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Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

Coalition news

An update from



February 2012, Volume XXVI, Number 6

2012 MLK Day of Service, "A Day On, Not a Day Off"



January 16th marked the 19th Annual Northern Berkshire Martin Luther King Day Celebration and the 3rd Annual MLK Day of Service, a day to reflect on the timeless question Dr. King asked, "What are you doing for others?" Thanks to a grant from the Massachusetts Service Alliance, the MLK Day Committee joined with nbCC to host this great event for the third year. The day's theme was "A Day On, Not a Day Off", transforming the holiday into an opportunity for volunteers of all backgrounds to come together to make a positive impact on our community.

There were tasks for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to celebrate the legacy of Dr. King through service. Over 200 volunteers gathered at St. Elizabeth of Hungary's Parish Hall for a kick-off and service placements. Inspiring words were given during both kick-off and lunch by MCLA President, Dr. Mary Grant, Mayor Richard Alcombright, State Senator Ben Downing and State Representative Gailanne Cariddi.

After service sign-ups, volunteers went off to their sites which included the transitional shelter, Louison House, where volunteers took inventory, sorted food and helped with office work. Others visited The Salvation Army and The COTY Youth Center to clean and sort items. A can and bottle drive was held and items were col-

lected at Stop and Shop and on Main Street to benefit local food pantries. Volunteers filled buckets of sand and delivered them to the Adams Council on Aging for delivery to elders in Adams for slippery sidewalks and driveways. At the Habitat for Humanity site, sheetrock was cut and installed. Several local homes were weatherized to help keep them warm and the new family center, The Family Place, was painted in preparation of its upcoming opening. For those not able to venture out, there was plenty to do right at St. Elizabeth of Hungary's Parish Hall. Warm hats and mittens were sewn and personal items were bagged to help those in need.

Volunteers met back at the Parish Hall to end the day by sharing a community luncheon partially prepared and served by the Berkshire Food Project. Following lunch, MLK Committee member Sue Walker presented the annual Peacemaker Award to Mark Lincourt, for his tireless community involvement and volunteer efforts over the years, which include volunteering for The Friendship Center Food Pantry and working with many local groups, Higher Ground and the Northern Berkshire Systems of Care Committee. We were treated to a song sung by Quincy Goodwin from MCLA's group, The Allegrettos, and an inspiring exercise by Otha Day, local drummer and teacher, who made us believe we are all drummers. nbCC

UNITY member and songwriter, Steven Nutt sang several songs including one he wrote.

Although this was a wonderful day of active service it also serves symbolically as a day of coming together to make a positive impact and to inspire a culture of service. Special thanks to the members of the Martin Luther King Day Committee for organizing this wonderful event, Alex Daugherty, chair, Kathy Keeser, Carolyn Leab, Liz Boland, Annie Rodgers, Sue Walker, Tom Alexander, Steve Green, Darlene Ellis, Jill Daugherty and Jeanne Feder. Thanks also go to St. Elizabeth of Hungary, COTY Youth Center, Paul Marino and NBCTC, Berkshire Food Project, MCLA, Williams College, Boston Seafood, Northern Berkshire Container Redemption Center, Price Chopper, MASS MoCA, Scarafoni Realty, local faith based institution partners, Massachusetts Service Alliance, and ALL the volunteers who participated! -Bert Lamb

▲ Volunteers sort food at The Louison House, the MLK Committee presents the 2012 Peacemaker Award to Mark Lincourt, 107 Main Street served as a collection site for food and personal items to be distributed locally. (See page 5 and our Facebook page for more photos of the 2012 MLK Day of Service)

nbCC thanks our February
newsletter sponsor:

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Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

Our Mission

"Dedicated to improving the quality of life for people in Northern Berkshire by organizing, supporting, and empowering the community."

In pursuit of this mission, we place particular emphasis on the following:

- Strengthening neighborhoods and community life
- Preventing alcohol/substance abuse
- Fostering economic development
- Mitigating poverty
- Supporting positive youth development
- Building bridges between residents and service agencies

Coalition Supporters

Public Sources

- MA Dept. of Children & Families
- MA Cultural Council
- MA Department of Public Health
- MA Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services

Foundation Supporters

- Fund for North Adams
- Catholic Campaign for Human Development

Local Support

- Contributions from our many individual supporters

The Coalition is a member agency of the Northern Berkshire United Way and the Williamstown Community Chest.

To submit announcements to the Coalition News:

The *Coalition News* is a publication of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition. We encourage submissions of announcements from local organizations.

March Newsletter Deadline

February 19, 2011

Please submit announcements (100 words or less please) via e-mail to: blamb@nbcoalition.org or abashevkin@nbcoalition.org. If necessary, announcements may also be faxed to 413-663-9877. Thank you!

February Forum: "Issues Surrounding Poverty"

The Northern Berkshire community will once again gather together to discuss important issues facing its residents for our monthly Forum on Friday, February 10th. The topic, Issues Surrounding Poverty, will look at different areas of struggle for those living in poverty, such as the lack of affordable housing and the unavailability of jobs that provide a decent living wage.

We'd like this Forum to be a real community conversation about the issues, in a safe environment - to put a personal face on the issues. We'd also like to identify what is already happening to address some of the issues people are facing in this economy, and find ways to work together more effectively. A crumbling "safety net" and slashed services is certainly part of the picture. An equally important part is the sense of powerlessness experienced when people feel that their voices are not being heard.

