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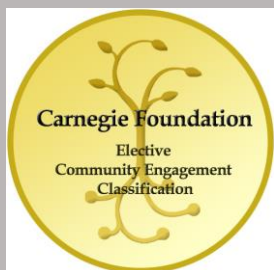
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President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll Member With Distinction



Carnegie Foundation Elective Classification in Community Engagement



Mentoring Matters: SUNY Cortland Rallies to Support Local Youth

SUNY Cortland's championship baseball team is taking the lead in rallying other SUNY Cortland athletic teams to join them in supporting Cortland area youth mentoring programs.

January marked the 15th annual National Mentoring Month and a coalition of local programs launched a campaign aimed at expanding quality mentoring opportunities to connect more of our community's young people with caring adults.

Although about 100 youth are currently being mentored through Cortland Community Mentors, there are 80 more youth on the waiting list; thus the campaign #80for80 was launched with the goal of recruiting 80 adults for the 80 youth currently on the waiting list for a mentor.

In the Bridges for Kids program at the YWCA, 87 mentors are working with children ages 5-11. Sixty-three of those mentors are SUNY Cortland students. However - there are 80 kids STILL waiting to be matched- and some of them (particularly young males) have been on the waiting list for more than 3 years.

When SUNY Cortland Baseball Coach Joe Brown learned of this he quickly made a call to see what the baseball team could do to help. The team has begun developing a program that would create two-person teams that partner student

athletes from different teams to mentor a local youngster. The idea is to rally other athletes to participate, develop the two-person teams and solidify the program. To begin this new mentoring concept by fall 2016, the team hopes to finalize the plan, form teams and complete mentor training during the spring 2016 semester.

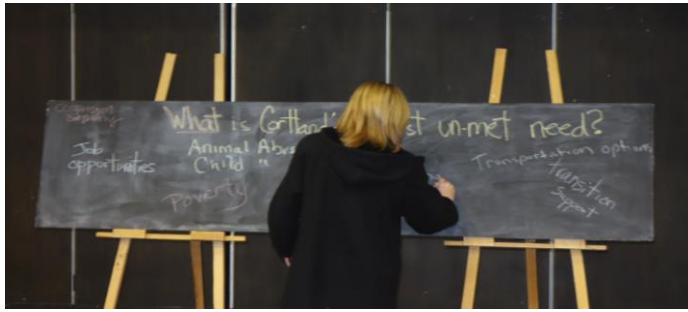
"Mentoring relationships are so powerful," reports Sara Earl, Program Director for the YWCA Bridges for Kids program. "When a child sees that you take the time to listen to his or her feelings and understand their struggles, that child's confidence just soars. It is not about money spent on a child, but about quality time and showing you care."

Leslie Wilkins, Director of Cortland Prevention Resources which offers the "Compass" mentoring program, commented that "mentors are all trained using a national curriculum and they are provided constant support which prepares them to provide the best possible outcomes for the youth they mentor." Wilkins and Earl have offered to adapt training to include and support this unique opportunity for a two-member team approach.

The baseball team is also planning a special recreation clinic in April. The clinic will offer skill-building and fun playing wiffle-ball, basketball and kickball.

Research shows that trained mentors can play a powerful role in providing young

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The Economic Inequality Initiatives Democracy wall was featured at Cortland Counts



Cortland Counts A Snapshot of Cortland County

Cortland Counts is an annual event where pertinent information regarding the community is shared and discussed. This year's forum was held in Corey Union's Function room on January 20th. The forum reports on five areas of community assessment: health, youth, sustainability, housing and economics.

The first speaker, Mary McGuire, SUNY Cortland Political Science professor, and director of the college's Institute for Civic Engagement, presented on the joint college and community initiative; the Economic Inequality Project. McGuire revealed how income inequality in the United States has grown significantly since the early 1970s.



Mary McGuire delivers a presentation on Economic Inequality at Cortland Counts

The Economic Inequality Initiative also featured a democracy wall at the forum; inviting participants to respond to the question "What is Cortland greatest un-met need?"

Mark Webster, director of Cortland Regional Medical Center shared some positive news regarding our local

hospital: Out of more than 3000 hospitals nationwide, the center was ranked #50 in the U.S. and #1 in the state!

Webster also outlined some of the health challenges of Cortland County stating that in terms of health, a person's zip code is more important than his/her genetic code (where you live can impact your health). He also cited the four key healthcare threats of our community: obesity, lack of exercise, smoking and alcohol and drug abuse.

A group representing Cortland County Health Department and Cortland Regional Medical Center outlined Cortland's Community Health Improvement Plan. Highlights of the plan include:

- A program to encourage drinking water rather than sugary drinks
- Recruiting new physicians - twenty were hired last year
- Expanding and promoting walking trails in the area
- Bringing a midwife practice to the area
- Implementing a smoking cessation program and encouraging landlords to offer smoke-free apartments
- Encouraging more moms to breastfeed and provide support and resources for breastfeeding
- Working with area lawmakers to support the return of fluorinated water

Superintendents, Michael Hoose, from Cortland City Schools and Nancy Ruscio, of Homer Central Schools, presented

Soaring with Birds of a Feather



Arts Creativity Workshops
Wednesday 6 pm
Wishing Wellness Center
24 Church Street



Creative Arts Workshops!
 Every Wednesday Evening 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Wishing Wellness Center
 24 Church St. ~ 423-7472
 Materials provided free of charge.
 This is an open workshop; feel free to create what you like!
 There will be upcoming guided workshops in the future. If you have
 interest check out our Facebook Page!
<https://www.facebook.com/BirdsofFeather>

Cortland County residents who are recovering from substance abuse or who may be dealing with mental health concerns, have a unique support team in the community: Birds of a Feather.

