

**Clay County Collaborative**  
*Successful Partnerships building Successful Families*  
**Coordinator's report – May 2006**

Two themes run through this month's report: connections and wrapping up the old. Together they result in great anticipation of the new.

*Connections*

My road to Duluth for the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health (MACMH) conference led through St. Paul where I met Amalia Mendoza at the Department of Human Services. After corresponding via email these last months it was great to finally meet her. I also met Kathy Jefferson, Clay County's liaison. Both were interested to hear of our plans for the next fiscal year. At the MACMH conference in Duluth, I learned a great deal about children's mental health and parent advocacy. Those of us with ties to the Collaborative who attended came home with many great ideas for speakers, training, and meeting activities.

For thirty-six hours at the end of the first week in May, all my conversations and emails seemed centered on juvenile justice and mental health. At the Clay County Joint Powers meeting I heard about the Minnesota Supreme Court's interest in drug courts which led me to this task force report ([http://www.courts.state.mn.us/documents/CIO/NEWS/newsReleases/CD-Task-Force-Report\\_-\\_Adult\\_and\\_Juvenile\\_AOD\\_Offenders-2-06\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.courts.state.mn.us/documents/CIO/NEWS/newsReleases/CD-Task-Force-Report_-_Adult_and_Juvenile_AOD_Offenders-2-06_FINAL.pdf)). We discussed the report on Friday morning at the Substance Abuse work group and concluded that we have several of the recommended pieces in place. A grant opportunity appeared in my inbox that afternoon. Stay tuned for more on this....

Last week I attended an excellent workshop hosted by U of M Extension entitled "Let's Get Real: Taking Apart Youth Program Quality." The presenters left us with many ideas about designing and assessing effective youth programs.

*Wrapping up the old*

On Tuesday, May 9, the County Board voted to return \$93,466.53 in interest earned on holdings in 1997 to 1999 to the Collaborative. The CCJPC Finance Committee met for the last time on Thursday and voted to recommend to the Executive Committee to accept the terms of the settlement.

You have received the third draft of the new governance agreement. These documents are set up in such a way that the charter is broad enough that it will not need to be repeatedly revised and signed. It is our hope that the charter, once signed, will be in effect for years. The bylaws, on the other hand, can be revised as needed upon your recommendation and by approval of the Governance Board without your organizations having to sign off on the revisions. The first draft of the documents was edited after receiving input from members of the Executive Committee and attorney Pat Kenney. Pat also reviewed the second draft.

Brian Stavenger from Eide Bailly is nearly finished with the audit of our 2005 books. He is pleased with changes that have taken place in how we track our finances.

At times I have felt like I've been slogging around in the spring muck these past few months as I've been filing reports to the state and dealing with these items of old business. If you have horses or livestock in the Red River Valley, you know what I mean. You can feel the pull of the smelly mud on your boots and hear the noise each step makes. As the reports have been filed and as these items of old business are taken care of, I've conjured up a different image – the barn is nearly cleaned out and it will soon be time to cover the floor in fresh straw that smells of the summer sun. What a great reward! I'm grateful to each and every one of you who has lent a hand in shoveling out the barn in the past year and has walked with me through the muck!

*Anticipation of the new*

This month the work groups have begun planning their work for next fiscal year. I am excited by all of the trainings that will be scheduled. As Carolyn pointed out at one of the many meetings we attend together, we are fortunate to be able to offer families services like respite, flexible funds for activities, and opportunities for training because in many parts of the state these types of services are being cut.

Our first big event is coming up on Tuesday, May 23 – the Children’s Mental Health Fair. I’d like to thank to the other members of the steering committee who have worked so hard to make this day happen: Amy McEwen (parent representative/ LAC), Tara Nelson (Lakeland/Children’s Mental Health work group), Megan Vanyo (Access/School-Age Disabilities work group). It has been a collaborative effort with many people from many work groups making contributions. As I’ve mentioned before, we hope to take the show on the road to school conferences around the county next school year and perhaps even do a full-blown fair complete with speakers in Hawley next May, Mental Health Awareness month.

I would like to conclude this month’s report with a bit of personal history. I spent most of my childhood in two towns with large institutions housing people with physical and mental disabilities. I was born in Grafton, North Dakota, where, in the late 1950s, my dad worked at the State School as one of just two psychologists serving over 2000 residents. Because of his connections with the ARC and others around the state, he was hired in the early 1960s to start sheltered workshops in Grand Forks and Fargo, the first in North Dakota for people with developmental delay. In the mid-1960s his big career change brought us to Fergus Falls. At that time hundreds of people lived at the State Hospital. It’s fascinating to learn now about “the rest of the story” – how treatment has changed and options seem to have grown exponentially since large institutions like the State School and the State Hospital closed. Playing a small role in helping to change the future for the children and families the Collaborative serves is just one of the many reasons I continue to feel that working with you, your staff members, and passionate and committed parent representatives is a great joy and privilege.