In addition to the identification of barriers facing people in this economy, there will be an opportunity to identify the various local and state supports currently available. We will identify what is already happening to address some of these issues and find ways to work together more effectively. We can, as a community, come together and think more deeply about these issues, with the hope of community change.

NBYC Sets Agenda for the Year

Staff from youth-serving organizations and schools network each month and train on youth topics.

The Northern Berkshire Youth Collaborative (NBYC), at its monthly meeting in January, laid its course for the remainder of the year. The group chose several areas of learning and training that they wished to pursue at meetings, including covering the following issues: bullying policy and intervention, cyberbullying, youth suicide prevention, and the new nbCC-based Family Place.

At the next meeting, set for Wednesday, February 8th, the NBYC will welcome staff from The Family Place, who will introduce and discuss their new services. The Family Place, headed up by Program Director Amber Besaw, offers support, nurturing,



This forum will also introduce the emerging community-organizing initiative, tentatively named nbOP (Northern Berkshire Organizing Project), whose mission is to break the cycle of poverty by building community. nbOP will consist of groups such as congregations, neighborhood groups, and community associations. The primary objective of nbOP is for people facing poverty to come together to identify their own leadership, their most pressing issues, and work in unison to make community and policy change.

Come join us on February 10 for this important community conversation. Be a part of the solution! The forum will be held from **10 am to 12 pm on Friday, February 10th** at the First Baptist Church in North Adams (please use Eagle Street entrance). The first portion of the meeting will be dedicated to introductions and event sharing; please bring canned good items to support the Friendship Center Food Pantry. For more information on the forum topic, or nbOP, please contact Wendy Krom at 663-7588 x15.

-Wendy Krom

and resources to families with children ages 0-12. This program, which is funded by the Department of Children and Families, offers innovative, family-centered services out of nbCC's offices at 61 Main Street, North Adams.

Anyone who works with or is interested in the well-being of northern Berkshire youth is invited to attend these monthly meetings. While this meeting is on February 8th, the NBYC typically meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month, 11am to 12:30pm. For more information, contact Kate Merrigan at kmerrigan@nbcoalition.org or (413) 663-7588.

-Kate Merrigan

Mass in Motion in North Berkshire: Helping our Communities to Eat Better and Move More



Amanda Chilson

nbCC is proud to announce its involvement in the Mass in Motion Community process. nbCC is excited to take the lead on this Department of Public Health (DPH)-funded initiative to provide

opportunity for the municipalities of North Adams, Adams, and Clarksburg to expand their pursuit of healthy eating and active living among the communities and initiate change at policy, systems, and environmental levels.

Mass in Motion, which will be funded through DPH over the next five years, is a comprehensive set of initiatives to address the overweight and obesity epidemic in the Commonwealth. nbCC has chosen specific initiatives to target the issues that align with the needs of Clarksburg, North Adams, and Adams. Mass in Motion will work towards creating conditions that encourage, nurture and promote wellness with particular focus on the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. Mass in Motion will look at implementing and expanding Safe Routes to School; a program that provides safety for children as they walk to school, enabling more children to walk, alleviating congestion at the schools and increasing physical activity in children. Mass in

Motion will also focus on implementing the new state nutritional guidelines in schools among the three municipalities. These are just two key examples of the many tasks and goals Mass in Motion will meet in the northern Berkshire community.

nbCC has hired Amanda Chilson as the Project Coordinator of Mass in Motion. Amanda Chilson was born and raised in North Adams, has developed many connections among the community, and looks to utilize these connections, along with creating new partnerships to lead the implementation of Mass in Motion. She will also work closely with town and city officials and leadership committees comprised of people in the communities, as well as with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, to help make this program a success.

“We are excited to bring Mass in Motion into our communities. This important initiative will make a positive impact on the health of our community, will benefit our schools, businesses, and residents by transforming the places where we live, learn, work, and play by encouraging our residents to lead healthier and more active lives,” comments Chilson. For further information, contact Amanda Chilson by phone at (413) 663-7588 or by email- achilson@nbccoalition.org. To learn more about Mass in Motion click here.

-Amanda Chilson

North Adams, Is It Walkable?

Students from the Williams College Environmental Studies Planning Workshop embarked on an ambitious mission this fall. They set out on foot to learn firsthand about the “walkability” of North Adams. There are many attributes which make a place walkable including overall safety, sidewalks, crosswalks, aesthetics and how well places of interest are connected. The areas studied included Downtown and the adjacent residential neighborhoods of Church Street, Ashland Street/MCLA, UNO and State Street. Methods used included numbered rankings for blocks of the streets, on-site observations, informal interviews with community members and detailed interviews with stakeholders.

The survey says – North Adams is a very walkable city! While there are potential improvements in each area, from very small changes to larger ones that will take time to implement, overall the well-connected streets and proximity of these neighborhoods to essential services create a very walkable physical form. A walkable community allows residents and visitors to reduce their dependence on vehicles, get in exercise during daily routines, and provide access to important needs for everyone. For more information about the comprehensive plan or walkability in North Adams, contact Mackenzie Greer at the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, mgreer@berkshireplanning.org, 413-442-1521 x32. The full report can be found here.

