

Madison County creates connections for those in crisis

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EDWARDSVILLE – Officials are calling Madison County Community Development's recent crisis summit a success by creating connections.

“We held a two-day workshop that focused on bringing organizations together to create a stronger network in order to assist our neighbors in crisis and help them move to a place of stability and self-sufficiency,” Trudy Bodenbach, Community Development administrator, said.

The event, which brought social service and faith-based organizations together, was held on Sept. 11 and 12 at Community Christian Church in Alton. Around 70 individuals from numerous agencies and organizations attended the summit.

“It’s about helping people in a place of crisis get to a place of stability,” Bodenbach said. “They are helping people who are the most vulnerable.”

Bodenbach said the issues discussed included everything from homelessness, domestic violence, being a single parent, grandparents raising grandchildren, addictions, unemployment or underemployment, people with disabilities to public assistance recipients.

“These are our friends and neighbors throughout the county that are struggling,” she said. “It’s these organizations that are assisting them.

Madison County Community Development Program Coordinator David Harrison said it was good seeing so many organizations come together to create a collaborative countywide effort.

“It helps us serve Madison County residents better,” Harrison said.

Harrison said many residents find themselves in a place of personal and financial crisis and often times resource providers don’t always know how to work together or know about all the services that are available for their clients.

Bodenbach said that various entities approached Community Development asking for assistance in creating the network. She said the outcome of the workshop was the formation of a cooperative effort designated as “Madison County Connected.”

“The goal of Madison County Connected is defined as being ‘to connect Madison County individuals and families with resources to achieve healthy goals, building on their assets and strengths,’” she said.

In addition to defining the overall goal for the effort, the workshop attendees defined three specific areas where they will plan to engage together. Three areas of focus were established, and teams were formed around these areas.

The three areas identified for focus are:

- Coordination of services and agencies
- Access to services
- Marketing to foster connection

Denise Ukena, assistant executive director of the Community Hope Center in Cottage Hills, and Lindsey Apple, associate pastor of Newsong Fellowship in Edwardsville were selected by the group to co-lead Madison County Connected.

“A collaborative, countywide effort was long overdue and much needed in order to effectively serve our most vulnerable Madison County residents,” Ukena said. “We are excited and thankful for the opportunity to participate.”

Other organizations and agencies, which provide services in Madison County, who would like to find out more about how to become involved with Madison County Connected should contact Bodenbach at tebodenbach@co.madison.il.us for more information.