversations beyond our monthly meetings impacting county homelessness, food security in Northern Berkshire, our environment, community violence, workforce development, supporting families engaged in protective services, and preventing teen pregnancy.

An important function for the Community Coalition is its capacity to bring necessary services to our rural region. A few years back, the Community Coalition led a process working with Congressman John Olver to bring federal funding to the region for a local transportation call center. The Transportation Association of Northern Berkshire (TANB) is now a thriving and busy service to our communities, providing over 3000 work-related rides each month to local residents.

Initially started in 1994 as a means for the community to address issues of peace and tolerance, the Martin Luther King Day celebration is an annual opportunity, directed by Alex Daugherty, to support diversity in the Northern Berkshire region.

Now completing its second year, the Berkshire Youth Development Project (BYDP) continues to bring the Coalition together with the Pittsfield Prevention Project and the South Berkshire Youth Coalition to gather risk and protective data about Berkshire County youth, plan community campaigns based on that data, and continue to learn best practices for youth development from each other. A new grant from the Attorney General's Office has made it possible to develop county wide materials to prevent underage drinking. The BYDP has been made possible through the support of the Berkshire County Legislative Delegation.

Thanks to the support of SAMHSA and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition continues to work to prevent underage drinking and substance use through science-based prevention programming. Our initiative to prevent underage drinking, Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol, now has active strategy teams facilitated by local residents in Williamstown and Adams that are creating media advocacy and parent education to curb underage drinking.

The Coalition monthly meetings are public forums intended to help explore local issues. Topics covered this year included "Community Needs Assessment," "Emergency Preparedness: Preparing for a Flu Pandemic," "Finding Effective Peaceful Solutions in a Violent World," "Assisting Elders to be in the Environment They Want," "Community Support for Families Engaged in the Department of Social Services," "The 10 year Action Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and Housing Instability," "Greening the Berkshires with Leadership from Local Collegians," and "Teens Take on Tough Topic: Youth Substance Abuse."

Thanks to all who participated in our important community discussions.

**"The Coalition's importance cannot be overstated. It has for more than twenty years played an increasingly important role in leading to and providing support for a healthier quality of life for the people of the North Berkshire region."**

**--Steve Green**  
Board Member

# Northern Berkshire Neighbors

**Northern Berkshire Neighbors (NBN)** is dedicated to building strong community through connecting residents both in neighborhoods and in the wider community. NBN creatively links residents with local agencies, state institutions, government officials, police, landlords, local colleges and other resources as partners in developing the neighborhood conditions needed for families to flourish. Through community organizing, these partners provide forums for people to express ideas, and work to find creative solutions for improving their quality of life.

## **Neighborhood Groups and Summits.**

Neighborhood groups provide forums for residents to work together to assess concerns and take action to improve their neighborhood. Neighborhood Summits serve as a forum for

resident leaders to network and garner support from each other, as well as to help guide NBN programming. Training and information about community resources are part of the regular leadership development provided.

**Neighborhood programming**, including **Neighborhood Baseball** and **Step Dance**, builds confidence in youth, provides family activity and instills neighborhood pride.

**The Talk of the Town**, a resident-designed neighborhood newsletter, keeps residents connected with each other and informed about community resources. It is distributed to over 500 households.



**“Northern Berkshire Neighbors is about connecting residents with each other and with community resources in order to achieve a purpose. NBN broadens community members in working together to serve people of all ages and backgrounds.”**

**-- Jess Dennis**  
MCLA Intern

**Community Connections** works within neighborhoods and the community to support and strengthen families. NBN works with the community to provide support for foster families as well as those in need of parent development skills. The Parent Resource Group collaboratively plans for parent and family programming to fill gaps in needs in the community.

NBN works with residents to plan events and activities that bring the community together for safe and positive experiences including **National Night Out**,

the **Neighborhood EXPO** and **Community Recognition Awards**. Activities and programs for children and families take place in their neighborhoods and children are connected with community programs outside with transportation provided.

A core base of 300 residents and a broader base of 2000+ residents from throughout Northern Berkshire are involved with NBN through neighborhoods, community events and special activities.

# UNITY

**UNITY** (United, Neighboring, Interdependent, Trusted Youth) promotes youth development in North Berkshire through a wide range of programming that includes youth-led community service projects, leadership training, creative writing workshops, and a teen arts management and performance series called **The Groove**. We also facilitate networking and collaboration between youth workers and youth-serving organizations through monthly meetings of our **Northern Berkshire Youth Collaborative**.