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2012 MLK, Jr. Day of Service



nbCC to Celebrate 25 years with Fundraising and Fun

Hard to believe, but the nbCC began its work in the Spring of 1986...over twenty-five years ago. We began with the simple process of interviewing community agencies to get a sense for how well the helping system was working for the dislocated factory workers. More than twenty-five years later, the process of bringing the community together to celebrate its work and address its issues continues. We at the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition see our anniversary as an occasion to celebrate how we do our work. We are planning a number of projects to help that celebration move forward.

The 20th Anniversary Journal that documented many of the projects of the nbCC during its first twenty years is being magically updated into the 25th Anniversary Journal. Thanks to Bert Lamb for leading this project and, once again, to Liz Kodela for providing the final publishing work to our Journal. This journal should be completed by early March, and has been completed with the support of many of the original firms and organizations that supported our 20th Anniversary Journal.

Steve Green has taken on the challenging job of helping us to raise moneys to keep the nbCC alive and vital in the Northern Berkshire Community. Many of you will see our enhanced fundraising drive for 2012 in honor of the 25 years that the nbCC has been around. We're asking folks to donate a bit more this year, to make our 25th Anniversary Fundraising Drive a bit larger than previous drives, and to use these funds to help the nbCC stay around for many years to come.

We're hoping this FUNdraising campaign can have some fun as well. We're in preliminary discussions with a local institution to see if they can host an event to help us to raise moneys and celebrate our twenty-five years of Coalitioning.

Help us to celebrate our work and take part in the Coalition's 25th Anniversary celebrations however you can.

-Al Bashevkin



▲ We've grown, we've grayed over the past 25 years. Recognize anyone?



▲ Volunteers Mark Lincourt, Denise Krutiak and Stuart Crampton stock shelves recently at The Friendship Center.

NB Interfaith Action Initiative (NBIAI) Looks to the Future

NBIAI Volunteer-Run Food Pantry Serves Over 105 Households in Northern Berkshire

The next meeting of the Northern Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative will be held on Friday, February 17, at 10 a.m. at the First Baptist Church of North Adams. (Please use Eagle Street entrance). All are welcome.

Our meeting discussion topics will be the Friendship Center Food Pantry as we near one year of operation and the current state of and future directions for the Initiative. A fundraising campaign for the Food Pantry will begin soon. One possible future direction for the Initiative is advocacy, in conjunction with other groups, for a more just distribution of governmental resources for those in need. About 20 people attended the January 20 Initiative meeting, which focused on affordable assisted living in Northern Berkshire. We expect an investigatory committee to be formed in the near future to look further into this important and complicated issue. Upcoming, the April 20 Initiative meeting will host Berkshire County minister Bert Marshall and discuss with him reviving the annual CROP Walk in North Adams.

The Food Pantry continues to add families from North Adams, Clarksburg, and Florida, with a total of about 740 member households. Wednesday, January 25, was a record-setting day. Our morning session total of 105 households served was a record by 7 families. We served 29 families in our afternoon session for a total of 134 households served, a one-day record by 12 families. Our pantry volunteers are fantastic.

The Northern Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative is a group of people of varied faiths working with others of goodwill to find ways to serve our community. Our meetings, which are open to everyone, include a time of faith sharing and silent prayer. For more information about the Food Pantry, call 664-0123 or visit its page on Facebook. For more information about the Interfaith Action Initiative visit <http://northernberkshireinterfaith.blogspot.com> or call Mark at (413)664-0130.

— Mark Rondeau

can you groove?

Groove has been working really hard to prepare for their next show. First they met with Liz Boland, Business Manager with nbCC, to learn about budgeting; next with Katherine Myers, Director of Marketing and PR with MASS MoCA to learn marketing skills; finally with Bert Lamb, Communications Director with nbCC, to learn how to create an eye-catching poster. All their hard work paid off!

Groove will be hosting a concert this month on Saturday February 11th at Gallery 51, Main Street in North Adams from 6:30- 8:30PM. The concert will be Valentine's Day themed, and feature the bands On The Shoulders of Giants and ShitZoo Ballistics, whose members attend the various local high schools. In collaboration with Williamstown's J Café, Schuyler Jones will be working the soundboard. Admission is \$5 at the door, or \$3 if you come wearing pink or red. Moreover, any teen that attends the show will get a \$5 discounted ticket to MASS MoCA's Synth Funk Dance Party that is happening immediately following the Groove concert. Remember, everybody that comes, gets kissed!

YLP Chooses Two Service Focuses

After significant discussion in December and January, the Youth Leadership Project (YLP) participants decided to split in two work groups, one of which was more interested in a service project that addresses the needs of fellow teens and one of which wants to help other populations in northern Berkshire. The two groups are "Team Drive" and a group focused on identifying gaps in sex education and working on providing supplemental information on sexuality and reproductive health to address those gaps.

Team Drive, who are interested in connecting people in need with resources, will go to high schools, churches, and supermarkets to ask if they can host a drive there; there will be multiple drives, including a food drive, a coat drive, and a hygiene products drive. The other group, which does not, like Team Drive, have a name, plans to assess the available sex ed in northern Berkshire schools, determine what areas aren't covered that they think should be, and then create public service announcements that educate about these areas. They aim to make these PSAs as videos that they can spread virally online. Additionally, this group is interested in developing a workshop on sexual decision-making for teens that they would offer at as many venues as possible this spring.

Although the large YLP has split into two groups, they still come together for about half of each session to participate in team building activities in order to stay connected and strong as a larger team.

