



## **Erie Together Activity Update** **April 2014**

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Erie Together teams have made significant progress over the last few weeks. Please see the following bullets that highlight important points of interest since March 2014.

### **Action Team 1: Early Childhood Readiness and Success**

#### Student engagement in the Erie Together movement

- Erie Day School National Junior Honor Society and Student Council members held two special fundraising events to raise money to support Erie Together's early childhood readiness and success efforts.

#### Easing transitions into Kindergarten

- An Erie Together task team focusing on easing children's transition into Kindergarten has collected transition practices data from all Erie County school districts except one. The group is now analyzing the data to identify local "best practices" and areas for improvement, and will share best practice information across Erie County to help the school districts learn from one another. Additionally, efforts are underway to explore options to bring relevant transitions-related training to Erie County to further assist local districts.

#### Other related activity

- Kindergarten Readiness Home Progress Chart: One of Erie Together's task teams is creating a chart for families to use at home to measure their children's progress in each of the areas included in Erie Together's Kindergarten Readiness Checklist. At April's Action Team meeting, the group presented a draft layout. Work on the chart continues.
- Kindergarten Readiness Checklist: Another task team is reviewing the current checklist with the PA Core Standards in mind to determine if any changes need to be made prior to the checklist's upcoming reprint.
- 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 and inform our work moving forward.

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## **Action Team 2: Aligning K-12 Education to Careers**

### Erie Together Annual Survey of 8<sup>th</sup> Graders re: career awareness, preparation and exploration

- The survey is ready and housed on Career Street's website ([www.careerstreeterie.org](http://www.careerstreeterie.org)). Erie County public and diocesan schools are now being asked to deploy the survey with their eighth graders. Last year, Erie Together collected data from over 1,830 (of roughly 3,000) local students. This year, the survey is going out earlier than in prior years, and our hope is that we can further increase that response rate. Additionally, Erie Together is looking for ways to connect with non-public, non-diocesan schools to garner their participation.

### Connecting children and families to high quality "out-of-school" (i.e. after school and summer) programs

- One of Erie Together's task teams is looking at ways to connect more children and families to high quality after school and summer school programs. This involves understanding what currently exists in our community, what their programmatic goals and outcomes are, and finding ways to connect families to high quality programs.
- Through this task team, Erie Together is also collaborating with The Nonprofit Partnership, United Way of Erie County and others to explore ways to assist interested local programs in building their capacity.

### High School to Post-Secondary Education/Training Transitions

- Erie Together has created a task team focused on easing the transition from high school to post-secondary education and/or training to help ensure success once a student leaves high school. This group is focused on two key tasks:
  - Identifying programs in the community that help ease those transitions, and finding ways to connect more families to those supports, and
  - Creating a checklist, similar to the Erie Together Work Ready Checklist, that outlines what students need to be successful in life after high school.

Work on both of these tasks continues.

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### **Action Team 3: Individual and Family Stability**

#### Update on Family Action Team (FACT) expansion efforts

- Erie City Mission/Emmaus Ministries: currently on their third FACT cohort; things are progressing very well
- Mercy Center for Women: trainers are in place; will begin class shortly
- Corry: more than 16 individuals are participating
- St. Jude: should begin shortly
- McLane Church: plans under development
- Union City: in the "big view" meeting process
- North East: under exploration with Vicki Stetson of the 4 N.I.N.E. Thrift Store
- African American Concerned Clergy: exploring opportunities

#### Human Services Directory

- Draft in print form complete
- Erie Together volunteers currently reviewing for clarity of verbiage
- Proposals have been sought to migrate the data online
- Goal is to have data searchable online by category, and "updateable" by organizations
- Individuals who want print copies will ultimately be able to order, for a fee
- Erie Together's role will be to help make community aware that this resource exists, and how to access it

### **Action Team 4: Aligning Workforce and Economic Development**

#### Ex-Offender Reentry Strategy

- This work is progressing extremely well. The group focused on this task has finalized the name, mission, vision and strategic goals of a proposed ex-offender "one stop shop" assistance entity, to be known as the "Erie County Reentry Services and Support Alliance." They have begun to craft a specific strategy related to housing and employment, and will next focus on transportation. They meet approximately every two weeks.

#### Connecting Low Income and Minority Workers to Local Jobs

- Goal: develop a strategy to encourage and help local employers to proactively recruit low-income and minority workers to fill local jobs (big contracted construction projects and/or within companies)

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- This task team has only met once, with the next meeting scheduled for early May. At the first meeting, the group reviewed what is/has worked locally in this regard. Next steps will include: identify elements essential to the strategy; pull from what works; create ways to address gaps; ensure social service infrastructure plays key support role; and develop a communications plan to reach target audiences (employers, potential workers and social service agencies).

**Other important points of interest:**

- Erie Together has revised the “business plans” used to guide each of the action teams’ work to make them more user-friendly, understandable, and more useful in measuring progress. The plans are currently in draft form, but will be posted on Erie Together’s website ([www.erietogether.org](http://www.erietogether.org)) once finalized.
- Erie has been chosen by America’s Promise Alliance as a GradNation summit site ([www.americaspromise.org/program/gradnation](http://www.americaspromise.org/program/gradnation)), and Erie Together has been asked to serve as the summit convener. Generally speaking, the purpose of the summit, which will take place later this year, is to help fuel collaborative actions to increase local high school graduation rates.
- Career Street has over 70 schools, companies and/or organizations registered on the website ([www.careerstreeterie.org](http://www.careerstreeterie.org)), and more than 50 career exploration experiences have been created since late February 2014. Additionally, several activities are planned for the coming months to help build stronger relationships, and understanding, between the business community and local educators. The initiative is off to a good start.
- McDowell’s Exposure club will hold its annual Love Heals concert on Thursday, May 29 at 7:00 p.m. at McDowell Intermediate High School’s Little Theater. This is the second year of their involvement with the Erie Together movement to help make this a community where everyone can learn, work and thrive. Last year, Exposure donated concert proceeds to the local Imagination Library to support early literacy efforts. This year they will donate the proceeds to the Urban Erie Community Development Corporation to support their “Walking in Black History” trip, a non-violence tolerance educational program.
- Georgia Del Freo and Mary Bula recently presented Erie Together’s work to the Community Action Association of PA at the group’s statewide conference in Harrisburg.

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