

REPORT TO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

1ST FISCAL QUARTER. FY 2010-2011

LEADERSHIP DURING STORMY ECONOMIC TIMES...

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It was a desperate act at a time when his country needed him the most. George Washington crossed the Delaware River in the dead of the night and energized a tired and depleted colonial army giving the American people cause for celebration. British forces had occupied Boston and New York, forcing American evacuations of those two cities. In fact, the British were coming dangerously close to eliminating the resistance in the north. The American army looked for a way to restore its people's faith in the cause. Against what was deemed years of expert military advice, Washington took a different strategy by waiting until nightfall to implement his attack. But he had to get across the river first. It was cold that night - in fact ice cold. Boats carrying American soldiers barely made it across the treacherous waters. But they did make it- along with 2000 soldiers.

Washington captured 900 prisoners during this affair which lasted approximately 45 minutes. Wow- what an impressive feat!

North Carolinians are seeing some of the most difficult and challenging economic times ever. Families are losing their homes; banks and personal savings are being depleted; the

national unemployment rate has doubled for many Americans; and local DSS caseloads are swelling due to the recession. The fact remains that Warren County residents are not immune from this weak economy. However, there is hope! There exists a resiliency known to Warren County citizens that compels them to forge ahead despite the challenges. We are indeed leaders- we are strategic leaders. “Strategic leaders are clear and direct as they face the challenges of their organizations. They think in terms of leverage, i.e., fishing where the big fish are, and partnering to gain the market advantage. Though some leaders are interested in

one sale, strategic leaders would rather create pipelines and strategic alliances that generate thousands or hundreds of thousands of sales” - William S. Frank (Denver Business Journal).

In the words of Warren County's Chairman **Commissioner Barry Richardson**, “times are tuff for everyone. But I believe that we are going to make it. Things will get better!”

Good leaders tend to rise above the fray. They monitor the here-and-now, but they always keep their finger on the pulse of tomorrow. Our Warren County Board of Commissioners and our Board of Social Services continue to lead during stormy economic times with a resiliency that says- “things will get better”.

Our county is both hopeful and fortunate for the leadership both of these boards display. Its is there efforts that will propel this county during our stormy economic times.

DSS Board Retreat: In April 2010, the Warren County Department of Social Services held its 1st DSS Board Retreat. The event took place at Bullocksville State Park in Henderson, North Carolina. The retreat focused on strategic planning for the agency including setting the agency agenda for the next year. The Board heard presentations from the DSS attorney Caroline Burnette; technologi-

cal advances in social services delivery systems by Michael Drabek, consultant, Northwoods Systems, Dublin, Ohio; DSS budget presentation; a host of ice-breaker and networking opportunities for management staff, DSS Board, and County Commissioners. The afternoon session consisted of small group exercises aimed at creating service efficiencies and boosting agency morale.

Two priorities emerged from the retreat: (1) the recommendation to implement a flex work schedule, and (2) a request to consider purchasing the Northwoods System- which is a records management/case management system that scans case files onto CD's eliminating the usage of metal file cabinets. Case records can also be electronically sent to different parts of the agency producing

WARREN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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DSS Board Retreat Con't:

service efficiencies and reducing labor cost. The County Commissioners provided a favorable response to both planning strategies. Additionally, the Social Services Board voted to implement the Retreat as an annual event.

9 Ground Rules for Effective Groups:

1. Test assumptions & inferences.
2. Share all relevant information.
3. Use specific examples & agree on important words.
4. Explain reasoning & intent
5. Focus on interest, not positions
6. Combine advocacy & inquiry
7. Jointly design the approach.
8. Discuss the undiscussables.
9. Use a decision-making rule that generates the commitment needed.

(Roger Schwartz)



2010 DSS Board Retreat at Bullockville State Park, Henderson, N.C. DSS Board & County Commissioners engaged in social services strategic planning.

DSS SPOTLIGHT

Someone You Need To Know?

Ruby Elam is a child welfare social worker in the foster care and adoptions unit. She has worked for Warren County DSS for over 15 years. Many of her colleagues consider her a local expert knowledgeable of foster care and adoption practices. As her name suggest, Ruby is a jewel and always rises to the occasion in support of Warren County families and best practices in social work. Ms. Elam has developed an expansive network of resources to aid local families and their children. Additionally, she participates as an “on-call social worker” - protecting children from abuse and neglect during weekends and holidays.