—Jackie Kelly and Kate Merrigan

Teen Writing Workshop Receives Local Cultural Council Grant!

Teen Writing Workshop is working steadily at their writing. Great work is being produced and everyone is cooperating perfectly. We're delighted to report that we have received funding from the Local Cultural Council of Northern Berkshire to support the Teen Writing Workshop! We extend our thanks to the LCC and Mass Cultural Council.

Although TWW is partway through the year, teens 14-19 are still welcome to join. It meets every Wednesday, 4pm to 5:30 pm at the Coalition offices at 61 Main Street, North Adams.

—Jackie Kelly

Second Annual Rainbow Valentine's Dance for GLBTQ Youth on February 10

A group community effort, led by the Live Out Loud Youth Project and including the First Congregational Church of Williamstown, UNITY, Williams College, and Java Jive/Essence, is pleased to announce their second annual Rainbow Valentine's Dance for GLBTQ youth (and straight allies!) ages 13-22 on Friday, February 10th. The dance, which will be held from 7pm to 9pm, will be held at the First Congregational Church of Williamstown, which is located at 906 Main Street. Free rides for northern Berkshire youth are available for this event; to arrange a ride, call Kate at (413) 663-7588 by February 9th. Special thanks to the Makepeace Grant program of the First Congregational Church of Williamstown, which has in part supported this dance!

—Kate Merrigan



RAINBOW VALENTINE'S DANCE
FOR LGBT YOUTH AND ALLIES
AGES 13-22
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10TH
7:00-9:00 PM
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
WILLIAMSTOWN
906 Main Street
FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO:
'LIVE OUT LOUD YOUTH PROJECT'
ON FACEBOOK
FREE DOOR-TO-DOOR
RIDES FOR YOUTH IN NORTH COUNTY II
CALL NBCC 413-663-7588
Thanks to the Makepeace Fund of the First Congregational Church of Williamstown for making this possible!

"The mission of nBn is to connect and support residents within neighborhoods to build community, create stronger neighborhoods, and make linkages to groups, institutions and other resources."

2012 Community Outreach Worker Training Begins

Trains on social services and supports offered from local state, regional and community agencies.

On Thursday January 26th, Northern Berkshire Neighbors kicked off the 2012 Community Outreach Work Training, with thirteen participants from throughout Northern Berkshire. The training will culminate on April 26 with a graduation ceremony. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about various social services and supports offered from local state, regional and community agencies and organizations. Some training sessions will focus on access to affordable health care through Ecu-Health Care, the works of the Northern Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative's Friendship Center Food Pantry, and the various assistance programs that are available through the Department of Transitional Assistance. Throughout the training, participants will learn key skills that will enable them to apply their knowledge to actual outreach work. During the course of the 12-week training, participants will identify their own personal and community outreach goals, and have an opportunity to submit a proposal to accomplish those goals as part of their Community Outreach work through nbCC/NBN.

-Wendy Krom

2012 Community Outreach Training Began in January!



UNO Bowling Party

The United Neighborhood Organization, UNO, held their annual "After the Holidays Bowling Party" on Sunday, January 15th at Valley Park Lanes on Curran Highway in North Adams. The group, consisting of twelve children and adults, enjoyed bowling, followed by pizza and all the fixings. Everyone, adults and children, received a Holiday bag of treats to take home with them. Another fun time in the UNO neighborhood! Committee members who helped at the event were Darlene Ellis, Gail Nelson, Tammy Moon, Amanda Sunn and yours truly, Shirley Davis.

-Shirley Davis

Exciting Community Organizing Training!

On Saturday, January 14th, there was a followup to the Community Organizing Training held in December. We began with a "go-round" to share a brief phrase describing our experience of conversations. There is a kind of magic in being connected with other people. With access to so much technology these days, the presence of another human being can be cause for celebration. Patience is important, and sometimes we have to listen a lot to find out a little!

We reviewed the December 3rd Training, which included the skill of one-to-one conversations. We paired off and practiced a one-to-one to support our effort to get to know one another better.

There was a sense of excitement and hope. One person described it as being "on the cusp of something wonderful." Next steps include attending the February 10 nbCC forum to join the community conversation on issues surrounding poverty. Other training opportunities include the IVP Winter Leadership Institute (tentatively late March), and our next Community Organizing Training in North Adams: May 18 -19. Mark your calendars!!

Greylock Valley Gazette is Back!

The community-based after-school program, the Greylock Valley Gazette, is starting back up on Thursday February 16th. Any child that lives within the Greylock Valley neighborhood (Angeli, Sutton, Sullivan, Isbell, and Greylock Streets), and is in grades 3-7 within the North Adams Public Schools are welcome to join. This program uses the concepts of positive community involvement and teamwork to learn all aspects of journalism, including interviewing, investigating, critical thinking and creative writing, to create the for-kids newspaper the Greylock Valley Gazette. The program will meet each Thursday from 3-5p.m.; please contact your respective school's after-school program coordinator to sign-up.



The Family Place Takes Shape!



Here We Are!

The Family Place is several steps closer to being completed.

Thank You to all the Drury High School students and their teacher, the Cooper family, and 2 volunteers from the Louison House for all your efforts to paint our, now, beautiful space. In addition to the paint, our furnishings are here and it is really beginning to look like a place for families. Please keep your eyes and ears open, there is more to come!



