

COMMUNITY VOICES

Call for help to draft blueprint for local health, human services

By ALAN ABRAMOWITZ
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Have you ever wanted to make a difference? Here's that chance. Tell your neighbors, tell your friends, call your mom. Numerous individuals committed to making our community stronger, healthier and more productive are embarking on a new quest, what we're calling the Community Agenda project.

The Community Agenda is intended to become the blueprint for health and human services in Flagler and Volusia counties through a visioning process specific to this community, but based on data.

It is an opportunity for volunteers to decide just what is important to them. And all that is requested is time — a commitment to attend just three meetings of a work group that interests you. So if you are interested in services related to children and youth, families and neighborhoods, the elderly and disabled, personal crisis and disaster, or wellness and health — we're asking that you participate.

Why is this being done? Our community appears to be rich in resources and services by the number of agencies working and making positive strides in the lives of others. But funding, time and human resources are becoming limited. Therefore, it is necessary to take a second look at how effective we are and would like to be in the areas of health and community services for children, families and all individuals.

Given the level of technology



and data that is available to us, it is timely for a community like ours to coordinate a project like the Community Agenda. Communities across the country — and as close as Jacksonville, which implemented the model we are following — are redefining progress and ultimately improving quality of life issues.

The great news is that a potential hurdle for such an effort has already been achieved by the commitment of key leaders to use the project outcomes to guide funding, planning and policy decisions in the future.

By working collectively to define our community's priorities, we will ensure that our health and human service systems function with the utmost of efficiency.

Of particular importance is

that the work groups are diverse and composed of a balance of individuals from all sectors of Flagler and Volusia counties. The work groups are:

- Creating a Brighter Future for Our Children & Youth.
- Building Stronger Families and Neighborhoods.
- Creating Independence for Elderly & Disabled.
- Responding To Personal Crisis and Disaster.
- Promoting Wellness and Protecting Our Health.

Each work group will essentially start by creating a vision about what this community should look like in each of the five areas. Each work group is tasked with identifying a set of key indicators that will allow the community to set priorities in critical issues and determine benchmarks for measuring the future successes of services in the community.

The ability of our community to meet the needs of children, families and individuals directly impacts all of us — our families, jobs, lifestyles and future. So, we encourage each resident to get involved by visiting www.onevoiceforvolusia.org/CA.htm to sign up for a work group or call One Voice for Volusia, (386) 947-8301, for more information. Registration ends Sept. 23.

Abramowitz is administrator for the Department of Children and Families for District 12. Willett is president of Bank of America for Volusia, Flagler and Putnam counties. The two serve as co-chairs for the Community Agenda Steering Committee.