

***For Immediate Release
June 12, 2006***

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Looking for a great investment? How about our kids? The Healthy Community•Healthy Youth® Initiative of Livingston recently announced plans for a two-part Mentoring Summit in the fall of 2006. Livingston's greatest assets are the people that live and work here - business and professional people; lawyers, doctors, dentists, educators, athletes, entertainers, artists, kids, and more. The search is on for successful volunteer Livingston adults and kids who will mentor kids about the business world, social problems, school, college admission, sports, and other subjects in an on-going program, providing them with insights, knowledge, and acumen they otherwise may not get, making them "healthier" and capable of even greater success. The Summit will be facilitated by Livingston resident Bruce Fein, a principal with Intentional Development, Inc. The goal is to develop a model to manage, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive mentoring program to benefit youth throughout Livingston.

Livingston's Healthy Community•Healthy Youth® efforts have evolved over the past three years through a unique collaboration of community members including middle and high school students, town and school officials, clergy members, parents, senior citizens, educators, mental health professionals, recreational and philanthropic organizations. The group which includes executive board officers Alan Karpas, Robin Beckerman, Martha Ackermann, Jennifer Erdman, and LHS student Michael Leiwant is committed to coordinating the resources of the entire Livingston community to create an environment and culture that truly values youth. As stated by Bonnie Granatir, HCHY's Executive Coordinator of Livingston Youth Community Resources, "Every child deserves the opportunity to be surrounded by caring adults; to be provided a healthy start and future; to have safe places to gather; to be offered effective education; and to have opportunities to help others. These goals are nationally recognized as 'America's Promise'. The HCHY is committed to making this 'Livingston's Promise' as well."

SHARE YOUR SUCCESS; SHARE THE REWARDS OF YOUR SUCCESS. Participate. Give a little of yourself. Let kids in on what makes your business or profession tick, what it takes to succeed, what it takes to work with other people. This kind of invaluable advice and mentoring isn't usually available until much later in life. You can have a hand in shaping the future of the next Livingston generation to succeed. Look at it this way: **INVESTING IN KIDS YIELDS A HIGH RETURN ON INVESTMENT.**

Join the HCHY in the upcoming Mentoring Summit to be held at Livingston's Community/Senior Center. Mark your calendars for the mornings of October 14th and November 4th. Look for detailed information on the HCHY website at <http://www.livingstonnj.org/hchy.htm> or contact Bonnie Granatir at 973 535-8220 or bonnie@granatir.com. And pass the word along!

BACKGROUND

Several years ago, the Livingston community was stunned by the tragic deaths of three teens. In the aftermath of the shock, grief, and shared vulnerability that ensued, members of the Livingston community sought to make meaning from these tragedies by seeking to better understand and address the forces in our community that may contribute to a culture that would lead three young people to such a tragic end. A diverse group of community leaders representing religious groups, the counseling staffs of the Livingston Public Schools, members of the Livingston School Board and the Livingston Town Council, the Livingston Parent / Teacher Council, LMAC, and the Livingston Police Department began meeting at the beginning of May 2003.

The group's first objective was to assess the strengths and assets one finds in Livingston that promote physical, emotional, and spiritual health for young people in our community. Additionally, we sought to evaluate the challenges and forces in the community that contribute to an unhealthy environment for young people in town.

After this period of informal assessment and evaluation, the group's second objective was to identify a number of challenges that we sought to address with concrete recommendations we hoped would begin a process toward improving the communal environment in which our youth engage and to help young people in town to develop a stronger skill-set for coping with the pressures and forces they face. The final report issued in March of 2004 reflected our deliberations surrounding the first objective, and offered recommendations that emerged from the second.

Despite some of the important challenges that were outlined in this report, the overriding sense was that Livingston is a community with a great foundation for healthy community culture, and is privileged to have citizens and professionals in the community who care so deeply for the town's health. Much that Livingston seeks to do as a town promotes healthy culture, and ought to be applauded and reinforced.

Livingston is not alone. Every day, thousands of communities ponder how they can improve the health and well-being of youth. We hear frightening news reports and statistics, but what can be done besides feeling bad or concerned? What do kids really need to be successful? The Healthy Community•Healthy Youth®Initiative of Livingston is investing new energy and creativity into creating a community in which all young people can succeed. Livingston's HCHY has joined over 600 communities and organizations throughout the world in this movement. Begun in response to communities' requests and supported by Minneapolis-based Search

Institute™, the HCHY provides the vision, structure, resources, and training to unite all sectors of the community in nurturing the positive development of youth.