Chris Joins The Family Place

Chris Griffin, a Family Support Worker, is excited to be at The Family Place representing Berkshire Children and Families. "I enjoy working with families and have always felt there should be a central location for families to access resources, attend groups, or just stop and see what the community has to offer for events and activities," says Chris.

Chris joined The Family Place in January. She currently lives in Clarksburg. When she is not working, she loves spending time with her grandchildren and her two Boxer dogs. Welcome, Chris!

Heating Safely and Affordably This Winter

On January 17, The Family Place hosted a community informational forum on heating homes safely and affordably in the winter. Kate Agin of Northeastern Utilities offered forum attendees energy information and many tips on how to save energy.

Some of the invaluable information included documentation needed to enroll in assistance programs, how Western Mass Electric Company's NUStart Program (designed to help you manage your electric bill) works, a list of the program and services offered by Community Action Programs, a detailed description of the Mass-Save programs including weatherization services and other information about the Citizens Energy Corporation and Massachusetts Good Neighbor Energy Fund.

Kate also covered income guidelines for eligibility (see below) and suggested that even if you were not eligible in the past, check again as maximum income guidelines have increased recently.

Fuel Assistance 2011-2012		Good Neighbor Energy Fund 2011-2012	
# in Household	Yearly income up to	# in Household	Yearly Income
1	\$31,218	1	\$31,218 - \$41,624
2	\$40,824	2	\$40,824 - \$54,432
3	\$50,429	3	\$50,429 - \$67,239
4	\$60,035	4	\$60,035 - \$80,047
5	\$69,641	5	\$69,641 - \$92,855
6	\$79,246	6	\$79,246 - \$105,661
7	\$81,047	7	\$81,047 - \$108,063
8	\$82,848	8	\$82,848 - \$101,464

Friday, Feb. 3, 6:00 p.m.**Sweet Success**

nbCC is partnering with Child Care of the Berkshires to host an informational event for parents and a chance for parents to tell us what they need! Yummy desserts will be served. Join us at the Haskins Community Center 2nd Floor conference room.

Monday, Feb. 6, 7:30 p.m.Friday, Feb. 10, 8 p.m.**Northern Berkshire Tonite**

The talk show of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition seen on local Channel 15. Each month it takes a look at key issues of concern to the residents of Northern Berkshire County. This month, nBn Coordinator Wendy Krom, hosts a conversation about the upcoming nbCC monthly forum addressing issues surrounding poverty.

Mon., Feb. 6, 4:00 p.m.(Wmst. Team - MGRHS)Tues., Feb. 28, 5:30 p.m.(Adams Team - Town Hall)**nb21 Strategy Team Meetings**

nb21 is a grass-roots initiative to reduce teenagers' access to alcohol. Strategy teams made up of local citizens meet monthly to guide project priorities and actions. For Adams, contact Corinne Case at 743-7455 or ccase@nbccoalition.org. For Mt. Greylock, contact Sally Sussman at 458-4670 or s.suss@verizon.net. For information about the CMCA program, call or email Lois Daunis, Prevention Coordinator at the Coalition office, (413) 663-7588 or ldaunis@nbccoalition.org.

Wed., Feb. 8, 11:00 a.m.**N. Berkshire Youth Collaborative**

This monthly meeting is held the first Wednesday of each month at the Coalition, 61 Main St., Suite 218, North Adams. To get on the group's e-mail list, contact Kate Merrigan at kmerrigan@nbccoalition.org. (all meetings at 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., attendees are encouraged to bring a bag lunch).

Friday, Feb. 10, 10:00 a.m.**Monthly Forum**

Join us for this month's forum of the nbCC where we will discuss "Issues Surrounding Poverty". See page 2 for more details. The meeting will be held at the 1st Baptist Church in N. Adams, at the corner of Eagle and Main streets. Please use the Eagle Street entrance.

Friday, Feb. 17, 10:00 a.m.**No. Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative**

The Northern Berkshire Interfaith Action Initiative (NBIAI) meets the third Friday of each month at 10 a.m. at the First Baptist Church of North Adams. All people of goodwill are welcome to participate. NBIAI is a group of people of faith working together with others of goodwill to find ways to serve our community.

Tuesdays, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.**Youth Leadership Program**

The group meets on Tuesday evenings from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., throughout the school year at the nbCC conference room. Two adult facilitators engage the group in a wide variety of exercises related to leadership skills such as communication, problem-solving, team work, identifying community needs, and project/event planning. It's also a great environment to just discuss issues of key interest to teenagers. Contact Kate at kmerrigan@nbccoalition.org or at 663-7588.

Wednesdays, 4:00 p.m.**Teen Writing Workshop**

The group meets on Wednesday afternoon from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. throughout the school year at the nbCC conference room. For those who would like to join the workshop or know teens ages 14-19 who could benefit from participating in a creative writing workshop, please contact Kate at kmerrigan@nbccoalition.org or at 663-7588.

Fri., Mar. 2, 1:00 p.m.

