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Newport Convenes for Children and Families at Special Partnership Meeting

Community event will discuss the well-being of Newport children and families, and includes several data-driven presentations and discussion opportunities

Newport, RI (October 6, 2017) – At a special Newport Partnership for Families event, Newport community members will have the opportunity to learn about the well-being of local children and families through several data presentations and discussion opportunities. Newport Partnership for Families developed this event as an opportunity to highlight several community initiatives that are data-driven and making an impact on child and family well-being.

Welcoming remarks will be provided by the Honorable Henry F. Winthrop, Mayor, City of Newport; Susan Schenck, Chief Operating Officer, East Bay Community Action Program; and Sharon Carter, Director, Newport Partnership for Families.

As the keynote speaker, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Senior Policy Analyst Stephanie Geller will lead a data-driven community discussion on the well-being of Newport children and families. The presentation will utilize data from the [2017 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook](#).

The event will also include presentations on Newport's economic well-being and education initiatives, including Newport Working Cities, Newport Health Equity Zone (HEZ), the Chronic Early Absenteeism and Truancy Reduction Initiative (CEATRI), and several district-led initiatives, including Newport's Learn to Read by 3G Grade-Level Reading initiative by:

- Joseph Tomchack, Assistant Executive Director of Boys and Girls Clubs of Newport County, Inc.
- Jessica Welsh, Director of Prevention at the Women's Resource Center
- Rob Archer, Vice President of Operations at Child and Family Services
- Colleen Jermain, Superintendent of Newport Public Schools

Topics to be discussed in Ms. Geller's presentation include:

Newport has a high percentage of low-income children

The most recent data from the U.S. Census show that Newport has a child poverty rate of 24.1%, however, data from schools indicate that a much larger proportion of Newport's children are from low-income families (i.e., eligible for free and reduced-price meals at school). As of October 2016, 65% of Newport students were low-income according to that measure. Only Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket have higher percentages of low-income children in their public schools.

Opportunity to connect low-income children with School Breakfast Program

Students who eat breakfast have higher math and reading scores, fewer absences, improved attentiveness, and lower incidences of social and emotional problems. In Newport, only 27% of low-income students participated in the School Breakfast Program in October 2016.

Universal School Breakfast (free breakfast to all students regardless of income) and breakfast in the classroom are two proven strategies to increase participation. Pell Elementary School recently began offering breakfast in the classroom to its students and is hoping to see an increase in school breakfast participation as a result.

Improvements for Newport Public Schools

Decline in chronic absence: Regular attendance at school is an essential step for children to succeed academically and do well in life. Students who are frequently absent from school miss critical academic and social learning opportunities and are at risk of disengagement from school, academic failure, and dropping out. Newport has focused on reducing chronic absenteeism over the past few years and has seen declines as a result of this strong effort:

- Despite improvements in recent years, during the 2015-2016 school year, 14% of Newport students in grades K-3 were chronically absent, up from 11% in 2014-2015.
- Chronic absenteeism at the high school level continued a downward trend seen in recent years. During the 2015-2016 school year, 31% of students at Rogers High School were chronically absent, down from 32% the year prior.

Improvement in high school graduation rate: High school graduation is the minimum requisite for college and most employment. In Rhode Island, adults without high school diplomas are over four times as likely to be unemployed as those with bachelor's degrees or more.

- Newport's high school graduation rate has improved, with 85% of students graduating in four years in 2015, compared to 67% in 2013.

For additional trend data and comparisons to Rhode Island statewide rates, please see [Newport's Community Snapshot](#).

The Newport Campaign for Grade-Level Reading –Literacy Efforts Recognized Nationally

Achieving reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a critical milestone for children. A fundamental shift occurs by the end of third grade: children begin to move from *learning to read*, to *reading to learn*.

Students who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than their proficient peers. While interventions implemented before third grade have high rates of success, interventions after third grade are much less effective. Once they fall behind, most children never catch up to their grade-level peers.

In 2016, 36% of Newport's third graders met expectations on the *Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* English language arts assessment.

Newport's campaign to improve third-grade reading, Learn to Read by 3G, is a comprehensive birth to age eight strategy that includes efforts to improve children's health, access to high-quality early learning, and summer learning, decrease chronic early absence, and improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, representing the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, will present Newport with The National Pacesetter Award. Newport is one of 48 communities across the nation recognized as a Pacesetter for leading by example to solve one of the major challenges that can undermine early literacy – school readiness, school attendance, and summer learning.

"I'm pleased to present Newport with the 2016 Pacesetter Award on behalf of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading," said Elizabeth Burke Bryant. "It's exciting to see the sense of urgency of Newport's education and community leaders who have committed to working together to increase the percentage of children who read proficiently by the end of third grade. Newport is a stellar example of teamwork for improved children's outcomes."

“One year after the kickoff of the Newport Learn to Read by 3G effort, we have made great progress in bringing key partners together, and using data to inform our work,” said Colleen Jermain, Newport Schools Superintendent. “We have been able to identify areas of progress, and focus on areas where we still need enhanced and better-coordinated efforts. There is enormous energy and commitment in Newport to accelerate progress toward ensuring that all children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade, with a key focus on closing achievement gaps for low-income children. On behalf of all of our partners in the Newport Learn to Read by 3G effort, we are honored to receive a Pacesetter honor from the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading.”

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All data and information presented at the Partnership for Families is available on Rhode Island KIDS COUNT’s website: www.rikidscount.org.

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (GLR Campaign) is a nationwide movement to increase early reading proficiency. Launched in May 2010, the GLR Campaign is a collaborative effort of funders, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states and communities across the nation to ensure that many more children from low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college and career.

The Newport Partnership for Families is an association of social service agencies, community organizations, educational institutions and businesses striving to strengthen the City of Newport by prioritizing and supporting the needs of children, families and individuals. Our Mission is to develop and maintain a coordinated network of collaborating partners that measurably strengthens families and enhances the quality of life in Newport County.