“Birds of a Feather” is a project of The Wishing Wellness Center, a peer-run and peer-led Catholic Charities organization. Its coordinator, Mark Kelly, has a background in Philosophy, Art History, and Recreation. Since 2012, he has been developing ways in which art and recreation can help people integrate back into society in a holistically-healthy way.

Kelly follows a peer-based philosophy as he conducts Arts Creativity Workshops each Wednesday at the Center, 24 Church Street. He works with few resources to generate productive results. He also applies this approach in his recreational activities for community members.

One of his first projects in this arena was the “Cortland Glow-Ride, which included catering, live music, and \$1,000-worth of bicycle materials for people who were unable to buy items (such as glow sticks) for the Ride.

As the sun set on the evening of that first Ride, Kelly was not sure how many people were participating, but when he looked south from the corner of Main Street and Port Watson, he noticed that the glow-sticks stretched from that corner to at least the rail-road tracks – about 1,800 feet away.

About 200 people enjoyed that Glow-Ride, the first of three such events.

He also takes people on recreation trips that have included hiking along Buttermilk Falls in Ithaca and camping in the Adirondacks.

In autumn of 2014, Kelly took five people to Paul Smith Campground in the Adirondacks. (four of those five people had never gone camping) Over four days and nights, these

five people learned how to live without modern conveniences while setting-up camp, cooking food over an open fire, hiking, and climbing St. Regis Mountain – which is nearly 2,900 feet tall, with an almost seven-mile-long trail that took five hours to complete. But the experience was magical.

Kelly said that “this was a spiritual experience for all of us. I still remember the ‘ooohs!’ and ‘aaahs!’ when we looked out from the rangers’ station.” The view includes 30 lakes and the Adirondack High Peaks.

Participants in Kelly’s recreation and art projects have built their self-confidence and their self-esteem by getting out of their comfort zones, and they have developed a sense of community in which they can express themselves freely. Events such as these have been powerful healing experiences for participants.

Kelly stated, “We’re looking to reinvigorate our efforts and stimulate a wider scope of interactions and welcome participation from the college community.”

In addition to welcoming participation Kelly is also recruiting volunteers to help him create the Birds of a Feather webpage. To volunteer or participate in the workshops, contact Mark Kelly at mdkelly66@live.com.

Leadership in Civic Engagement Awards

Nominate an individual or a group, from on- or off-campus, for a Leadership in Civic Engagement Award. Details regarding the nomination process will be announced soon via campus e-mail and posters.

The awards recognize the exceptional civic engagement work accomplished by students, faculty, staff, community members, and organizations. Taken together, their work demonstrates initiative, creativity, and long-term dedication to the improvement of life in and around Cortland County.

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Cortland Counts Continued from page 2

information on their campaign, called “Every Student Present” to improve and reward good student attendance. The absentee rate for Homer High School is 5% while it is 12% at Cortland which faces greater challenges, such as students living in poverty.

Members of Solarize CNY’s Cortland group, Sean Vormwald, (OCC) and Beth Klein (SUNY Cortland), reported on efforts to increase the use of solar power in Cortland County. The group offered solar home tours, community workshops on solar power options, and facilitated home assessments and bulk pricing to make solar panels affordable. The project resulted in 140 home solar assessments and 35 homes actually contracting for solar panels.

Keith Pagini of County Planning presented the community’s Comprehensive Housing Plan which is focused on transforming the county’s sub-standard or vacant housing and to offer more affordable housing options in the area.

Mack Cook, Cortland City’s director of Administration and Finance gave an update on local economic initiatives. Cook pointed out that although unemployment is down and per capita median income is up, the demographics of Cortland are changing in a way that could limit our continued growth. For example, the number of people in the 35-44 age-group, (considered primary earners) is declining while 35% of the population is on fixed retirement or social security income. Cook noted that the community needs to attract more of the primary earners back to the area.

Cook also cited the several grants recently awarded to the Cortland area that will enhance business and

commerce in downtown Cortland. Cook wrapped up by encouraging the community to be thoughtful about how Cortland might develop a proposal to secure \$10 million in additional funds being offered by Governor Cuomo for downtown revitalization in 2016.

The Cortland Counts Community Forum is sponsored by Seven Valley’s Health Coalition and supported by the community assessment team which includes Cortland County Health Department, Cortland Regional Medical Center, United Way of Cortland County, and SUNY Cortland’s Institute for Civic Engagement. Follow-up meetings were conducted for each track to facilitate plans for the coming year.

Mentors continued from page 1

people with the tools to make responsible decisions, to stay focused and engaged in school, and to reduce or avoid risky behaviors, such as skipping school, using drugs or engaging in other harmful activities.

For example, in a recent national report called *The Mentoring Effect*, young people who were at-risk for not completing high school, but who had a mentor, were 55% more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor.

“Many meaningful, far-reaching mentorship programs involving the College already take place, but a growing need for positive role models always will exist,” said SUNY Cortland President Erik J. Bitterbaum. “This is a wonderful cause that I hope our campus community members will consider supporting far into the future.”

To sign up go to:
<http://www.cortlandareactc.org/#!cortlandcommunitymentors/prwk> or for more information contact Cyndi Guy at 753-4271 or cynthia.guy@cortland.edu