CCB 3rd Fl. Conference Room

No. Berkshire Systems of Care Committee (NBSOCC)

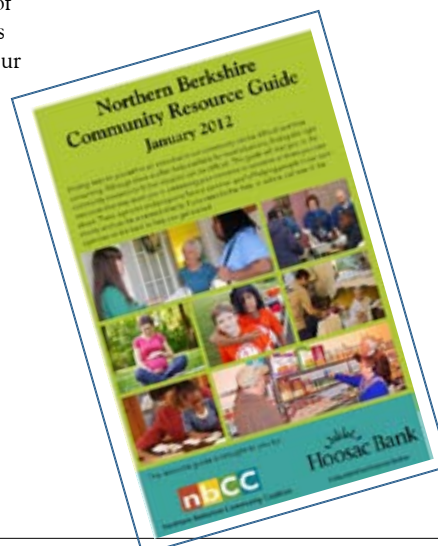
The NBSOCC consists of families, providers, and community members who live and cope with children with emotional ups and downs every day, who are the true experts qualified to adequately define, prioritize, and seek to address the needs of these children. To get more information, contact Annie Rodgers at (413) 663-7588. Lunch will be provided.

Thursday, April 12**Mark your calendars for the 411 in the 413!**

Planning for the 'health and wellness' themed youth conference on Thursday April 12th at Becket Chimney Corners is well underway! More details to come!



Check us out on Facebook and "LIKE" us if you haven't already! Click here to follow nbCC on Facebook!



Our January 2012 Community Resource Guide is ready! Stop by or give us a call for a copy!

Faith Institutions and Leaders

Adams

First Baptist Church

15 Commercial St. 743-5680
Pastor Donald E. Gray

First Congregational

42 Park Street 743-1677
Rev. Mike Mullany

Pope John Paul the Great Parish

21 Maple Street 743-1767
Rev. Daniel J. Boyle

All Saints South Episcopal Church

P.O. Box 191 743-0947
Rev. Edward A. King

Sovereign Grace Baptist

75 Commercial St. 447-8127
Pastor Kenneth Mick Jr.

Cheshire

Cheshire First Baptist Church

32 North St. 743-3649
Worship Leaders: Chip Winnard & Stephen Stroud

St. Mary of the Assum.

159 Church Street 743-2110
Rev. David Raymond

United Methodist Church

197 Church St. 684-3290 743-0133
Pastor Christa Levesque

Florida

Florida Baptist

245 County Road 664-6055
Rev. Roy Burdick

Hancock

Hancock Baptist Church

Box 10A 698-2230

Lanesboro

Berkshire Union Chapel

Route 8 445-4299
Rev. William D. Furey

St. Luke's Episcopal

20 S. Main Street 443-0165
Rev. Mary Schreiber

New Ashford

Christian Harvest Center

199 Mallery Rd 743-4605
Pastor Joseph D. Slonski

North Adams

Northern Berkshire Christian Church

55 Harding Ave. 663-8998
Rev. Robert Bellofatto

Blackinton Union

Massachusetts Avenue 458-8302
Pastor Eugene Kemp

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Holiday Inn Annex of Amer. Legion Dr.
President: Jim Law 802-694-1726

Congregation Beth Israel

53 Lois Street 663-5830
Rabbi Rachel Barenblat

COTY Center

70 Marshall Street 663-3133
Caitlin McConnell

First Baptist

131 Main Street 663-3780
Rev. David Anderson

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March 1 Application Deadline for the

Hardman Fund Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation is accepting grant applications to the James and Robert Hardman Fund for North Adams through Thursday, March 1. The Fund supports nonprofit groups, community organizations and public agencies that enrich the lives of residents of North Adams and the neighboring communities of Florida, Clarksburg, MA., and Stamford, VT. Last year the fund distributed over \$45,000 to 19 organizations. More information and applications are available online at www.berkshiretaconic.org. A link to the full press release is here.

HIV testing will be offered at NARH on

Thursday, February 9, and Thursday, February 23, at 1 p.m. The service is offered on the first and third Thursdays of each month, and appointments are required. Those wishing to be tested should call (413) 447-2654 to make an appointment. The HIV testing clinic is conducted in Suite 210 of the Ambulatory Care Center (the doctors' office building) on the campus of NARH. Testing is confidential and can be anonymous. Jacqueline Roy-Elliott, BSN, RN, Director of the State Clinics at Berkshire Medical Center, will provide services.

The VNA & Hospice of Northern Berkshire will offer several public health clinics

which include blood pressure and blood sugar screening, medication reviews, and health teaching. Public health clinics are offered every Tuesday and Thursday at the VNA & Hospice, 535 Curran Highway in North Adams, from 3-4 p.m. In Adams, clinics will be held at Barrett House, Wednesday, Feb. 1, from 10 – 11 a.m.; Columbia Valley, Thursday, Feb. 9, 10-11 a.m.; at Millhouse Apartments, Wednesday, Feb.15, 10-11 a.m.; and at the Adams Council on Aging, Wednesday, Feb. 22, 10-11a.m. In North Adams: St. Joseph's Court, Wednesday, Feb. 8, 9:30-10:30 a.m.; Holy Family, Wednesday, Feb. 8, 11 a.m.- noon; Village East, Tuesday, Feb. 14, 10:30-11:30 a.m.; and the Spitzer Center, Tuesday, Feb. 21, 9-11 a.m. For information, call the VNA & Hospice of Northern Berkshire at (413) 664-4536.

Did You Know....You may be eligible for WIC if..

1) You are pregnant or think you are pregnant. (You do not need to see your doctor first). 2) You have a child(ren) under the age of 5. 3) Fathers, foster parents, grandparents, guardians and other caregivers with children under 5 can enroll. 4) Are receiving SNAP (food stamps) 5) You can be working and still qualify. Call your local WIC office at (413) 445-9429 in Pittsfield or (413) 663-3012 in North Adams to see if you qualify.

