

# Community Coalition News

Oct 1 2011

Volume 2, Issue 1

Community Coalition

Ottawaquechee Community Partnership (OCP)



*OCP convenes monthly Community Coalition meetings on the second Tuesday of September - May, focused on specific topics.*

*Topics include:*

- *Safe Spaces*
- *Healthy Environment*
- *Local Healthy Food*
- *Mentoring*

*Each month, the Community Coalition News reports on the highlights of the meetings. The News is distributed online and in paper through schools and community.*

*The September Community Coalition meeting focus, planned since August, was on the topic Safe Spaces. Little did we know how appropriate the topic would be.*

## Save the Dates:

- ◆ Upcoming Coalition Meetings: 5-7 p.m.  
All are welcome to attend!

### October 11<sup>th</sup>

Focus: Healthy Environments  
Meeting at Woodstock Elementary

### Nov 8<sup>th</sup>

Focus: Healthy Local Food Council  
Meeting at Woodstock Elementary

### Dec 13<sup>th</sup>

Focus: Safe Spaces  
Location TBA

## Community Coalition Addresses “After the Flood; the emotional impact of natural disasters”

Suzi Whitehurst and Adam Ameele, school psychologist gave a talk about the emotional impact of a traumatic event such as Tropical Storm Irene.

A traumatic event is one which threatens our safety or perceived safety, is unanticipated and beyond our ability to control or adequately respond to. Experiencing a crisis such as Irene, puts extreme pressure on our body's system and can result in a non-released fight or flight stress response. This response can trigger a whole host of physical and emotional reactions which sometimes seem totally unrelated to the event. It is important to know that our body is wired for survival, and all of these reactions, although often uncomfortable, are NORMAL reactions to an ABNORMAL experience. Many of

the effects are similar to post-traumatic stress. In fact, the community has experienced a collective trauma through this flood experience.

It's important to note that not everyone has the same type of responses, and it's unpredictable who will have a strong emotional reaction as a result of the event. Some of the emotional signs experienced are depression, irritability, disorientation and a sense of being overwhelmed. It is important for people to know that these are common reactions.

If you or a loved one is impacted in this way, the best thing to do is to talk with others, family and friends about it. Gatherings like this one are available to communities throughout the flood-hit area. If your community is interested, contact OCP at 457-2679 to be put in touch w facilitators.

## Coping and Well-Being Resources

Stress management helps people cope with the emotional aftermath of the flood. Good resources are in place to provide support. Asking “How are you sleeping?” for example, is one indicator of how people are coping with the stress.

*Frank Silfies from Mt. Ascutney Hospital* is a specialist in crisis stress management. His phone number is: 802-674-5717

*Sara Manns* is coordinating a group of local counselors who are offering services at no charge with assistance

from the *Ottawaquechee Health Foundation*. Call Sara at 291-1172.

*Reverend Norman MacLeod*, the new minister from St. James Church reminds us that places of faith can be a source of refuge, support and encouragement during stressful times. Reach Rev MacLeod at [nmacleod@stjameswoodstock.org](mailto:nmacleod@stjameswoodstock.org)

*Cynthia Emerlye* is a professional life coach willing to give once a week sessions for flood victims. Her email is: [EmerlyeArts@gmail.com](mailto:EmerlyeArts@gmail.com).

## Thoughts to consider:

After the storm, we could see what needed to be done. In the next stage of recovery, we don't see what people need.

Telling your story helps make meaning of the event.

It's important to recognize signs of trauma in ourselves and others.

Listening helps.

Seek help, and encourage others to do the same.

How can we continue to build a spirit of the community working together?



## OCP

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OCP is a 501c3 non-profit organization serving the towns of Barnard, Bridgewater, Killington, Pomfret, Reading and Woodstock.

We're on the Web!  
<http://www.ocpvt.org>

## OCP's Mentor and Buddy Program: More important now than ever!

Principals, teachers, parents tell staff at OCP that now, more than ever, mentors and buddies are so important in the lives of children and young people. Irene disrupted children's lives, parents are stressed, distracted and preoccupied with stabilizing their family's lives. A mentor or buddy shows up to school every week, and is there for the child, no matter what.

The point of mentoring is to establish a caring relationship in which the child or young person takes front and center. Every child needs someone who is crazy about them, who knows and cares about

their interests; someone who is there to listen.

OCP's Mentor and Buddy Program has programs in Bridgewater, Reading and Woodstock Elementary and Woodstock Union Middle and High School. The program has more children and young people who want mentors and buddies than community members to participate.

If you're looking for a way to help re-build community after the flood - please consider becoming a Mentor or Buddy! Call 457-2679 to learn more. You'll be glad you did!

## How Can You Become a Buddy or a Mentor?

In Bridgewater or Reading: Spend an hour a week partnered with an elementary-aged Bridgewater Village School, Reading or Woodstock Elementary School.

Have breakfast or lunch, read together, garden, make art, have fun! When asked in a recent survey, 29 children at Reading Elementary said they'd like to have a community buddy!

WUMS/HS: Spend an hour and a half a week partnered with a 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade young person - visiting community locations to learn, connect, help out, or just talk together.

To learn more, contact **Krystal Waite**, OCP Volunteer Coordinator at [kwaite@ocpvt.org](mailto:kwaite@ocpvt.org) or call 457-2679.

Oct 11<sup>th</sup> Community Coalition Meeting  
Topic: Healthy Environments, including:

- [Learn more about the youth-led team assessment of where we 'walk, bike and play'](#)
- [Healthy, healing welcoming places in Woodstock](#)
- [Stores that provide affordable healthy foods](#)
- [Creating smoke-free environments](#)



