

Belmont Community Conversation Focuses on Youth

For Event on March 4, 2008

BELMONT: Residents of Belmont are invited to attend “Community Conversation about Our Youth”, on Tuesday, March 4th from 6:30-8:00pm in the Belmont Middle School cafeteria. Sponsored by local residents in partnership with the Belmont Middle School PTO, UNH Cooperative Extension 4-H, Belmont Recreation Committee, the Belknap County Restorative Justice Program, and the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families, the organizers seek comments from Belmont residents about youth issues and possible solutions.

Local and county professionals, including Belknap County Attorney Jim Carroll; Belmont Police Chief Vincent Baiocchetti; Alicia Morey and Lisa Carlson from local youth service agencies; Rebecca Levesque, UNH Cooperative Extension; Dianne Zawacki, Director of the Boys and Girls Club of the Lakes Region; and Brian Loanes, Director of the Belknap County Restorative Justice Program will be among those in attendance and contributing to the conversation.

Recent Belknap County data indicate that the “needs of local youth should hold a high priority whenever possible”, notes Brian Loanes, a Belmont resident, a community volunteer, and the Director of the County’s Juvenile Restorative Justice Program. He explains that 46% of offenses committed by juvenile offenders are related to simple assault, vandalism, and theft and that more than a third of these offenses involve violence or the potential for violence. “Yet managing kids who are in the system can be very complicated and expensive,” citing a range of per-diem fees from \$110. to \$366. for placement in foster care, group homes, or the Sununu Youth Services Center in Manchester.

Those organizing this “Community Conversation” plan to share information about available resources and to work with community residents to propose solutions for how Belmont can best respond to its youth.

“We really want to hear from Belmont residents,” said Loanes. “Our meeting will be brief, focused, and “will include refreshments served, as a fundraiser, by the Belmont Middle School National Junior Honor Society!” Pre-registration is not required. For more information or questions, please call Brian Loanes at 527-5493.