January 2025-Presentation for the Village Board of Schaghticoke, NY

Building a Community Center for The Greater Hoosic Valley Area
Enhancing Community Engagement and Well-Being
January 6, 2025
Lynne Hardy

1. Who is CLS and what do they do for the greater Schaghticoke area?

CLS Mission is Community Life Support, Inc. The mission is to provide multiple approaches that encourage healthy lifestyles through education, services, and opportunities. Community Life Support, Inc.’s purpose and goal is to build community capacity through volunteer opportunities, activities, events, and services. We are a multiple-branch organization that expands to address needs as identified, reviewed, researched and as we are able. Our branches are: Community Builders- Events Team; Health and Wellness Team, Schaghticoke Food Pantry, Greater Hoosic Valley Community Business Alliance Startup and the new Community Center Initiative. We also participated in launching the 250th Anniversary celebration group.

Our guiding priorities/values of this project which I believe include: a. keeping the voice of residents at the center. b. Honoring our agricultural and rural roots and community

c. fiscal responsibility- we are not asking for money or expecting it. We don't want taxes to increase.

1. Who am I and who is the Board of CLS?
2. **Lynne Hardy** -President of CLS, Pastor for Presbyterian United Church and Director of Schaghticoke Food Pantry.
3. **Elizabeth Baker**- Vice President of CLS; Events Coordinator; co- Director of Schaghticoke Food Pantry, local resident
4. **Heather Fronckowiak**- Secretary for CLS, Professor of SW at Suny Plattsburgh

Director of Health and Wellness programing, local resident

1. **Ted Wright**- Financial Team, Lead for Good Neighbors of Valley Falls, Retired Pastor, local resident
2. **Sharon Kosowsky**- Financial Team and Co- Manger of Schaghticoke Food Pantry; local resident
3. **Sue Pritt**- Financial Team; communications team member - Member Presbyterian United and Session Member, local resident
4. Board Members: **David Smith-** communications and events team member, local resident; member Presbyterian United and Session Member; **Debra Barton**- Events Team, Local Business Owner, local resident; **Dawn Knaus**- events team- Local Business Owner, Trustco Bank employee, local resident; **Deanna Rohloff** – Events team Member, Local Business owner, local resident; **Christine Barton**- Communications Team lead, Local Business owner, local resident; Writer for The Express; **Nikki Simoncavage**- events and health and wellness team member, local resident; **Tanya Lipinski**- Health and Wellness and Communication team Member, Local resident, Local Business Owner.
5. What do we think a community center set up would be a benefit to the Greater Schaghticoke Area: Benefits of a Community Center
   •    Social Cohesion: we have multiple small groups in the 5 hamlets and surrounding community that work independently of one another to meet the needs of the everyday families in our areas from Food- to holidays and everything in between, We lack cohesion and communication- to be effective and successful.
   •    Provides a gathering space for diverse groups- There are several areas for gathering within the various communities and this may not be as big a need- but we have an ever-increasing home school population as well as we believe surveys will show we need a multi-use space that will convert easily and provide adequate parking all in one easily accessible state of the art building.
   •    Encourages volunteerism and community participation
   •    Economic Development:
   •    Attracts local businesses and enhances property values
   •    Can host events that draw visitors to the village
   •    Health and Wellness:
   •    Offers fitness programs, workshops, and health screenings
   •    Promotes mental well-being through social interaction
6. Key Features of the Community Center- not limited to these-
   •    Multi-purpose Rooms: counseling, benefit needs, medical clinic
   •    Spaces for meetings, classes, and events; multiple office spaces for county and state access for services.
   •    Recreational Facilities:
   •    Gymnasium, outdoor sports fields, and playgrounds
   •    Cultural Spaces:
   •    Art studios, performance areas, and exhibition space
   •    Ensure the center is welcoming and accessible to all community members
7. Anticipated/Planned Actions CLS is taking via Community Center Initiative
* Involvement with the leadership at Hoosic Valley Central School – Paula Lanoue
* Involvement with and inclusion of other groups within the community- transfiguration, Good Neighbors, Valley Falls Methodist, Presbyterian United, Diver Library, The Masons/Victor Lodge, Chrissy’s, Chase Funeral Home, Sammy Cohen’s, Greater Hoosic Valley community Business Alliance team, Mechanicville Community Center, Stillwater Community center, Greenwich Community Center, many area residents.
* Survey processes to be taken this Spring season:
1. Requested permission to survey teaching and administration staff at school and other employees regarding what they identify as unmet needs or ways a community center can assist them with their work
2. Community Needs Assessment- we are currently reviewing the latest Community Assessment information and prepping a survey to send out to all residents to gather their data and thoughts. Anticipated mail date Feb 2025.
3. Beginning to review potential financial sources such as grants from the state, country, foundations and private resources. We are working with Mechanicville Community Center for mentoring. Have spoke with CEO of Rensselaer County and Community Foundation for the Capital District as well.
4. Beginning to present to the leadership for their input, thoughts, directions, support, assistance reaching out to resources if needed.
5. Building relationships within the communities to grow and nurture support.
6. Build a potential timeline based on survey results, input from communities, evidence of support and engagement and ability to access land for a building.

