



THE SPOKES SPEAK - GEARED TO SERVICE

Rotary Club of the North Fork Valley

POB 1543, Paonia, CO 81428

WEB SITES: www.rotary.org www.rotary5470.org www.paoniarotary.org

Meeting Thursdays at Noon in the Paonia Town Hall

District 5470

Club 1180 - Chartered 12/20/22

Vol 58 Issue 24 – July 18, 2019

Guest Editor: Bain Weinberger

LAST MEETING: July 11, 2019

President Coombe Presided.

No Visiting Rotarians

Key Guest: No key guest today (Ed Bliss had key, but it has been returned).

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Remote Area Medical Volunteer Corps will be in Paonia August 2nd and 3rd and is looking for volunteers. They provide free mobile clinics delivering dental, vision and medical services to underserved and uninsured individuals. They are looking for 200 volunteers per day over the 2-day event. They are also seeking donations. A very positive article in the NY Times portrayed them as a useful and necessary organization.

Program: Families Plus

Member James Schott introduced Carol Hickam, a retired psychologist and board member of the non-profit organization Families Plus.

She explained that she had been orphaned at the age of 10 and was raised by her grandparents. Friends and neighbors that helped out in various ways were instrumental in providing her with a normal childhood. These community members were very important to the kids growing up. This early experience showed what a program like this can do.

The organization has been around for 20 years. About 80 kids and their families are currently being served. Families have many needs. Families Plus provides a broad range of services, including mentoring, tutoring, and transportation to dentists and doctors when the parents can't. Every child's case manager is a therapist. Several live in the North Fork Valley.

Roughly 350 kids would qualify for services if there was sufficient funding. A child can be referred as a baby and can be followed all the way through high school.

Staffing is always an issue, as a non-profit cannot offer the benefits and salaries other places can. They work hard to keep their service providers and looking for mentors.

There is a wide variety of mentoring opportunities. And "mini-mentors" can provide specialty experiences for

such things as fishing. Mentors don't do a lot of fancy things. They just meet with the families once a week and interact with family to demonstrate life skills.

Rotary Member John VanDenBerg (also a consultant to the Families Plus Board) added that many of the families have strengths, but their lives are complex due to issues around money, addiction, violence, etc. Mentors give the kids an opportunity to see and participate in a less complex and toxic family environment. Kids often stay in contact with their mentors for many years after they grow up. Older kids often don't want or need a mentor.

Ms. Hickam provided flyers and other information provided about program and various volunteer opportunities. Financial donations are also welcome. There are lots of opportunities to get involved and provide a range of services.

Only 2 out of 100 participants studied needed additional services beyond Families Plus.

Their Motto is: Whatever it takes.

Q & A:

Q: With over 300 kids to serve, and just 80 being served how does the organization prioritize who gets help.
A: Referrals come from various sources. If there was more money, they could do more to go into schools and doctor's offices and seek referrals. Mental health a big concern with the medical community. A grant had allowed mental health professionals to reside in doctor's offices to provide services that residents would otherwise not receive. The program was a big success and was taken over by DCMH. Lots of kids are able to remain in homes their homes despite mental issues due to support from Families Plus.

A third of caretakers in the program are grandparents and are generally in poverty. Services provided to caretakers as well. Funding comes from individuals, Medicaid, foundation grants and other sources. The budget is \$100K/year.

Q: Please talk more about the mental health grant that was eventually taken over by the hospital.
A: The organization would like to work in the area of drug prevention in the schools. They are also working with Denver Health doing training to put everyone on the same page as regards best practices. It has not been all that successful. It was being run by AmeriCorps volunteer, so was not sustainable over the long term.

Schools are getting more counselors. There is a need to coordinate with them to make things more streamlined and easier. If a program in the schools could be shown to work, perhaps the school district itself would see the value and take over the program themselves - creating yet another resource in the community. John V. added that the current school administration is much more competent than in the past. They are accessing Dept. of Education money to put more counselors in the schools. Kids that are requiring a lot of teacher time get referred to Families Plus. The bulk of referrals are coming out of schools. Need more referrals from Child Welfare, and that is starting to happen as well.

Q: What sort of interaction is there with the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) community.
John V: Participants are usually referred by the court with possible involvement with Families Plus as well. Judges are "gung-ho" about the program.

Q: What kind of screening do kids get.
John V: Clients are put through a battery of standardized tests to benchmark the kids in terms of need. Counselors and teachers also provide referrals. Families Plus stays in touch with the teacher to determine progress of client kids and intervene when necessary.

Confidentiality laws are making it more difficult for service providers to get information about students in need in a timely manner.

Mentors get background checks and are interviewed by therapists. Mentors often recruit other mentors. The organization is there to provide support to the mentors.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Date	Speaker	Program	Member
7/18/2019	Ariana Chavira and Tracy Ihnot	Paonia Library	Peggy Szvetecz
7/25/2019			District Governor
8/1/2019	Melissa Palmer - DCMH	End of Life Options law	Bain Weinberger
8/8/2019	RYLA Students	RYLA	Glenn Dahlgren
8/15/2019			Bill Bishop
8/22/2019			Sarah Bishop
8/29/2019		Fifth Thursday	
9/5/2019			Ed Bliss
9/12/2019			Pam Bliss
9/19/2019			Randy Campbell
9/26/2019			John Coombe
10/3/2019		Business meeting	
10/10/2019			Felix Belmont
10/17/2019			Marsha Grant
10/24/2019			Barb Heck
10/31/2019			Fifth Thursday
11/7/2019			Mike Heck
11/14/2019			Ulli Lange
11/21/2019			Bob Lario
11/28/2019		no meeting	
12/5/2019			Betsy Marston
12/12/2019			Jackie Parks
12/19/2019			Kevin Parks
1/2/2019			Karri Polson