Networking Night with Southern Vermont

Health Care on Wednesday, February 8th, 5-7pm at The Williams Inn, Williamstown, MA. The topic will be Improving Access and Quality of Care in Our Region. Join Thomas A. Dee, FACHE President & CEO of Southwestern Vermont Health Care for an informal discussion about our health system and an update on plans to affiliate with Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health. RSVP to: info@williamstownchamber.com or call (413) 458-9077. To see more upcoming events go online to www.svhealthcare.org or call (802) 447-5076.

Race: The Power of an Illusion - Join

Multicultural BRIDGE for the documentary Race: The Power of and Illusion, a three-part series to be shown on Tuesday, February 28, March 6 and 13 at 5:15 p.m. at the Images Cinema in Williamstown, MA. A discussion and light reception will follow. RSVP is required. Admission is free but donations to Multicultural BRIDGE is encouraged and accepted. For complete information or to RSVP, visit www.multiculturalbridge.org or call (413) 274-1001.

North Adams 15th Annual WinterFest,

February 25 Shake off the winter blues! Downtown North Adams will turn into a winter wonderland full of activity. WinterFest takes place all day, with the majority of the events held in the downtown area happening between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Highlights include: Ice sculpture on Main Street, a chowder competition between 12-2, horse drawn wagon rides, and more! The day concludes with a skate party at Vietnam Veterans Memorial Skating Rink on Church St from 7-9 p.m. All events are FREE and open to the public. For more information contact the Office of Tourism & Community Events: 413-664-6180 or tourism@northadams-ma.gov

Williamstown Youth Center's Snowfest

Celebration The Williamstown Youth Center will facilitate the 9th annual Snowfest celebration on Sunday, February 5th from 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Williams College Field House and Skating Rink. This is the Youth Center's fundraiser for the year. Proceeds help cover Youth Center scholarships for children. Come enjoy inflatable obstacle course and bounce house, caricature artists, ice skating, athletic games, etc. This is a great way to spend the day while supporting the Youth Center. Cost is \$ 35 per family; scholarship assistance is available. If you have any questions, please contact the Youth Center at 458-5925.

Spring CE Conference Berkshire AHEC will present "Motivational Interviewing" on Thursday, March 22 at Cranwell Resort, Lenox, MA. This full day conference will feature Thomas E. Broffman, PhD, a Chemical Dependency Consultant for the RI Dept. of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals, at the Eleanor Slater Hospital in Cranston, RI. Registration begins at 8:45am and the program will run from 8:45 to 4:00. 6 contact hours will be available. Please visit www.berkshireahec.org to register online and for more program and fee information.

Northern Berkshire Family Support Group will be held 6:00 – 8:00pm, February 9, at UCP, 26 Union Street, North Adams. Join us in an open accepting environment for parents and caregivers of individuals with disabilities of any age for networking, information and support open to all. Refreshments will be served. Childcare/Respite Services will be available on site – no age exclusions. R.S.V.P. by February 2, 2012. For more information or to R.S.V.P. call (413) 664-9345. This program is sponsored by Community Resources for People with Autism and United Cerebral Palsy.

"\$\$\$\$ Cents" Ability Learn five tricks to help you gain control of your spending and so much more. BCAC offers a workshop the third Monday of every month from 4:30 to 5:30 at BCAC, 10 Ashland Street in North Adams. Call Aleta at (413) 663-3014 for more information or to register.

The Spring 2012 "Green Living" seminars and workshops hosted by the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) Environmental Studies Department will continue through May 3rd on Thursdays at 5:30 p.m. in Murdock Hall room 218. The public is invited to attend this free series, "Saving biodiversity: Protecting species in Berkshire County and beyond." The aim of the series is to inform students and the community about the importance of biodiversity and efforts to protect ecosystems and species on the brink of extinction. No reservation is required. For further information see www.mcla.edu/greenliving, or contact Elena Traister by phone (413-662-5303) or email (elena.traister@mcla.edu). Upcoming events in February include: Thursday, February 2nd: "Medicinal plant conservation"; Thursday, February 9th: "Land conservation and the New England cottontail"; Thursday, February 16th: "Saving biodiversity in the Berkshires"; Thursday, February 23rd: "Rattlesnakes in the Berkshires".

Are you a 6th grade girl or a parent of a 6th grade girl? Dr. Kate Stroud is conducting a research project in order to provide a better understanding of how adolescents cope with stress and is looking for 6th grade girls and their female caregivers to participate in this study at Williams College. Mother/daughter pairs will be paid a total of \$150 for participating in the first part of the project with additional compensation provided for participating in follow-up projects at Williams College. Participation is entirely confidential. If interested please contact Dr. Stroud's Laboratory at (413) 597-4358 or youthemotioncenter@gmail.com

BCAC Offers Free Tax Help for low and moderate income taxpayers under 60 (no self employers). Evening, weekend, and daytime hours are available by appointment only. Call BCAC at (413) 663-3014 for more info or to schedule an appointment.

Support Groups available for current and former Spruces residents. For more information or any questions, contact: Robin Lenz, Coordinator, Higher Ground at (413) 458-4273.

