



Erie Together Activity Update **March 2014**

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This month was tremendously busy, and exciting, for Erie Together. The movement continues to grow, with new people joining the countywide action teams fairly regularly. The groups are making a lot of progress. Please see the following bullets that highlight Erie Together's significant activity over the last month.

Action Team 1: Early Childhood Readiness and Success

Kindergarten Readiness Parental Training Kit

- Task Team is developing a distribution strategy, with initial sites already identified. Plans are also in place for pre- and post- data collection.
- Task Team is exploring opportunities to translate kits into Spanish, Arabic, and potentially other languages.

Transitioning into Kindergarten

- A handful of school districts have not yet completed the survey; efforts are underway to collect their information. Once finished, data will be reviewed to identify best practices and gaps.
- The PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has robust transition training and tools. Task Team is exploring bringing this training to Erie. The hope is that the training can be tailored in part to help address Erie County's needs as identified through the survey. School districts and early learning sites will be invited to participate, including both public and nonpublic entities.

Other Related Activity

- Kindergarten registration flyer, including all Erie County public school district information, has been printed and distributed across Erie County. Little Caesars and McCarty Printing sponsored the printing of the flyer. Goal: increase on-time Kindergarten registrations across Erie County. Baseline registration data has been collected; follow-up data will be gathered from school districts to determine flyer impact.

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- Southern Erie County Kindergarten Roundtable continues to meet; next meeting to take place in April and be hosted by Corry Kindergarten teachers. Much discussion at March's Erie Together Action Team meeting focused on the value of this Roundtable and how this model could be replicated elsewhere in Erie County.
- Efforts are underway to collect data on Kindergarten readiness from Erie County school districts and nonpublic schools so Erie Together can have a baseline to help evaluate our strategies.
- Erie County public libraries are planning a "Celebrate Kindergarten" event in late summer. The ExpERIEnce Children's Museum may also hold a summer event related to Kindergarten readiness; this is currently in the "idea" phase.
- Erie Together partnered with Erie's Public Schools, the GE Foundation, Gannon University, United Way of Erie County, and the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership to hold an informational community forum on the Common Core College and Career Ready standards in late January. Following the forum, the team of experts who participated on the panel answered questions submitted by attendees. Please visit <http://www.erietogether.org/news/common-core-community-forum-q--a> to access that information.

Action Team 2: Aligning Education to Careers

Strengthening transitions from high school to post-secondary education/training

This Task Team briefly discussed their research to date and identified a number of potential next steps, including:

- Create a tool, similar to the Erie Together Work Ready Checklist, that could be titled, "Keys to Success in Post-Secondary Education and Training," and would include information re: what students need to be successful in life after high school, including:
 - Proficiency in math and literacy
 - Career exposure
 - Career path and goals
 - Resiliency
 - Financial help and a financial plan
 - Etc.

This tool should also point to resources that individuals and families can access if they are experiencing difficulty with any of the above. Potential sources of information for

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these resources will include the recent survey done by the team, Career Street, and the human services resource directory being compiled by Gannon University, among others.

- Create a messaging campaign: "Five factors on how education impacts your life," and get this message out very broadly throughout the community. The team had a number of ideas about how this could be accomplished.
- Locate/review data to identify what is key to successful entry and completion of post-secondary education and training.

Utilizing After School Programs to Support Local Youth

At the March Action Team meeting, this Task Team gave a very detailed presentation regarding national research they had reviewed to date regarding the impact of after school programming on youth. Generally speaking, the research revealed the tremendous importance of after school programming.

This team is just beginning its work; they have only met twice. Next steps include:

- Inviting a couple/few business people to serve on the task team.
- Identifying what afterschool programming exists locally, which programs have additional capacity, and determining if there are gaps in service.
- Local demographic analysis to determine areas and populations in greatest need.
- Review of Gannon University faculty research regarding key elements that make strong after school programs.
- Developing a strategy to get more kids connected to good programs.
- Exploring whether or not there are funding gaps and how to potentially address.

Career Street

- Executive director, Jennifer Pontzer, hired; began February 24.
- Business community presentations underway: Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership Board of Directors on February 13; MBA Eggs 'n' Issues on March 19.
- Career exploration matches are already being made through Career Street.
- It is important to spread the word about Career Street (www.careerstreeterie.org) through personal and professional networks to get more businesses and organizations that will provide, or participate in, career exploration experiences engaged.
- Erie County school districts, and the diocesan schools, are all engaged. Each has appointed a Career Street liaison.
- The Career Street advisory board which consists of business, education and nonprofit representatives will meet at the end of March.

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Action Team 3: Individual and Family Stability

Erie City Mission/Emmaus Ministries Family Action Team (FACT) program

- Erie City Mission (ECM) and Emmaus Ministries have done very well with their FACT process, expanding their “program” to include more than the traditional FACT efforts. To that end, they have formed important partnerships with Edinboro University (four week job readiness course); Scott Enterprises (speakers and job shadowing opportunities) and HERO (PCA training). ECM and Emmaus are working hard to establish relationships with additional businesses so they may help connect more employers to individuals who have proven their commitment and follow-through with their participation in the FACTs efforts.

FACT Expansion Opportunities and Current FACT Efforts:

- Mercy Center for Women facilitators have been trained; will be running a group soon.
- McLane Church (several sites) – moving forward.
- Corry – kicking off March 27.
- St. Jude – facilitators are being trained.
- Union City – participants currently meeting with community partners.
- African American Concerned Clergy – currently considering opportunities.

Self-Sufficiency Matrix

- Instructions for use nearly complete.
- Identifying organizations to pilot.
- Preparing to receive demonstration of GECAC tool for data capture and warehousing.

Human Services Directory

- Gannon University compiling this directory as a service to the community.
- Over 1,000 programs currently listed.
- Information should be available in PDF format by end of March.
- Data will ultimately be put online, searchable by category, and “updateable” by organizations.

Action Team 4: Aligning Workforce and Economic Development

Ex-Offender Reentry Strategy

- The ex-offender reentry strategy group finished Phase I of its work.

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- The group is now putting together its detailed strategy to assist prior inmates to integrate into our community. They are using the Lancaster County (PA) Reentry Management Organization as a model, but modifying that model to best meet local needs.
- The team is now meeting every two weeks. At its March 7 meeting, the group finalized the name, mission, vision and strategic goals of the proposed ex-offender assistance entity. At their next meeting, the group will focus on services.

Connecting Low Income Workers to Local Jobs

- Goal: encourage and help local employers to proactively recruit low-income workers to fill local jobs (big contracted construction projects and/or within companies)
- Need: local agencies to provide support infrastructure to help address potential employee barriers AND to connect local employers with viable employees.
- Need: Communications strategy to effectively reach agencies, employers, potential workers.
- Need: Strategy to make this all work (currently under exploration.)
- Next step: convene task team to begin work.

Other important points of interest:

- Erie Together's Community Engagement Committee is working hard to develop collateral materials regarding Erie Together engagement, and to follow-through with presentations to those organizations that have requested them. Two recent presentations include the Erie County Women Infants and Children (WIC) countywide staff, and the Erie County librarians. The Erie County Department of Health staff (2 sessions) are next on the agenda.
- Erie Together's new website is information rich. Please visit www.erietogether.org to access recent news, upcoming events, and important resources.
- At Erie Together's March Action Team 4 meeting, Laura Guncheon, director of community affairs from Senator Sean Wiley's office, gave an update on local efforts to explore creation of a National Center for Arts and Technology (Manchester Bidwell) site in Erie County. A local steering committee has been assembled. For more information, email lguncheon@pasenate.com.

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