Since 2004, the goals of Livingston's HCHY have been embraced by the community and specific recommendations included in the report have been addressed. For instance, in order to reduce the stigma regarding excellence by shifting the focus from "being *the* best" to "being *my* best", official student transcripts and the school profile have been revised at Livingston High School. In order to promote healthy individuation, the S.A.G.E. (Set a Good Example) Program has been adopted by our athletic and extracurricular organizations and the TeenScreen Depression Screening diagnostic has been made available to all LHS 9th graders. In our efforts to "Let Kids be Kids", Livingston's annual "Family Night" will be observed for the third time in September.

Livingston's HCHY evolved from a recommendation that the community support a committee whose mission it was to maintain the town's focus on the issues outlined in the 2004 report and to consistently advise the town and its citizens on ways to create and maintain healthy community culture. The HCHY provides an important venue for representatives of different town governance and advisory bodies to share thoughts and concerns, and to coordinate the efforts of different groups with regard to the objectives and goals outlined in the report. The composition of the Committee members continues to evolve from a shared belief that by including representatives from the schools, municipality, youth, senior citizens, medical and mental health resources, parents, businesses, recreational organizations, and philanthropic organizations, a sense of community and shared responsibility would drive future efforts. During the past year, this recommendation has come to fruition.

A community-wide training was held in September of 2005 and since then, a committed group of volunteers from across the community has stepped forward to build a healthier environment for our youth. The HCHY is proud to have recently announced the election of an Executive Board. Officers include Alan Karpas, President; Robin Beckerman, Vice President; Martha Ackermann, Secretary; Jennifer Erdman, Treasurer; and Michael Leiwant, Youth Representative. Karpas, a 36 year resident, currently serves as chair of Livingston's Vision 20/20 Committee. Beckerman, a 16 year resident, is chair of the United Way of North Essex's Livingston Community Fund. Ackermann, who has lived in Livingston since ____, is employed by the Livingston School District and serves as long-standing chair of the Town-wide Safety Committee. Erdman, a lifelong resident and 2001 LHS graduate, is an elementary teacher in the Livingston schools. Leiwant, a lifelong Livingston resident, is currently finishing his freshman year at LHS.

Finally, the original report recommended creation of a staff position called “Community Coordinator” whose task it would be to help drive the issues and proposals contained in the report and to enhance communication between and among different town governance bodies, organizations, and committees. In May, the Advisory Board appointed Bonnie Granatir to the position of HCHY Executive Coordinator of Livingston Youth Community Resources. Granatir, a 20-year resident, currently serves as President of the Board of Education and has chaired the HCHY since 2004. A former president and administrative director of Hudson Rehab/Regional Physical Therapy, Inc., Granatir has professional experience in the areas of finance, management, marketing, supervision, and community relations. She has served as a member and presided over numerous community, philanthropic, and professional committees and boards.

HCHY’s recent progress would not have been possible without the financial support and guidance of the United Way of North Essex. Through UWNE grant monies and the Livingston Community Fund, HCHY initiatives including the 2005 Community Training, the Coordinator position, and community collaborations have been achieved. UWNE’s Board of Trustees hopes to use Livingston’s HCHY as model of community engagement and youth development throughout its partnering communities.

Now, here’s where every member of the community can help. The HCHY has planned a two-part community-wide Mentoring Summit for the fall of 2006. Livingston’s greatest assets are the people that live and work here - business and professional people; lawyers, doctors, dentists, educators, athletes, entertainers, artists, kids, and more. We seek such successful volunteer Livingston adults and kids who will mentor kids about the business world, social problems, school, college admission, sports, and other subjects in an on-going program. Thus, much experience and wisdom can be passed along, furthering and advancing Livingston youth. Providing them with insights, knowledge, and acumen they otherwise may not get, making them “healthier” and capable of even greater success. **SHARE YOUR SUCCESS; SHARE THE REWARDS OF YOUR SUCCESS.** Participate. Give a little of yourself. Let kids in on what makes your business or profession tick, what it takes to succeed, what it takes to work with other people. This kind of invaluable advice and mentoring isn’t usually available until much later in life. You can have a hand in shaping the future of the next Livingston generation to succeed.

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