

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE, IN REGULAR MEETING OF MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2022 AT 5:30 PM, SOUTHEAST REGIONAL LIBRARY, ALCOTT ROOM, 775 N. GREEFIELD ROAD, GILBERT, ARIZONA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Iya Affo; Chris Curley; Katie Hackett; Amy Holstein; Javier Rodriguez; Christine Sabel; Sean Warren; Heather Watts; and Suzanne Lunt, Alternate

MEMBERS ABSENT: Alexandra Rodriguez

STAFF PRESENT: Council Liaison Kathy Tilque, Community Resources Program Supervisor Jennifer Lauria, Assistant Town Manager Dawn Prince, and Deputy Town Clerk Judy Martinez

GUESTS PRESENT:

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hackett called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice Chair Warren led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Community Resources Program Supervisor Lauria called roll and declared a quorum present.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Hackett welcomed everyone and asked those present who were not members of the Task Force to introduce themselves. Those in the audience introduced themselves.

TASK FORCE MEMBER WARM UP – ENERGY CHECK-IN AND WEEKLY HIGHLIGHT

No warmup exercise was done.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consider approval of the minutes of the October 3, 2022 meeting.

A MOTION was made by Vice Chair Warren, seconded by Member Watts, to approve the minutes of the October 3, 2022 meeting. *Motion carried 9-0.*

2. 211 Presentation

Shelby Graves, Public Health and Community Outreach Administrator from Solari, Inc., summarized the 211 service and other programs. She discussed partnerships in Arizona with communities and organizations that provided services and resources, including crisis response in the 211 program which she said was Nationally accredited. She discussed what 211 was and that it could be accessed by dialing '211' on a phone or at 211arizona.org, adding the website was available in both English and Spanish. She showed an example of how someone could search the website for services. She said the services could be texted directly to someone seeking help from the website, so you would not have to provide your own phone number to others. She said all of their services were vetted. She said they also had a COVID-19 hotline, housing crisis line, transportation hotline, and heat relief services , as well as many other services. She noted there was also a 211 app. She discussed what were some of the most requested services and said that the 211 website could also be used for someone to suggest other services or providers that could be vetted for possible inclusion in their list of services.

Member Curley asked about tracking analytics and what was most popular, then asked how they promoted the 211 program. Shelby Graves responded that the app was most popular, followed by the phone, then stated 211 was promoted through various events, conferences, and social medial.

Alternate Lunt asked about housing assistance; the response was there would be different criteria depending on the funding and people could call to learn more.

Vice Chair Warren asked if a person needed help with housing and called, how was that handled. Shelby Graves explained that 211 was a database where they housed information and provided contact information for whatever services were needed to connect them with the provider; they were information and referral but did not provide the services.

Member Curley asked about response times; the answer was that they were connected within seconds to someone. Member Curley asked how long it would

take if someone sent an email; the response was that they had business hours but someone would respond quickly, within a day or so.

Member J. Rodriguez stated it was important to know that 211 was the information source but not the end result.

Vice Chair Warren asked what was the biggest barrier for people that kept them from benefiting.

Shelby Graves said that people did not reach out sooner. She also addressed how language could be a barrier, but said there was a language line, using Mandarin as an example, then discussed Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility. She added that someone should not be afraid to reach out, adding it was confidential.

Alternate Lunt asked if the service was available 24/7; the response was yes.

Shelby Graves then discussed the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and its history, noting it was free. She said in July 2022 the new National Lifeline was launched. She said the goal was for individuals to feel more hopeful. She said calls or requests were routed by area code, so if your phone area code was not where you physically were, it would route you based on your area code, then routed back. She said you would also need to go through some impromptu questions, but mobile teams were contracted through local providers that would be dispatched to assist, noting someone could also call their local crisis center. She discussed different reasons why someone may call and said that you would be talking to an actual person and quickly. She said some information would be taken from the caller including if they had suicidal intentions, but said someone could also remain anonymous and still receive help.

Chair Hackett asked if there was a crisis and resources were provided, would there be follow-up. Shelby Graves said they did have a case management team but not all calls had follow-ups.

Member Holstein asked if someone would call and check up with the participant if there were concerns and the person was receiving care with a crisis team. Shelby Graves said yes, they would contact their agent and also be checked to see if they were considered to have a serious mental illness (SMI). It was noted there were teams for those with SMI and clinics that helped them; Solari would make the determination if they met the SMI requirements.