\$\$\$ Work First Pay After Performance \$\$\$

In 1996, North Carolina along with other states implemented the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act signed into law by former President Bill Clinton. This act transformed public assistance from an entitlement program to a program that required participants to work for benefits. In 2009, North Carolina required all of its counties to provide “Work First” benefits contingent upon “working prior to receiving cash money”. After the participant demonstrates acceptable work performance, cash assistance is rendered. North Carolina and other states are graded based on each state meeting its participation rate. NC’s participation rate is 50% - meaning at least 1/2 of those required to work are gainfully employed and/or participating in

an approved work experience program. Across the nation, many states have seen their welfare rolls decrease as a result of this act. Warren County public assistance rolls steadily decrease from 471 in 1/1997 to 66 in 5/2010. “There has been a paradigm shift” according to Alice Abbott, Work First supervisor. “Participants now receive time-limited benefits and are required to work prior to receiving benefits”. Employment numbers have increased for some counties as economic development and job growth attract perspective employers and employees. Experts agree that small businesses drive the economy. The recession still remains challenging for economically depressed counties whereby many business are relocating and/or closing. In Warren County, the Work First program faces an uphill battle given the local economy. Warren County’s unemployment rate remains at 11.6% (June2010).

DSS SERVICES CONTINUED

DSS partners with Radio Station WARR 1520 AM

Warren County Department of Social Services and Mr. Ron Michaels of radio station WARR-1520 AM are airing monthly radio segments informing the public of the array of services offered through DSS. Agency staff are interviewed over the airwaves and share public service updates, program descriptions and policies, and criteria for applying for and receiving agency services. "Knowledge is power—and this process aids the public as they access our services", according to Jeffrey Woodard, DSS Director. "It is my belief that an informed community is an empowered community—especially when it come to seeking help. WARR-1520 AM serves as a conduit assuring that the listening audience is empowered". WARR has aired DSS crisis programs; foster care, child care subsidy, adoption programs; adult services programs; and most recently the DSS Food and Nutrition program. "It is my intent to showcase all of our programs during to course of this calendar year" - Woodard. Mr. Michaels and the radio station

management are exceptional partners. We encourage the Warren County community to tune into WARR for the most update news and public service announcements including the best inspirational music in town.



DSS staff Connie Salmon, Annie Francis, Lora Edwards & Ron Michaels (WARR-1520 AM).

WARREN COUNTY DSS SIMULATION—TANF TOWN, USA

Warren County DSS participated in a simulation exercise entitled TANF Town. TANF stands for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. The objective of this exercise is to acquaint DSS staff with best practices in customer service, problem-solving resolution, and cultural competency. The agency set up simulation stations resembling DSS intake, DSS CPS, DSS Work First, and DSS reception areas. Staff role played several scenarios and then processed the engagement activities with the DSS director.

How does it feel sitting on the other side of the desk? Are you the case worker you want to be when you look in the mirror? Are most staff a paycheck away from applying for the benefits they administer? How do these discussions influence your practice and promote understanding when working with clientele? TANF Town helps staff to employ empathy and respect as they engage our customers through volatile situations.

Additionally, staff participated in a discussion on "gossip" and how it can destroy an agency

and the reputation of its members.

A critical issue presented during the simulation process included: "How to deal with stress". DSS secured the services of a christian masseuse to provide free massages to agency staff and to discuss the therapeutic benefits of a massage. The presentation was most stimulating and subsequently had to be extended beyond the designated time-frame due to the strong interest expressed by staff.

A TOUCH OF LIFE THERAPEUTIC MESSAGES & DAY SPA



"Empathy— The act of perceiving, understanding, experiencing, and responding to the emotional state and ideas of another person." - The Social Work Dictionary 5th Edition.

WARREN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

2010-2011 DSS BUDGET & PERSONNEL HIGHLIGHTS

“Hold the ship steady—Captain!” is a phrase encouraging the leader to maintain the course despite treacherous waters. Our 2010-2011 DSS budget was reviewed by the social services board and adopted by the county commissioners. We did our best to maintain the course. However significant reductions in the employee travel line item and agency supply line item occurred. There are several programs whereby travel is required to service Warren County customers. The DSS director encourages staff to utilize county vehicles for travel and has redistributed vehicles based on program usage to meet budget reductions. Supplies (paper, ink, toner, pens, etc.) are critical to the department as our eligibility programs require the printing of applications for service approval and the storage of files for auditing purposes, etc. Likewise, staff are encouraged to recycle and deploy cost-effective measures such as printing on both sides of paper and emailing reports whenever necessary.

Welcome to the DSS Family! **Kristi Mayfield**, Child Support Supervisor (CSE) ; **Janet Hammock**, CSE Agent; **Patricia Newsome**, CSE Agent, **Krishawn Bynum**, CSE Agent, **Ginger Carter**, IMC-II Work First, and **Sue Reneman**, Office Assistant, CPS. Congratulations to all.

