Local Advisory Council (LAC) – North

St. Louis County

2/15/2024

**Present**: Linda O’Neil Deremee, Jennifer Rich, Tod Swenson, Macy Viita, Blair Smith, Brenda Shafer-Pellinen, Colleen Davern, Katy Lofquist

**Absent:** Joseph Laufeia, Katrina Broten, Howard Anthony, Samantha Stocco, Dana Stroschein, John Swenson, Tony Yeley, Lacy Podlogar, Melissa Brusacoram

* Colleen read the values from the By-Laws.
* Question of the Day…… what is your favorite season?
* Membership review. Motion to remove three inactive members. Motioned by Blair, seconded by Colleen. Agreed by all board members present. Todd will reach out to an alternate that was decided on in past meetings. Todd will also reach out to three members, that have missed at least two meetings recently, to see if they would like to remain on the board.

**Guest Speaker – Lynn Gertz**

Lynn is a UWS Professor of Social Work and director of LiveWell Northern WI

* Lynn Introduced herself. Lynn was involved with the development of the SLC LAC. She worked with the county to figure out what we needed to do to develop our LAC.
  + She is currently doing a new needs assessment, looking at what is or is not working. Each county needs to make their own decision and identify priorities. Her organization will be traveling around the region to hear what people have to say. They are two months into this project and will be done in August. They are about a month away from doing interviews. May and June will be set aside for the interviews.
  + Lyn shared that their LAC is expected to share their needs assessment with the county board yearly. Todd asked if she could come back and talk to our LAC board when their assessment is published. Lynn agreed that she would. The board went around and introduced themselves to Lynn. Lynn shared that she is very happy to see the broad range of members and thanked them all.
  + Lynn shared what they do in Douglas County. She shared why they are doing what they are doing.
  + Two years ago, she was approached by Miller Dwan to share the struggles they have currently with mental health. Douglas county has a large population with MH issues. MD decided to make an investment in Douglas County. They approached her because she was involved in mental health and asked if they could hire her to find out what their investment should be. She said that it could not be just her, that it would need to be a team that could share lived experiences.
  + They have been doing work to try to make a dent in Douglas County MH. The reason it is hard in this area is because of the proximity to Wisconsin. There are problems with different states and different coverages with heath care. Colleen shared that she has the same problem and shares that she is licensed in both states. This makes it difficult when people need to live in one state, due to finances, now cannot access their therapist in another state just across the bridge. Lynn shared that because there are so many gaps, they had to get innovative. Desperation breeds innovation. Colleen shared info about the “Collaborative Clinic Model” Sharing space for different providers. She shared that it could be helpful for people to rent a day a week to do specialized services without all the usual overhead.
  + They have a very strong NAMI in Wisconsin. They are very close to opening a 24hr peer respite facility. It will be a 4 bdrm facility and completely free. It will be located across the street from a YMCA. Blair shared that she anticipates there could be a line down the block for people wanting to access this facility. The average stay in other similar facilities is approximately 4 days.
  + Lynn said they have been spending a lot of time on connection. The surgeon general came out with a report on the price of isolation. Now that covid is starting to wind down, what do we do now? What do we do to turn this isolation around. She shared that they have put together a public calendar to create “better together” events. Live well northern WI has a face book page, Instagram and website. Free, fun, and public connection. For months no one came. The only participants were the organizer and friends. This was until they hosted a Dungeons and Dragons event at the library. They saw a need to find what people really wanted to do. Trying to promote other activities that are free and fun. They also will share other events. “**Better Together”** activities are all volunteers. They have a walk every Wednesday for 30 min but only had one person attend. Although attendance is low, they will not give up. It is getting people’s attention. The biggest problem is people getting into their cars and showing up. They are encouraging providers to create activities each month. The goal is getting people to be consistent and building that consistency. Parents are loving the D&D at libraries. They know where their kids are and they are safe. Another promising activity is reuse and repurposing items. They recently had no luck with mocktail class. Even something that looks fun, gets rsvps, doesn’t get them to get in their car and show up. Just keep trying to get them to be consistent. They will continue trying to get attendance at the mocktail class. Just keep trying different things until they find something that gets people going. Collen shared that there is a fear-based culture that parents don’t want their kids to be anywhere other than home so that they are safe from perceived dangers.
    - Two other things they are doing is they bought domes “clear igloos” They were hard to set up and take down. They purchased clear tents that just pop up. They currently have 4 of them. They call them “**conversation coves**” with camp chairs and blankets and conversation cards. When they set them out, kids especially come in and grab the cards. Two weeks ago, they set them up at an ice festival. They had a line of people waiting to come in. People shared that they could learn something new about people they have known for years. They are seeing an interest in conversation. Some people are just isolated even when they are around friends and family. They have people fill out a little survey after. People say they love it and feel connectivity. They set them up occasionally on campus and at conferences. They will be creating their own conversation cards that are more relevant to our region.
    - There is a map on their website “healing and welcome spaces” map. The hope is to have images and addresses with descriptions. They all are outdoor spaces.
    - Katy shared that united way has done similar for veterans. Found there was not much participation in physical activities, but more with social connectedness events. Asked Lynn about barriers. She shared that transportation can be a barrier. They have funding for some supplies and gas cards. Most activities are set up along the bus line. As they grow, they will need to do a better job at transportation. United way program is called “veterans connections” . RSVP do not match the turn out. They have started to follow up with participants and share future events in an attempt to get people to continue to show up. Todd asked what are some things UW has done. They recently did a night at the races. Target shooting, at the gun range, has gotten a good turnout. Golf, snow shoeing, mini gulf, want to do Bentleyville. Movie night renting out a theater. Tubing at Giants ridge. Bowling activity. UW has funding for these events.
* Lyn shared that Essentia gave them $20k last year for their events. They used the funding for domes and roller-skating etc. Partnered with a local roller derby. This was their most popular event. They are using their money to make connections with the smaller communities. Trying to see if they can think of anything that would benefit their community and help them make it happen. Creating spaces in these communities like in churches that can be shared.
  + There was a discussion about how to promote these events. Flyers etc. but Facebook events seem to work better because people share and repost events. Collen shared that Event bright might work because u can look up sober events and find local events. Good for young adults. Todd asked what recommendation she would make to the county board. Lynn suggested funding that is supported by resources like UW. Have the county to invest more in what is currently working like UW. Need to be able to pay for the activities to make these free. Need flexible funding. They don’t necessarily need more funding just more flexibility to use the funds ex. gas cards. University can not use funds for gas cards.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00