Shelby Graves discussed what would be expected if someone called into the crisis line, noting someone could call if they were in need of help but could also call for

others. She said they could send out a mobile team or provide transportation to someone, in addition to directing people to services. She provided a quick snapshot of the call volume to show the Statewide crisis line versus the Nationwide line calls. She said they were averaging about 5,000-7,000 calls per month. She discussed numbers for how many times they worked with different cities and first responders. She said the community dashboard was available and updated every few seconds.

Chair Hackett asked if already Gilbert worked with the group. Councilmember Tilque stated Gilbert would reach out to them, but there was no one with Gilbert who worked directly with Solari, but it would be a great goal.

Member Curley asked how many mobile teams were available in Arizona; the response was that it depended on the area.

Member Curley asked what was the average time to get to a scene; the response was about an hour, and it was noted someone should use 911 for immediate assistance.

Member Curley asked if Solari was a mandated reporter; the response was yes and no, depending on situation.

Shelby Graves stated there were local helplines such as a teen lifeline and peer support line, or a “warm line”, to listen. She said the warm line had a limit of 15 minutes but someone could call back every hour and it was available 24/7. She discussed the different contact options.

Member Watts stated it was a great service that they offered, then asked about the outreach events and how they would spread the word. Shelby Graves said there was an outreach team of one person, that was now going to be two people, but they also had resource/crisis cards and a social media platform; she said they could provide crisis cards upon request.

Chair Hackett asked what organizations were provided crisis cards and who they were typically given out to. The response was to anyone, even at gas stations or grocery stores; also noting Solari recently received a grant from Samsung to provide mental health support training.

Vice Chair Warren asked if they would also work with religious institutions; the response was yes.

3. Gilbert Public Schools Mental Health Presentation

Susan Cadena, Coordinator of Student Services at Gilbert Public Schools, discussed health support systems and prevention initiatives at Gilbert Public Schools. She discussed their efforts to collaborate on suicide prevention with the emphasis on preventative measures. She discussed her department of Master-level social workers assigned to full-time positions at 27 elementary schools, noting there were also 8 mental health counselors at high schools and their global/virtual academy. She discussed training to help them understand signs and symptoms and trying to ensure all staff, including support staff, were trained. She discussed efforts to streamline processes and said in 2014 they created behavioral health teams (BHT) that included social workers, school psychologists, counselors, nurses, and administration that was district and school site based. She discussed the BHT process including student re-entry plans and follow up, as well as collaboration with community agencies. She spoke of the need for communication while having privacy and the importance of re-entry meetings for any extended absences for scenarios of students being hospitalized, displaced, suspended for a long period of time, etc. She discussed how the information would be shared if they had contact with first responders or crisis response teams, then discussed community collaboration and partnerships with behavioral health agencies, social services, fire and police departments, and other groups all working to share information and build relationships. She said she worked with other east-valley school districts to explore youth suicide and formed the East Valley Prevention Collaboration to vet resources, talk about legislation, how to access grant funding, etc. She stated that from about 2018 to now there were about 40 youth suicides in the area. She reiterated the need for prevention and to help develop healthy coping strategies. She discussed events that triggered evacuation, adding they did mobilize and receive training and worked with the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

Member Affo discussed focusing on preventative measures and asked how were teachers trained to create safety in the classroom to shift the culture.

Susan Cadena stated the school district revised the instructional framework and discussed how to help strengthen instructional practices, as well as how to create a supportive environment with different types of training, coaches, and helping teachers be more trauma-informed. She said there were lots of initiatives and they had systems in place to address issues with teachers.

Member Affo asked how they were dealing with issues on racial discrimination and bullying. Susan Cadena said they tried to address it on the school site, then discussed equity lessons. She spoke of looking for community partnerships and said it was ongoing.

Member Curley asked if Gilbert Public Schools promoted those services at the beginning of the year.

Susan Cadena stated yes, it was part of their role to introduce to topic to staff, students, families, and not only to kick off in the beginning of the year but throughout. She said staff should know the families, and families should know who the social workers were.

Member Curley asked what if a crisis occurred during off-days or holidays; the response was that someone was available even during the holidays and summer.

Member Watts asked about emotional resilience courses.

