



Report to United Way of Erie County Board of Directors

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The four countywide Erie Together Action Teams have not met since late September, however the smaller task teams continue to meet, and will do a current report out at the upcoming Action Team meetings on December 9 and 10.

During the months of October and November, the majority of Erie Together staff time was focused on preparing for the annual community forum, doubling this year as Erie's *GradNation Summit*.

In 2010, America's Promise Alliance launched the GradNation campaign to inspire action throughout the country to help raise on-time high school graduation rates to 90% by 2020. As part of the GradNation campaign, America's Promise is supporting 100 community summits through 2016. Erie was chosen as a 2014 GradNation Summit site, and Erie Together was asked to serve as the "summit convener." These summits will all center around one or more of the "Five Promises" of America's Promise, which are the fundamental resources young people need to thrive and succeed. The five promises include: Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others.

Through the GradNation campaign, leaders from business, civic organizations, nonprofits, local government, public schools, higher education and faith-based organizations, along with parents and youth, are expected to develop an action plan based on a critical local challenge. The challenge we chose to address is *how to create a community that encourages and promotes the involvement of caring adults in children's lives and educational success*.

Leading up to the forum/summit which took place on November 18, Erie Together conducted 17 focus groups collecting input from approximately 400 people, including both adults and youth. This process generated roughly 900 ideas, which were prioritized, analyzed, and distilled into a three-part action plan which was rolled out at the forum as the "More Caps and Gowns Project." The three components of the plan include: (1) an "Adopt-A-School" initiative; (2) community events bringing caring adults and youth together; and (3) widely infusing the 40 Developmental Assets across the community. For more information, please visit <http://www.erietogether.org/more-caps-and-gowns>

This year's forum was larger than it has ever been, with more than 400 people in attendance. The program consisted of (1) sponsor remarks; (2) Erie Together highlights delivered by a panel of participants; (3) remarks from Steve Pemberton, a top Walgreens executive who epitomizes the impact caring adults can make in children's lives; (4) rollout of the More Caps and Gowns Project; and (5) a table exercise to get people thinking about how they can advance the More Caps and Gowns Project. We received a tremendous amount of positive feedback

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through emails, social media and in person. Additionally, the following bullets reflect survey results we collected from the 99 respondents to date related to the substantive survey questions:

- Erie Together's activity and progress over the last year were clearly communicated. (88%)
- The Erie Together highlights were informative. (91%)
- The Erie Together panelists were a valuable part of the overall presentation. (85%)
- The speaker, Steve Pemberton, was an important part of the program. (94%)
- The More Caps and Gowns Project was clearly communicated. (83%)
- The More Caps and Gowns panelists were a valuable part of the presentation. (76%)
- The table exercise was worthwhile. (37%)
- I am making a conscious effort to do things within my work, volunteer or personal life to help achieve the desired community outcomes. (96%)
- I would like to become more directly involved in Erie Together's work.
 - Early childhood readiness and success (20%)
 - Aligning K-12 education to careers (38%)
 - Helping more families become self-sufficient (14%)
 - Helping adults secure family-sustaining employment (12.5%)
 - Please add me to the general mailing list (42%)
- My interests in advancing the More Caps and Gowns Project are as follows:
 - Participate in "Adopt-A-School" efforts (37%)
 - Help plan and execute community events (31%)
 - Inform Erie Together about relevant events I plan (33%)
 - Helping spread 40 Developmental Assets across community (33%)
- I intend to explore the following related opportunities:
 - Career Street (54%)
 - Big Brothers Big Sisters (8%)
 - Positive Youth Development (39%)
 - Get Connected youth-related volunteer opportunities (30%)

Finally, Erie Together has received significant media coverage (Erie Times-News, radio and TV) over the last few weeks, primarily related to the community forum. Additionally, Mary Bula participated in a WQLN-TV Erie NOW segment related to "brain gain" that aired on Thanksgiving Day.

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