6- Key Goals: for 2025-

  1.    Demonstrated Need: Present data showing community interest and need for a center.
   2.    Benefits to the Community: Highlight social, economic, and health benefits.
   3.    Feasibility and Funding: Outline potential funding sources and sustainability plans.
   4.    Community Involvement: Emphasize the importance of local engagement in the planning process.
   5.    Vision for the Future: Share a compelling vision of how the center can transform the community.

A community center can play a vital role in supporting schools in meeting student needs in various ways. Here are several key areas where a community center can enhance educational outcomes and provide additional support for students:

1. After-School Programs

        •       Tutoring and Homework Help: The community center can offer after-school tutoring sessions, helping students with their homework and reinforcing what they learn in school.
        •       Enrichment Activities: Programs in arts, music, science, and technology can provide students with opportunities to explore interests beyond the standard curriculum.

2. Mental Health and Wellness Support

        •       Counseling Services: The community center can host counselors or mental health professionals who provide support to students dealing with stress, anxiety, or other emotional challenges.
        •       Wellness Workshops: Programs focused on mental health, stress management, and healthy lifestyle choices can promote overall well-being among students.

3. Family Engagement

        •       Parent Workshops: The center can offer workshops for parents on supporting their children’s education, understanding school policies, and fostering a positive home learning environment.
        •       Community Events: Hosting family-oriented events can strengthen the school-community relationship and encourage parental involvement in their children’s education.

4. Extracurricular Activities

        •       Sports and Recreation: The community center can provide facilities for sports, physical education, and recreational activities, promoting physical health and teamwork among students.
        •       Clubs and Interest Groups: Offering clubs for various interests (e.g., robotics, drama, debate) can help students develop skills and build friendships outside of the classroom.

5. Access to Resources

        •       Technology Access: Providing computers and internet access can help bridge the digital divide, allowing students to complete assignments and engage with online learning resources.
        •       Educational Materials: The center can serve as a resource hub for books, educational games, and other materials that support learning.

6. Safe Space for Students

        •       Safe Haven: The community center can provide a safe and welcoming environment for students to gather, especially those who may feel isolated or bullied at school.
        •       Conflict Resolution Programs: Implementing programs that teach conflict resolution and communication skills can help students navigate social challenges effectively.

7. Collaboration with Schools

        •       Partnerships: The community center can collaborate with local schools to align programs with school curricula and address specific student needs identified by educators.
        •       Professional Development for Educators: Hosting training sessions for teachers and staff on community resources, youth development, and engagement strategies can enhance their effectiveness.

8. Cultural and Diversity Programs

        •       Cultural Events: The center can organize events that celebrate diversity and promote cultural awareness, fostering an inclusive environment for all students.
        •       Language Support Programs: Offering language classes or tutoring for non-native speakers can help students improve their language skills and feel more integrated into the school community.

9. Volunteering and Leadership Opportunities

        •       Service Learning Projects: The community center can facilitate service projects that allow students to engage with their community, develop leadership skills, and foster a sense of responsibility.
        •       Mentorship Programs: Connecting students with mentors from the community can provide guidance, encouragement, and support in their educational journey.

Conclusion

By serving as a supportive resource and partner for schools, a community center can significantly enhance the educational experience for students. Through a variety of programs and services, it can address academic, social, emotional, and physical needs, ultimately contributing to the overall success and well-being of students in the community.