Local Advisory Council (LAC) – North

St. Louis County

3/21/2024

**Present**: Tod Swenson, Lacy Podlogar, Brenda Shafer-Pellinen, Jennifer Rich, Macy Viita, Linda O’Neil Deremee, Blair Smith

**Absent:** Arielle Trevena, John Swenson, Anthony Howard, Joseph Laufeia, Colleen Davern, Melissa Brusacoram, Katy Lofquist

1. Jan and feb minutes were approved. Motioned by Blair, seconded by Macy.
2. Todd read the values.
3. Todd asked what everyone’s all time favorite movies are.
4. Membership review. Motion by Todd to remove Howard, seconded by Blair and approved by all. We have 3 openings now. How do we want to address filling these gaps? We can look at the reserve apps, from last spring, or we can open the application process. We have used up all our alternates. Brenda suggested contacting the applicants from last go round and see if they are still interested. It was agreed we need to get the target market we are looking to fill. Consensus was to email everyone that applied, that were not picked, to see if they were still interested. Melanie will send all the applicants to Tod, and he will send out the email to get responses. Applicants will be asked to respond to Melanie. She will create a list for members to review and approve.
5. Tod explained to the guests what the LAC does and how it was created.
6. The first guest speaker, this month, was Patrick Stieg, Carver County social worker. Speaking regarding social connectiveness.
   1. Patrick spoke regarding “Communities of belonging”. This initiative is to create a place where people are truly connected and care about each other. Despite differences, we appreciate each other. Did a study of how this is working. When one hurts, we all hurt. Very important is ones need for safety and security. Sense to belong. Need to fill these needs as well as primal needs (food, etc) . When you feel like you belong, you get to be YOU; the real you. Referenced the report that came out last year from the surgeon general about social isolation. People with social isolation have a much higher risk of suicidal ideation. Groups with social inclusion have better health and happiness. Carver county studies 1 in 5 feel they do not belong in their community. Most were because of their political views. You don’t have to connect in one location but can connect through organizations.
      1. Todd asked if they went to their county board with this initiative. He said yes, they have, and they are very supportive of this concept. He asked if there was any specific support they had given. Pat shared that they have gotten funding for some programs. Some communities have asked for funds to get programs established and they have been able to fund their start up with this help..
      2. What kind of projects are working for them? Pat mentioned a city newsletter that one city started quarterly so that people understood what was going on in their community and feel like they know and belong to their community. Community gardens, food shelves, meetings on community topics. These all were published in this newsletter so that people knew what was going on and could participate.
7. Second guest speaker was Rrecovery Alliance Duluth, Iron Range division. 5 members came to talk with us. RAD helps individuals with recovery from drug use and misuse. Community recovery organization. Peers based program. Helps when you are working with people who have been in their shoes. Building a “recovery community” Social connectedness is such an important part of this. Isolation leads to deaths from despair. Work with stigma reduction. Able to talk about recovery and their mental health. Help with everything they may need, paperwork, housing, etc., anything to help them succeed. Reason they established an office on range was that they needed something local and not just Duluth. We needed people that lived up here to staff it and work with these people. People from the community, helping people in their community. Tiffany talked about their office in Olcott park and how they do different events. They go to jails to do zooms for inmates. Finding places to do events. 5 people working in their office. All have about 30 different clients. Everyone is invited to their events. You don’t have to be someone in recovery. There are no judgements. Recovery night out in Duluth is very popular. They have a website that promotes their events. Facebook and flyers also help with getting their word out. Mary shared her story of how she has been in working with them for almost a year and has been in recovery for two years now. Trying to reach some older people who may not use social media. There for anyone and everyone. Tons of things in the office that can help people with harm reduction. Loving people for where they are in their recovery. Harm reduction “fentanyl testing strips” want to keep them safe until they are ready for the help. Randy shared he has been in recovery for 4 years now. Recently got into the jails to help guys in jail contact their families via zoom. Trying to break the stigma. It is contagious. Negative and positive both. Travis shared he works as a peer recovery specialist with RAD. Proud of what they have grown into being all inclusive almost as a family unit. It keeps people coming back. If even to come back and just ask for Narcan to help others. Normalizing being open about recovery and proud. It is ok to speak about it. Not just hiding in a corner. We are getting together. Funding comes from grants and contracts. Need funding from the county. Need more funds for food and beverages.
   1. Blair asked if they have problems with transportation like other groups do. They have people pick others up or give out bus passes.

Quick discussion about suggestions for next meeting when they will be getting their suggestions ready for the County Board.

1. Support 3rd spaces.
2. Increase collaboration.
3. Improve and increase transportation.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00