Susan Cadena spoke of “Second Step” and social-emotional curriculum, but said it had come under conversation and had become political. She said it helped with self-management, healthy strategies, and coping. She said for high schools there was additional training, mindfulness rooms, and some offered yoga for staff.

Vice Chair Warren thanked Susan Cadena and asked what would be her wish if funding was not an issue; the response was an in-house, in-district, school based mental health clinic.

Chair Hackett asked about what time for referrals and said she learned at the Faith Summit that the wait time was high, sometimes six months.

Susan Cadena said yes, they tried to get creative in those instances and prioritize the level of need and risk. She said if they had more lead time, they called in other resources and tried to utilize other organizations first, then in-house would be dispatched. She said there was a huge need and it was not as much a matter of payment or benefits, but more of not having enough quality staff.

Member J. Rodriguez stated parents needed to know about the social workers in schools and what methods were utilized.

Susan Cadena stated they had community engagement nights, as well as education and awareness activities including virtual opportunities and morning meetings like “Muffins for Moms” and “Donuts for Dads” to include these messages and information. She noted they were entering the podcast realm and were considering using TikTok, as well as making phone calls and having meet and greets.

Member J. Rodriguez suggested having staff at dance recitals; the response was that they did cover those types of events, as well as football games.

Member Curley asked what students were coming to them for; the response was overall stress, that the world was a lot for everyone.

James Walker of Higley Unified School District agreed it was overall stress and coping.

Susan Cadena discussed the impacts of COVID-19 on everyone and how students' development stopped as they experienced social isolation but then were expected to move forward at a normal pace. She said junior high kids went from 6th to 9th grade without that development and without coping skills, adding they had not seen the peak of where the kids would land with mental health.

Member Affo asked if they had communicated with Arizona Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) Consortium about ACES training; she noted it was offered to them and asked where it got blocked.

Susan Cadena replied that it did not get blocked, they took that training in-house.

Member Affo expressed concerns, stating some parents were reluctant to use the school because it brought in other entities and authorities. She discussed the need to train teachers to deal with trauma, create safety in the classroom, be mindful, and create a shift in culture.

4. Higley Public Schools Mental Health Presentation

James Walker, Director of Student Services at Higley Unified School District (HUSD), discussed mental health and prevention. He provided information on his background, as well as HUSD's background and makeup, which he said included both House of Refuge on one side and multimillion dollar properties. He noted HUSD did not have the same staffing capacity as Gilbert and Chandler, adding he also was in charge of school safety. He discussed how HUSD opened first during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they were also experiencing tremendous growth, including apartment buildings and schools almost at capacity. He discussed social and emotional wellness and trauma, how it needed to be redefined, and said to be mindful of how trauma and reaction to trauma varied. He said they had open enrollment as long as there was capacity, which caused shuffling of who went where. He said they began the school year with hiring an Assistant Director of Counseling Services, 12 secondary counselors, 3 elementary counselors, and 1 behavioral specialist.

James Walker discussed arrested development and delays in learning due to COVID-19. He said students had a new baseline, and teachers also had a different threshold. He said in 2021-2022 the main focus was to develop the Higley Wellness Initiative and to help move forward to have students happy and healthy, with a focus on mental health and a needs assessment. He talked about his own experiences with dealing with five student suicides in his career. He summarized prevention and awareness efforts including adding parent nights, initiatives for building resiliency, and a multi-tiered system of support for students who may be struggling. He discussed how students' academic changes often were due to underlying causes. He discussed systems of support, drug trends, and signs of suicide. He covered partnerships and areas where there could be "real talk" with discussions that were both structured and informal to allow open, candid discussions and share resources. He discussed school safety which he said also included mental health and awareness and safety and prevention consortiums. He said there needed to be a place where kids found their groove and could connect with others, anything that encouraged students to participate.

Member J. Rodriguez shared a positive experience with his daughter and her school.

Alternate Lunt discussed "no place for hate" that focused on inclusivity and relationships as a whole.

Member Watts asked about multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).

James Walker stated it was like a pyramid. He discussed how there may be a need for intervention for academics which could be related to other issues; the system could be used to identify a peer group based on assessments and concerns, like a bell curve to see how it would trend overtime.

Member Watts asked if it provided for social elements as well.