Fourteen teenagers from four schools participated in this year's **UNITY Youth Leadership Program**. Using the Teen Outreach Program as a curriculum guide, UNITY Youth Leaders meet with UNITY staff on a weekly basis to develop service projects and discuss issues important to teenagers. This year, the youth leaders partnered with the Berkshire Violence Prevention Center to learn about sexual harassment and create an educational campaign to help

**"I feel more confident in this room than I do anywhere else."**

**--Ellie Goerlach**  
Writing Workshop  
Participant



reduce and prevent sexual harassment amongst teenagers. We also began a new partnership with the North Adams Public Schools Service-Learning Program that allowed the YLP members to design and implement a mini-grant program for local youth initiatives. The program's traditional capstone service project was the preparation and facilitation of the May Coalition forum; this year, our Youth Leaders engaged community members in a lively discussion about youth substance abuse in our community.

Our **CommUNITY Arts Program** had another successful year that saw some changes and new ideas emerge. Staff revised the structure of our middle school writing workshop to include more varied artistic exploration, and gave it the new name **nBEAT** (Northern Berkshire Exploratory Arts Troup); the group visited and responded artistically to places like the Norman Rockwell Museum, Gallery 51, and Natural Bridge State Park. The Groove, which saw an increase in membership from middle school-aged youth this year, continued to host regular concerts for local youth and enjoyed training from and field trips to local music/cultural organizations like MASS MoCA and Skyboro Sound. The **Teen Writing Workshop** continued for its tenth year. In total, our arts programming engaged approximately forty youth this year, with Groove audience members adding an additional hundred young people.

Also this year, UNITY staff and youth contributed significantly to the planning and running of the second annual **411 in the 413 Berkshire Youth Development Conference**, sponsored by the **Berkshire Youth Development Project** (a partnership of nbCC, the Pittsfield Prevention Partnership, and the South Berkshire Youth Coalition). We teamed up with the Railroad Street Youth Project and the Pittsfield Youth Commission to expand on last year's event to make it an overnight conference this year. Eighty youth from 11 Berkshire County high schools attended this successful retreat.

# SNAPSHOTS



## COMMUNITY RECOGNITION

Neighborhood Acts



Your Neighbor

Beautifying our neighborhood.  
Helping a neighbor. Making life better for us all!



# Financial Report

The following is a Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Changes in Net Assets for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2007 and ending June 30, 2008 for the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, Inc.

## Revenue\*

State Contracts	\$657,500
Federal Contracts	\$104,804
Misc. Income & Contributions	\$21,400
Local Grants	\$6,000
Local Charities & Foundations	\$58,786
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$848,490</b>

## Expenses\*

Administration	\$114,923
Program Expenses	\$391,916
Office Maintenance & Expenses	\$74,537
Subcontracted Services & Consulting	\$227,844
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$809,220</b>

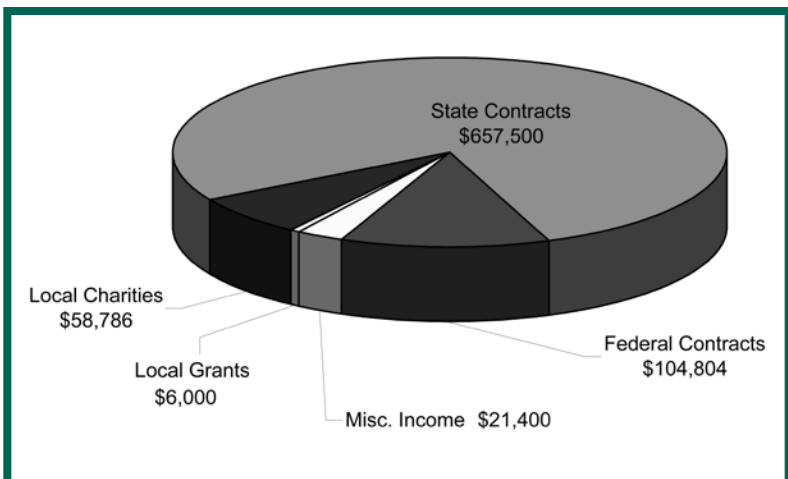
**Net Revenue** \$39,270

## Net Assets

Net Assets, July 1, 2007	\$266,526
Net Revenue	\$39,270
<b>Net Assets, June 30, 2008</b>	<b>\$305,796</b>

\*Projected revenue and expenses through June 30, 2008.

## 2008 Revenue Chart



# Coalition Supporters

The Coalition thanks the following individuals and organizations for their generous support. Many thanks as well to those who chose to remain anonymous.

