



## **Erie Together Activity Update** **May 26, 2015**

Prepared by:  
Mary C. Bula, Facilitator  
Nicole Wethli, Assistant Facilitator

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>. 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 start, introductory letters were sent to approximately 300 religious organizations along with a number of local pediatric and family physician practices. As a result, requests for resources are beginning to come in.

Additionally, Erie Together is working with local organizations through a train-the-trainer model to help groups understand how to use the Parent Training Kits with families, so parents and caregivers can make the most of them with their children. The first training for organizations will take place on June 2. For more information, please contact Nicole Wethli at [nicole@erietogether.org](mailto:nicole@erietogether.org).

- 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 is intending to hold two to three "pilot" events this summer in strategic locations to reach families who could benefit significantly from this information. Identification of potential partners to help host these events is currently underway.
- Another notable priority is to help connect families to resources that lead to early childhood readiness and success, with one of those resources being scholarships for quality early education through Erie's Future Fund. To that end, Erie Together has formed a task team to help promote Erie's Future Fund to raise additional money to

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support more children. Two important fundraising events are being planned. The first is Northwest Institute of Research's Dr. Joyce Miller's planned climb of Mt. Kilimanjaro in June (<http://bit.ly/1LFFGut>). The second is "Vinyl Palooza 2.0" on Thursday, September 24 at McCoy's Barrelhouse & Grill (<http://www.eriesfuturefund.org/>).

- Erie Together's task team focused on creating effective transitions into kindergarten is: (1) reviewing local data (kindergarten transition survey, kindergarten readiness, and kindergarten registration); (2) reviewing best practices both locally and through state resources; and (3) determining how best to enhance transition practices across Erie County.

### **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 next training is on "Conflict, Bullying and Making it Right" and will take place on June 4 from 9:00 a.m. to noon at Grace Church in McKean. Please visit <http://www.thenonprofitpartnership.org/payment-portal/register-for-member-events/> to register.
- Erie Together was instrumental in envisioning and launching "Career Street", a countywide career exploration initiative for Erie County students in grades K-12. Career Street is working diligently to deepen its usage within school districts, along with increasing business and workforce participation across Erie County. Career Street also recently deployed Erie Together's annual 8<sup>th</sup> grade survey to determine the level of career awareness, exploration and preparation of local students and that data is now coming in from school districts. Finally, Career Street has updated its website. Please visit [www.careerstreeterie.org](http://www.careerstreeterie.org) to see the latest.
- Erie Together recently formed a task team to help support youth civic engagement and/or volunteerism. This group is exploring the opportunity to host a "civic engagement symposium" to expose high school students to federal, state and local government officials and entities. This idea is in the formative stages, and the due diligence is not yet complete.
- Through the "More Caps and Gown Project," Girard School District is hosting training for potential mentors to help enhance children's lives and educational success on Tuesday, June 9 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at Girard High School Library. Please visit [bit.ly/MentorGirard](http://bit.ly/MentorGirard) to register.

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- Another Erie Together task team is focused on ensuring students and parents have positive connections with post-secondary education and training institutions and transitions supports, so that youth can move seamlessly from their high school education into post-secondary education or training. This group is currently conducting focus groups with students and parents to gain feedback on what they wish they had known, or had access to, to make the transition from high school to post-secondary education or training smoother or more successful.
- Additionally, Erie Together has formed a task team to pilot our "Are You Ready for Life After High School" checklist with local students, and develop a distribution strategy to get this information into the hands of young people across Erie County. The group has identified specific target groups for distribution, including schools, community organizations, GED/adult education providers, university programs and various events, etc. To access this resource, please visit <http://www.erietogether.org/Post-Secondary>

### **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. Currently six FACTs groups are either underway or planned. Erie Together is in search of mentors to provide moral support to graduates as they work to achieve their self-sufficiency goals. For more information, please contact Kathy Stearns at [kstearns@gecac.org](mailto:kstearns@gecac.org).
- On a similar note, an Erie Together task team has been formed to help recruit, train, and retain mentors to assist FACT families in the achievement of their goals. Complementary pieces to these efforts include poverty simulations and "Bridges out of Poverty" trainings. Target groups from which to recruit mentors have been identified, and plans are underway to seek engagement.
- The Gannon Human Services Directory ([hsd.gannon.edu](http://hsd.gannon.edu)) is experiencing 1,200-1,500 visitors per month. Marketing and outreach efforts continue. This is a great resource for individuals seeking assistance for themselves, or others, struggling with self-sufficiency.
- An additional task team has been formed to help reduce the stigma of accessing social services so those who need assistance can seek out available resources to help them move forward on their path to self-sufficiency. This group is currently working to create a list of individuals that should be invited to participate in upcoming poverty simulations, including those currently scheduled for June 16 from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the Scottish Rite (see more information below), and on October 16 from 9:30 a.m. to noon at Sts. Peter & Paul Social Hall.

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#### **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. On June 19, they are planning an event to explore how the faith-based community can best support these individuals in ways that will help them achieve success.
- 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. To that end, Erie Together has facilitated connections between multiple social service, criminal justice and faith-based organizations and four local employers looking for employees. This Action Team is now envisioning ways in which to grow these efforts to assist more local companies.
- 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:**

- Erie Together’s annual “cross team meeting” will take place on Tuesday, June 16 from 9:00 a.m. to noon, at the Scottish Rite, 4701 Old Zuck Road. This year’s meeting will feature a very dynamic poverty simulation. Seating is limited, and it is important to register as soon as possible. Please visit <http://bit.ly/JunePovertySim> to register.
- McDowell Exposure held its annual “Love Heals” benefit concert on May 21. Each year, Exposure works in partnership with Erie Together to help raise awareness of poverty and make the Erie region a community of opportunity where everyone can learn, work and thrive. The beneficiary of this year’s concert proceeds was Blended Spirits Ranch (<http://www.blendedspiritsranch.org/>).
- ExpERIEnce Children’s Museum is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a number of special events. Please visit <http://www.eriechildrensmuseum.org/20th-anniversary/> for more information.
- Erie Together is able to accept contributions to support its efforts to make the Erie region a community of opportunity where everyone can learn, work and thrive. Please visit <http://www.erietogether.org/donate> for more information.

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