



**Saranac Lake Community Café
Saturday, February 25, 2017
Lil' School**

Jaime Basiliere of the Child Care Coordinating Council of the North Country welcomed the group shortly after 9:00 am.

Megan Murphy, Director of the Adirondack Birth to Three Alliance briefly talked about the Alliance. It is a multi-sector collation working in the region to improve the lives of families with children 0-3.

Café Conversation #1: Please introduce yourself to the group of neighbors at your table and discuss “What does the support that you get as a parent look like?”

Harvest:

- ❖ Introductions: There was a broad mix of participants - very new parents, parents with older children and with baby on the way, grandparents, single parents, blended families, a child care provider, public health nurse,
- ❖ Supports parents identified:
 - Need a place PLUS a website/on-line resource
 - A place to interact with other parents, especially those with children with special needs
 - A one-stop-shop to find out where to go for resources: from dentists to storage unit, etc.
 - Adksupermums
 - Rob starting Daderondacks group
 - Events for kids
 - New Town event website
 - A place for socialization for kids
 - A place for intergenerational connection
 - A place to go with an inside space for play/blowing off steam when the weather is bad. The Town Hall has a space and some parents use larger stores such as Marshalls and ACE.
 - Need a place to start meeting parents before kids are school age
 - Parents that moved here for better quality of life for kids find it a more difficult quality of life for parents: not as many supports/places to go as urban or suburban areas.
 - Even bigger struggle for those without resources/low income, those with resources can “piece it together”
 - Birth and prenatal supports are needed

Café Conversation #2: Ask another participant (not a person that you came with), “What surprised you about being a parent?” Listen for 4 minutes.

- ❖ The total lifestyle change from before having a baby
- ❖ It is hard to connect with others
 - In or out of town it is still hard to find other parents
- ❖ The shock of having a new baby
- ❖ Lack of sleep/exhaustion makes it hard to network, Hard to balance tired with socialization
- ❖ Think that you will be different (hear these things from others before) that it will not be as hard for you, and it is
- ❖ Realize how long it had been since you were able to talk for 4 minutes uninterrupted!
- ❖ Time! Not enough to do everything you need to do every day
- ❖ Need one place to go
 - Make it easy
 - For everyone, diverse community members
- ❖ Need to talk to other parents to relieve guilt (of not being perfect parent)
- ❖ Multiple children = harder
- ❖ Can lose yourself, need self-care
- ❖ Have an ideal view before actually having the baby
 - There is a “post-child” reality
 - Need to “normalize” real life with a child, not like tv or commercials
 - “B.S.” ideal reinforced by others, need more truth about experiences
- ❖ Need to realize it is OK to not spend ALL time with kids
- ❖ There is place-based isolation
- ❖ The culture of the hardy ADKer gets in the way, do it all by yourself, be strong
- ❖ Expectations for those coming from other areas
 - It can be very cliquey
- ❖ Acknowledge that moms and dads experience parenthood differently – immediate and ongoing
- ❖ Need natural activities to lead to sharing environment
- ❖ Understanding different child rearing/parenting styles (both in a couple and between families) – resources are needed to help parents

Café Conversation #3: Draw your ideal family resource center in a group

- ❖ Flexible use of space
 - Resource room
 - Lending library
 - Indoor play: sensory/tumbling
 - Breastfeeding space
 - Counseling room
 - Community conference/meeting space
 - Reading nook
 - LOUD room
- ❖ Spaces should encourage intergenerational interaction
- ❖ Central space for information: Wall of support (mural with brackets for flyers/links to resources, visually organized)

- ❖ Van for transportation
- ❖ Babysitting nights
- ❖ Access to “gear” (Snowshoes, x-country skis, skates, hiking boots, etc.)
- ❖ Welcome package for new parents (like old welcome wagon)

Additional discussion

- ❖ The group discussed that supporting families is economic development, encouraging young people to stay and have families or move here. Need to encourage families to take advantage of the outdoors for activities with kids.
- ❖ Participants thought that it would be important to try to get specific representatives of community groups to attend the second Community Café in April at Dewey Mountain. They made a list of groups to contact:
 - Jen Clark: Saranac Lake Youth Soccer
 - Dewey Mountain League
 - Pisgah
 - Petrova Parents’ Club
 - Fish and Game Club
 - Boy Scouts
 - Northern Lights
 - The Wild Center
 - Pendragon
 - Blu Seed Studio
 - Fit for Life
 - Nori’s
 - Chamber: Johnny Muldowney
 - Civic Center
 - Carnival Committee
 - Adirondack Center for Writing
 - St. Bernard’s School
 - The Dance Sanctuary
 - Adirondack Carousel
 - Saranac Lake Free Library
 - Police and Fire
 - LPCA
 - Teachers from local schools at varying levels: St. Bernard’s, Petrova, middle/high

Feedback on Evaluation forms

- What brought you here today?
 - Wanting to learn from and build community with other parents
 - I am on the board of Northern Lights School. Our school is interested (and already involved) in outreach and education activities for children and families. We would like to reach and serve more families and community members.
 - Work

- To give input on a wide scope of needs that families in this area could use in a resource center. (This comes from both a professional and personal quest.)
 - Interest in starting a new family resource center – support groups
 - Longtime interest in establishing a resource family center
 - A need to branch out and find more support as a parent and resources for my child
 - Rose Blanchard invited us personally
 - To find out more what a family resource center would be like in the area
- What should we do differently or the same for the next Community Café on April 28?
 - Food and coffee ☺
 - Invite stakeholders/resources/other CBOs
 - Keeping the focus on families' needs, has been discussed and I feel like that we should continue this path
 - Invite area groups: summer soccer league, swim lessons at Colby, Blu Seed, Dewey Mountain, Pisgah, Learn to Skate – Civic Center, Fish & Game Club
 - Great Café! Perspective from more parents
 - Involve different community members
 - Advertise more about what this is about. May draw more people. Description on flyer is vague.
 - Different conversation topics were very engaging and helpful
 - More input from other people. Mini goals to move forward
- What was your favorite part of today's Community Café?
 - Fantastic participation & dialog. Felt Casual, not intimidating
 - Discussing these important topics with other engaged parents & community members
 - Learning other parents' experiences and/stories
 - Many! In-depth, HONEST discussions, drawing activity, well thought out parent ideas (we are all different but really the same)
 - Sharing and having ideas, brainstorming
 - Being able to talk to other community members
 - Getting to know other parents and see that there is something I can get involved in to be more involved in creating a better community for my child and other children
 - Connecting with other parents to discuss issues/topics we all share
 - Hearing about everyone's ideas for the area
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us?
 - I loved it – even more than I expected
 - Keep Northern Lights School in the loop! WE are interested and actively involved in providing more and better resources for area families.
 - Thank you – very validating experience
 - Really looking forward to making this a reality
 - Thank you for this!

Attendees:

Amber and Ryan Carrier

Denise Wylie

Jill Jones

Emily R. Luxford and Scott Gibson

Audrey and Ezra Schwartzberg

Deb Roddy

Mary Smith

Debra Fowler

Rob Carr

Peggy Canning

Erin Streif