## Funding Partners

Berkshire Youth Development Project  
Catholic Campaign for Human Development  
City of North Adams  
Fund for North Adams  
Mass. Cultural Council  
Mass. Department of Public Health  
Mass. Department of Public Health,  
Bureau of Substance Abuse Services  
Mass. Department of Social Services  
North Adams Human Services  
Northern Berkshire United Way  
U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration  
Williamstown Community Chest

Joe Manning  
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Mohawk Forest Apartments  
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## Contributors to the 2007 Annual Campaign

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James & Joan Hunter  
Legacy Bank  
Alice Shaver Foundation

### Guardians

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Michael & Agnese Meehan

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Robert & Suzanne Bach  
Alfred & Francis Bedini  
William Berkowitz  
Norman & Lorena Bianco  
Terri & David Bird

# The Year in Review

The **Coalition Core** served as a forum for discussion, a vehicle for information exchange, and a catalyst for the development of new community initiatives through:

- Facilitation of eight monthly forums that brought together an average of sixty-five participants each month to discuss emerging community issues.
- Production of 10 installments of our monthly TV show, *Northern Berkshire Tonite*, to further promote community conversation around the forum topics.
- Publication of ten issues of our monthly newsletter, which is now mailed to over 700 organizations and homes and e-mailed to over 1,000 recipients.
- Maintenance of our website, which includes information about Coalition programs and community services.
- Continued leadership for the implementation of the Prevention Needs Assessment Survey, an assessment of risk and protective factors affecting our young people's lives. Over 1200 Northern Berkshire and over 3000 Berkshire County 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders were surveyed in 2007, providing helpful data for substance abuse prevention programming. The survey will next be implemented in the Spring of 2009.
- Leadership of Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol in Adams and Williamstown, a project to limit access to alcohol by teenagers.
- Leadership in the facilitation of the Berkshire County Youth Development Project, a consortium of youth development coalitions throughout Berkshire County that is working to build a stronger Berkshire County prevention platform.
- Support for numerous community initiatives that include Target:Hunger, discussions about workforce development, our work in building a more peaceful and respectful community culture, and the annual Martin Luther King Day celebration.



**Northern Berkshire Neighbors** utilized community organizing and resident leadership to:

- Support 9 groups in North Berkshire and involve 200+ residents in active community work.
- Involve 400+ people in Community “Neighborlies” Events recognizing people and organizations for positive contributions to the community.
- Present the 10th Annual Neighborhood EXPO “Spreading the Roots of Our Community” with sessions on memories of Northern Berkshire, Middle Eastern/ Asian neighbors, and the roots and roles of faith communities.
- Coordinate the annual community National Night Out safety program and celebration with over 250 residents, police and agencies in attendance.
- Develop neighborhood-based programs involving youth and their parents, college students and local organizations including: Neighborhood Baseball (80+ youth), Step and Experience Dance (30 youth), Young Teen leadership development (10 youth), 2 day after school neighborhood programs (15+ children), Buddy Program (15 youth), Movie Nights (160+ residents) and picnics (180+ residents).
- Connect (30+) neighborhood youth and their families with community summer programs.
- Collaborate with local agencies, especially parenting programs, to develop a 12-week Parenting Course for DSS referred parents with an average attendance of 18 participating.
- Organize transportation for youth and families to activities/programs through collaboration with BerkshireRides.
- Provide leadership training for 10 residents to attend state and national workshops or conferences.
- Assist resident seniors in Adams with tasks including preparation of tax refund paper work.
- Support foster families through collaboration with DSS and MCLA; monthly support group, family outings, MASS MoCA and MCLA social events. NBN provided foster parents with regular updated info about community resources and events, working to increase awareness of foster care needs.

**UNITY** promoted youth development in North Berkshire through:

- Engagement and training of 14 teenagers from 4 high schools in the Youth Leadership Program, an initiative that provides opportunities for youth to identify community needs and create service-learning projects in response to those needs.
- Distributing mini-grants to fund 7 service-learning projects in local schools and community-based youth organizations.
- Participation of 40 young people from area middle and high schools (as well as some college-aged alumni of CommUNITY Arts programs) in arts programming; regular public concerts and open mic nights for approximately 100 local teenagers; publication of the tenth edition of the teen literary journal *Somewhere Between*.
- Facilitation of the Northern Berkshire Youth Collaborative; a forum that brings together youth service providers monthly to share ideas, solve problems, and work together to learn more about how to best take care of our youth and ourselves in our work.
- Awarding funding to and supporting Teen Talk, a youth-driven series of mixers meant to break down inter- and intra-school social stereotypes.
- Participation of more than 300 families in the Safe Homes project, which connects parents committed to setting clear rules in their homes regarding teen substance abuse.
- Co-sponsoring and planning the second annual Berkshire Youth Development Conference, a unique opportunity for Berkshire County high school students to gather, meet new people, and learn about the many opportunities available to young people in the Berkshires.

# Board of Directors

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Marilyn Boesse

Jim Canavan

Jeff Goldwasser

Paul Hutchinson

Chris Meehan

Edna Rudnick

Jonathan Secor

Mary Sugden

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Jess Dennis, MCLA Intern

Karissa Perras, UNITY Intern

Michael Amaral, Volunteer

Beverly (Walking Cat) Goodell, Volunteer



Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

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