



## **Erie Together Activity Update** **January 27, 2015**

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The below bullets highlight select Erie Together activity over the last month.

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

- A significant push is underway to get Erie Together-developed early childhood readiness and success resources into the hands of individuals and organizations that have access to and/or work with children and families. These resources include the Kindergarten Readiness Checklist, Progress Chart, and Parent Training Kits. To that end, the "Kindergarten Readiness Resource Distribution" task team has developed a distribution strategy and is making the necessary contacts throughout the community.
- One of Erie Together's priorities is to help raise awareness across the county of the importance of early childhood education and of reading proficiency by the end of third grade. The task team focusing on this priority began its work by doing a literature scan of research so their informational campaign will be well-grounded in factual information. Next steps will be to simplify the information into specific points, and then to conduct grass roots focus groups to help craft a communications campaign that will be well received by diverse constituencies in the community.
- Another significant priority is to help connect families to quality early education programs. A companion piece of this is to identify additional financial resources to support scholarships to help families through Erie's Future Fund. Erie Together has a task team in place to explore various funding opportunities, and its work is just now beginning.
- Much discussion at the last Erie Together countywide action team meeting focused on ways to connect families to literacy supports across the community, and natural synergies that can take place among various efforts that are doing complementary things. These collaborative opportunities will be further explored at upcoming meetings.
- Finally, Erie Together's Kindergarten Registration flyer is nearly complete and will be distributed into the community soon. This piece helps families understand important on-time registration deadlines and school district contacts.

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## **Action Team 2: Aligning Education to Careers**

- Erie Together’s “Extended Time Programs” task team has been collaborating with United Way’s Education Impact Council and Unified Erie’s Family Committee to create professional development opportunities for staff at local nonprofits. The trainings are based on data from all three groups, including a survey created and deployed by Erie Together’s task team. Trainings began in November 2014 and are being held roughly quarterly. The next training is currently being planned, and will focus on “strengths-based programming.” The goal of these trainings is to help build program capacity to effectively serve more children.
- Erie Together created a task team to assist with the marketing of Career Street in an effort to increase connections between local employers, nonprofits and educators to provide quality career exploration experiences for students. At the last Erie Together countywide action team meeting, attendees spent a portion of time brainstorming opportunities in this regard, surfacing some new and creative ideas. Additionally, the group learned that Career Street will be holding a strategic planning session in mid-February, and that the outcome of that meeting will help provide additional guidance to their work.
- Erie Together recently formed a task team to help support youth civic engagement and/or volunteerism. At the last countywide action team meeting, participants had a very dynamic discussion about ways to help kids gain a more comprehensive understanding of their community, their government, and how they can play active roles and make a difference moving forward. To that end, the task team will be reaching out to the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership to determine if there are opportunities for a youth-oriented “Erie Ambassadors” program, and also to the Erie Area Council of Governments to explore ways to help students engage with local elected officials. A whole host of additional ideas were brought forth and will now be further considered through the smaller task team.
- The “More Caps and Gown Project,” which arose out of our community’s participation in the national America’s Promise Alliance GradNation campaign, has now officially launched. This is a comprehensive three part strategy, including the following components: (1) Adopt-A-School (including mentoring); (2) community events bringing caring adults together with local youth; and (3) infusing the Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets across the community. For more detail on the More Caps and Gowns Project, please visit <http://www.erietogether.org/more-caps-and-gowns>

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

- The Family Action Team (FACTs) process is being expanded through relationships with several local social service organizations and parishes. Erie Together task teams have been formed to assist with engaging target organizations and to recruit, train, and retain community partner mentors. A new target, local high schools, is also a potential opportunity but is in the very early stages of exploration. This work is ongoing.
- Volunteers have developed a "Holistic Health Self-Assessment" and are now considering the best uses of this assessment, how it can complement the tools being used by local agencies measuring client self-sufficiency progress, and how it can best be distributed throughout the community.
- The Gannon Human Services Directory ([hsd.gannon.edu](http://hsd.gannon.edu)) and a companion Veterans' Portal ([www.veteransportal.com](http://www.veteransportal.com)) were launched in September. A task team has been convened to ensure community awareness and use of these resources. Gannon University mass produced a business card with information on how to access both resources, which are now being placed at strategic locations throughout the community. Other marketing strategies are currently under development.

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

- The Erie County Reentry Services and Support Alliance (ECRSSA) Planning Group continues to meet once every two to three weeks to develop a strategy for "transitioning clients" returning to the Erie community. They are making great progress and will be releasing their recommendations later this year.
- Erie Together has been focused on helping employers connect with underemployed, unemployed, low income and minority individuals to help fill local jobs. An important piece of this is engaging the social service community early on to help identify and support candidates through the process. This work continues.
- New task teams have been created to (1) measure employer and employee satisfaction with workforce development supports, (2) widely distribute Erie Together's Work Readiness checklist, and (3) identify best-practices for diversity trainings within the workplace to help support the local workforce. More information on their efforts will be forthcoming.

### **Miscellaneous:**

The activity described in this report is aligned with Erie Together's priorities and desired outcomes as reflected in our "impact plans." These impact plans are the documents that guide all of Erie Together's work, and provide good context for understanding the overall movement. Each of the four Erie Together Action Teams has a specific impact plan. To access the impact plans, please visit <http://www.erietogether.org/impact-plans>.

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