The Warren County job market remains challenging. We are seeing graduate level applicants apply for semi-professional positions. The successful applicant has to prove that they are the best man or woman for the company. Here are **5 Things to Remember during the Job Interview:**

1. **Dress for Success**– Sexy is not the way to go. It implies that you are too risky. Business attire is the better way of getting your foot in the door.
2. **Study the position**– Know the mechanics of the position and moreover why you are applying for it. Be prepared to answer the question: Why should I hire you over the next applicant?
3. **Do not underestimate**– Many internal applicants will “assume” they’ll get the job based on their current employment with the company or their existing relationship with the boss. Remember, today’s job market is very competitive.
4. **Be a critical thinker**– Employers are looking for applicants who possess analytical skills. Are you a problem-solver versus a problem pusher? Many interview questions include scenarios that are designed to assess such skills.
5. **Communicate Effectively**- 80 to 85% of the interview is salesmanship. Regardless of how extensive your skill set may be, if you can’t effectively communicate your worth to the company, you will not be hired.

“Internal applicants often make the mistake of underestimating their relationship with their employer. Do not assume you will get the job because of your current agency status or your relationship with the boss. Today’s job market is very competitive and employers of looking for applicants that are high performers”

Meet our new Partner: The Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe partners with Warren County Department of Social Services

The National Association of Social Workers once heralded the theme “Help is what we do!” Warren County Department of Social Services prides itself on being an integral partner of the “helping community”. There are several profit and non-profit organizations to which DSS is a collaborative partner. One of our valuable partners is the **Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe**, Hollister, North Carolina. The Tribe provides services to communities as opposed to county boundaries– thus Warren County and Halifax County incorporate the tribe’s catchment area. Services rendered include: Educational programs (a tribal school); Health and Human Services; Economic Development; Housing and Community Development; and Tourism. Mr. Woodard (DSS director) met with both former Tribal Administrator Archie Lynch and current Administrator Alfred Richardson to discuss engagement

opportunities for our partnership. The Tribe and DSS will plan quarterly meetings to strategically meet the needs of the community.



Marty Richardson, Vicky Richardson, Earl Evans, Archie Lynch– Administrator, and Valarie West participate in a collaborative information session with Warren County Department of Social Services

Editor/Writer: Jeffrey Woodard
Photographers: Jeffrey Woodard, Jose Henderson & Mary Ann Roberson

**Warren County Department
of Social Services**

307 North Main Street
Warrenton, North Carolina 27589

Phone: 252-257-5000
Fax: 252-257-4656
E-mail: jwoodard@co.warren.nc.us

**DSS Board Meetings: Every 3rd Monday
@ 10:00 am . 307 North Main Street.
Warrenton, North Carolina 27589**

*“The LORD your
God is with you, he is
mighty to save. He will
take great delight in you,
he will quiet you with
his love, he will rejoice
over you with singing.”
Zephaniah 3:17.*

**2010-2011 DSS Board
Members:** Charlene Brown,
Chairperson; Janet Hilliard,
Vice Chair; Commissioner
Jennifer Jordan; Maurice
King; and (vacant seat).

**UNC Masters of Public Administration &
Masters of Social Work lends its best to
Warren County**

*“Two are better than one, because they have a
good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the
one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is
alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift
him up” . Ecclesiastes 4:9-10.*

DSS has had the pleasure of supervising the educational placement of a phenomenal student— **Ms. Annie M. Francis**. Ms. Francis is a dual degree masters-level student in both the school of public administration and the school of social work. Her field supervisor (Jeffrey Woodard) has exposed her to several aspects of DSS administration including HR, supervision, group work, project management, community collaboration, board meeting participation, etc. She is described as a high achiever and very dedicated to servicing Warren County families. Additionally, Ms. Francis is a member of the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe and has aspirations of becoming a DSS director.

Two are better than one. Her training and educational experiences in both Public Administration and Social Work Administration should provide her with the skill-set to realize her career goals.

We wish you much success Ms. Francis!

**Good-bye to Ms. Barbara J. Kinton,
DSS Board Chair**

The Warren County Social Services Board; its director; and the agency staff expresses its appreciation and love to **Ms. Barbara J. Kinton**, outgoing DSS Board chairperson. Ms. Kinton served on the social services board for two consecutive term limits (6 years). Prior to her appointment on the board, she worked at DSS in our Crisis Program and as a state supervisor in the Child Support Program. Ms. Kinton loves Warren County DSS and always worked hard to advocate for social service causes. “I could go to her for anything, and feel that she would render her full support” - Mr. Woodard. 2009-2010 proved to be economically challenging for DSS yet under Ms. Kinton’s leadership DSS prevailed. Again, thank you for displaying strong leadership, courage, and compassion for our agency and the citizens we serve. You are like royalty to us. *Long Live the Queen!*



MPA Professor Maureen Berner & DSS Intern Annie Francis discuss placement performance at Warren County Social Services



MSW Professor Wanda Reives & DSS Intern Annie Francis discuss career goals and placement performance at Warren County Social Services



Ms. Barbara Kinton, DSS Board Chair & The Warren County Board of Commissioners