Williamstown: Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church, Park St., Williamstown (2/4, 2/11)

North Adams: Thursdays at 4:30 p.m., First Baptist Church, Main St., North Adams (2/2, 2/9)

The Center for EcoTechnology will be hosting three workshops this month in the Northern Berkshires. Interested in turning your daily food and yard scraps into a rich fertilizer? Then attend CET's "Home Composting Made Simple" workshop February 4, from 10am - 12pm at the First Congregational Church, 906 Main St, Williamstown, MA. Also join us for the "Ice Dam Prevention: Why they happen and what to do about it" workshop February 9, 2012 6:00 to 7:30pm North Adams Public Library, 74 Church St, North Adams, MA. Finally learn healthy lawn and garden maintenance practices at the "What's Pestering You? Healthy Home, Lawn and Garden Workshops for Homeowners" workshop March 8 from 7pm to 8:30 at Rural Lands, 671 Cold Spring Road, Williamstown, MA.

First Bible Baptist
35 Notch Road 662-2107
Pastor Eric Malachuk

First Congregational
134 Main Street 663-9940
Rev. Patricia Kriss

First United Methodist
P.O. Box 744, 270 Cole Ave. Williamstown
458-3183
Pastor Kim Kie

Jesus Saves Tabernacle
45 River St. 662-2260

Jehovah's Witness
984 Union Street 663-5030

St. Andrews Episcopal
1493 Mass Avenue 663-3010
Pastors Susan Crampton & Charles O'Brien

St. Elizabeth's of Hungary
68 Marshall 663-5316
Rev. William Cyr

All Saints North Episcopal Church
59 Summer Street 664-9656
Rev. Edward King

Salvation Army
393 River Street 663-7987
Lts. Russell & Cynthia Crowsen

Savoy

Christian Harvest Center
664 Main Road 743-4605
Pastor Joseph D. Slonski

Stamford, VT

St. John Bosco Chapel
Main Road 802-694-1950
Father Joseph H. Tate

Stamford Community Church
Main Road 802-694-1533
Pastor James LaMothe

Williamstown

Baha'i Faith
Williams College 458-8092
Sponsored by Wms. Coll. Baha'i Club

Community Bible Ch.
160 Bridges Rd. 458-5556
Rev. Douglas Duncan

First Baptist
731 Main Street 458-4811
Rev. Peter Daniels

First Congregational
906 Main Street 458-4273
Rev. Carrie Bail

First United Methodist
P.O. Box 744, 270 Cole Ave. 458-3183
Pastor Kim Kie

St. John's Episcopal
35 Park Street 458-8144
Rev. Peter Elvin

St. Patrick and Raphael
54 Southworth 458-4946
Rev. Wayne C. Biernat

Second Congregational
81 Hancock Rd. 458-3467
Rev. Penny Rich Smith

White Oaks Cong.
480 White Oaks Road 458-4633
Rev. Sue Stewart

Williams Coll. Chap.
39 Chapin Hall Dr. 597-2483
Rev. Richard Spalding

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nbCC is supported by:



Final Thoughts. . .

It's the beginning of a new year and looking back, 2011 was quite the year. A most significant event for me was the retirement announcement by Congressman Olver in October. I wasn't expecting to hear this news. It took me by surprise and offered me some time, once the truth sunk in, to reflect. I've known Congressman Olver since we began our Coalition in 1986. He was a State Senator from Amherst. He would show up at a monthly forum to hear what people were experiencing, and to offer information about projects that he was committed to.

My most important memory of Congressman Olver, and one that will stay with me for quite some time, was on the eve of the Iraq war. A large crowd came out for the March, 2003 forum. Congressman Olver was asked to talk about our local transportation network, but with war looming and the contentious mood in Congress, he found it appropriate to go off script. The room was dead quiet as Congressman Olver related the events that we were reading about in the news. Even though the war had not yet begun, he knew we were going to war, and he was not shy in talking about his opposition to it. For a few moments, it felt that we were in Congress and experiencing the frustration that the Congressman lived. The emotions were strong, and the vulnerability that Congressman Olver showed on that day, helped us to see that this man was human like us. He is our Congressman, and he is just like us.

While the district that Congressman Olver serves is huge geographically, it has always seemed that he is our Congressman. Never a stranger to northern Berkshire, whether in public events or small meetings, Congressman Olver serves as a Congressman of the people. He understands our transportation challenges and worked hard to secure funding and technical support for the creation of what is now BerkshireRides. He has advocated for workforce development in Berkshire County, the Berkshire Bike Path, services for Veterans and many, many programs that we may not be aware of. To his credit, Congressman Olver is not someone who relishes the credit for what he's done. To his credit, it's the personal that is so important. He knows so many of us by name, knows our families, and by knowing us in the way that he does, he becomes one of us.

Congressman Olver is our Congressman. I wish him, his wife Rose, and his daughter the best in these next years. Congressman Olver, know that you served your district well and despite a difficult political environment, your voice rang true for the people you served. I am honored to have known you in your capacity as our Congressman. To me, your work ethic and values represent the ideals of what America is all about. Thanks.

-- Al Bashevkin

Join us on Friday, February 10
for our monthly Forum

"Issues Surrounding Poverty"

See page 2 for details.

All are welcome and we hope to see you there!
Please bring a non-perishable food item with you to
benefit The Friendship Center Food Pantry.

Look for our new
"The Family Place"
page inside!



Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
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