

KNOW THE NEED



Daily News/Meghan Nelson

Alison Barberi, president and CEO of the Greenville Area Community Foundation, helped facilitate presentations and conversations during a community collaborative event held Friday morning Montcalm Community College-Greenville Campus. Area organizations discussed ways to collaborate and care for vulnerable populations within the county.

Community organizations stop, collaborate and listen to help vulnerable residents

BY MEGHAN NELSON
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

GREENVILLE — In the spirit of collaboration, members of the medical, educational, business, clergy and nonprofit communities gathered together to discuss ways to serve Montcalm County community.

In four presentations at a Know the Need community collaboration event Friday, community leaders discussed issues facing vulnerable or impoverished Montcalm County residents and what the various communities in attendance can do to bridge those gaps.

"Sixty percent of our county is considered working poor or lower," United Way Montcalm-Ionia Counties Executive Director Terri Legg said. "The need is so huge."

Presentations included information about Montcalm Care Network's Health 360 Clinic and Montcalm Prevention Collaborative (formerly YOUTHINK Montcalm) and a transportation service in Central Montcalm and Lakeview school districts.

Phil Millerov, with Montcalm Prevention Collaborative, presented how he is working to serve vulnerable youth in Montcalm County.

He presented statistics that 30.8 percent of high school students self-reported being drunk; 9.2 percent took a prescription not prescribed to them, including painkillers during the past 30 days; and 14.3 percent were offered, sold or given an illegal



Friday, during Know the Need, a community collaboration event, attendees stood up and found someone they didn't know to talk with about the services they provide.

drug on school property by someone during the last 12 months.

"When we start to talk about this I think we're pretty good at intervention," Millerov said. "If you can get into services, we're pretty good at moving you through but it's completely preventable."

Montcalm Prevention Collaborative is hoping to start with the youth in the county to support them when they encounter alcohol or illegal substances. In late summer or early fall, the program hopes to host a youth summit to tackle the issue.

"I think there's a real opportunity for us to engage youth, give them a

voice," Millerov said.

Another way Montcalm Care Network is serving the vulnerable community of Montcalm County is through the Health 360 Clinic which is open to the entire community and takes Medicare, Medicaid as well commercial insurance.

"The really unique thing is we have expertise in mental and physical health," Julianna Kozara, clinical director at Montcalm Care Network, said. "That really fills the gap."

By providing a range of services to a range of people, the Health 360

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Clinic is able to provide integrated care and look at holistic treatments.

“(The Health 360 Clinic) gives us an opportunity to look at the most vulnerable. It offers opportunities to look at new partnerships in the community,” Kozara said.

Brenda Smith, secretary at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Lakeview, is working to transport residents to those partnerships.

Liberty Line started in October 2016. The ride service operates with volunteer dispatchers and drivers to transport residents of Central Montcalm and Lakeview school districts to cancer treatments, grocery stores, court appointments, friends or relatives, etc.

“We would love to see this little transportation seed grow into a huge spreading tree covering all of Montcalm County and provide freedom to all of the people,” Smith said.

During conversations sparked by the presentations, attendees discovered organizations helping to address needs in the community. Alison Barberi, president and CEO of Greenville Area Community Foundation, and Esther Combs, special education supervisor for Montcalm Area Intermediate School District, wanted attendees to look at how to create a community collaboration to serve those in need and treat the adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Combs gave a presentation on the effects of ACEs, which was conducted at Kaiser Permanente — a health care company based in Oakland, California — between 1997 and 1999.

According to Combs, the study looked at 17,000 adults age 55 or older and how childhood experiences with household dysfunction (i.e., mental illness, incarcerated relative, mother treated violently, substance abuse and divorce); physical and emotional neglect; and physical, emotional and social abuse affected their behavior and physical and mental health as an adult.

“The study found people with four or more ACEs are far more prone to having disease factors,” Combs said, referring to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other illnesses. “If you have six or more ACEs, your life expectancy decreases by 20 years.”

Combs explained COPD is treated by fighting the disease and what caused the diagnosis, and self-harming behaviors should be treated by understanding a person’s ACEs.

“It’s not about being an alcoholic. It’s dealing with these ACEs through a mental health



Esther Combs, special education supervisor at Montcalm Area Intermediate School District, presented information about adverse childhood experiences and their effect on the community. Combs was one of four speakers who talked about local resources during Friday’s Know the Need, a collaboration event for community members.

provider,” Combs motioned to representatives from Montcalm Care Network. “Then, we can start to deal with coping mechanisms.”

For Combs, knowledge is power, and she hopes to help create a trauma-informed community.

With the education on ACEs and information about various organizations represented around the room, Legg asked attendees to start thinking about how they can sympathize with the people they serve.

“As a community, how do we understand those ACEs and become more compassionate?” Legg asked.

While there was no concrete answer to Legg’s questions, attendees agreed to continue looking for ways to collaborate with each other to benefit the people they serve.

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Lincoln Street south of Day Street would receive sewer and sidewalk improvements if Stanton city commissioners apply for and are awarded an Infrastructure Capacity Enhancement (ICE) Grant. City commissioners tabled discussion of the grant at Thursday’s meeting.