James Walker said they did provide for social elements, and the other side was that they focused on behaviors that were not being corrected, like students who were disruptive. He said the majority of students were in Tier 1, the second layer had less kids but more intervention for kids who were struggling. He discussed the processes that were in place, then discussed school safety and systems to deploy in case of emergencies with crisis response teams. He noted he did not just mean crisis as in a school shooting or something similar, but any type of crisis that may require post-vention, such as a death of a student or teacher, or even an air conditioner going out that may require an evacuation. He discussed the suicide risk management process along with related law and practice and the specific training that was

approved by the State. He discussed if students were identified at-risk, what then, and the suicide risk management process which included a team and bringing in an expert. He discussed the three tiers of awareness (more than sad curriculum), alertness (safe talk), and assistance (assist). He said there was a deficiency with what happened when the student returned, then discussed foundational statements and said every claim or statement was taken seriously.

Member Affo complimented James Walker on what was presented and the work HUSD had done. She asked what was being done in the classroom to train teachers on their own trauma and its effects.

James Walker stated it was a deficiency with their school and they had begun to be a self-covered insurance entity. He said that created opportunities to intervene before teachers were in need of care and that they had also created mindfulness rooms, yoga, etc. He said formal training could sometimes stress teachers out more, but he said it was an area they needed to focus on. He discussed the large number of teachers who were quitting.

Member Affo discussed the Resilience and Empowerment Project and asked what the district was doing in terms of racial issues on campus.

James Walker said there was some mandated training and they were adding additional curriculum, including diversity awareness and mindfulness. He discussed the perception of Higley schools in terms of race versus their actual demographics, then said they were looking into the discipline piece and mindfulness.

5. Area Agency on Aging Senior Resources Presentation

Lauren Friedman, Prevention Specialist with the Arizona Area Agencies on Aging, discussed mental health in the senior population. She said the group had been in Maricopa County for 48 years and were a 501c3 non-profit service, then discussed statistics and regions. She said there was an area agency in all 50 states, including many that were Native American focused. She said that in some categories of service it was for adults 60 years and older, but 55 years or older in other areas. She said they were most known for the senior help line but had many services including case management, respite care, adult day care, home care, care transitions, and home-delivered meals. She noted that the goal was to allow senior people to stay at home as long as they could and that most wanted to stay at home as long as possible. She discussed the “ElderVention” department, also discussing her own expertise, training, and certifications. She said they also assisted with prescription matters and home medications, clinical services, and someone who worked with seniors who self-identified as hoarders. She noted their contracted health plans.

Lauren Friedman discussed depression in the senior population, but said it was not a normal part of aging and it was not normal at any age. She said some depressed seniors may be thought to be “confused” so it could delay diagnosis, noting it often was tied to health problems and death. She summarized some of the symptoms of depression and signs to look for. She discussed common triggers for older adults such as housing problems, loss and grief, isolation, dementia, and financial difficulties, then discussed techniques for testing and treatment plans. She also discussed signs of anxiety in older adults such as avoidance to certain situations and tasks, shakiness and panic, difficulty breaking, and digestive problems. She discussed cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), pet therapy, relaxation techniques and breath work, and the need to encourage physical activity. She asked if there were questions; there were none.

6. Review and discussion of priority area of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

This topic was postponed due to lack of time.

7. Discussion and assignments of action items for CETF members

Community Resources Program Supervisor Lauria noted their assignments.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS

None.

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE AND TOPICS

Future agenda topics may be requested and compiled for a list of potential agenda topics; however, the merits or details of the items may not be discussed until placed on an agenda.

There was no additional discussion.

COMMUNICATIONS

Report from Council Liaison on current events.

Council Liaison Tilque discussed the Veterans Day Event and a two day musical festival. She discussed water conservation efforts and not over-seeding, noting the Town was issuing a rebate for smart controller. She stated she received approval to form a communications subcommittee to deal with not only civil discourse in

public meetings but also how the community wanted to be communicated with and what information citizens wanted from the Town; she said she would be asking the Task Force members for assistance.

Report from Staff Liaisons on task force assignments and current events.

Community Resources Program Supervisor Lauria noted there was a handout and flier about upcoming community events. She said there were action items and she would get them materials from the meeting to review. She noted the next meeting would be on December 5, 2022.

Report from Task Force Members on current events.

Member J. Rodriguez noted that the American Legion in downtown Gilbert would be open to public on Veterans Day and there would be events and food trucks.

ADJOURN

Chair Hackett adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

ATTEST:

Katie Hackett, Chair

Jennifer Lauria, Staff Liaison