

PROFILE

THE COMMUNITY OF RIVERHEAD, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK COUNCIL FOR UNITY (CFU) COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY MODEL

Riverhead's association with the Council for Unity began as a chapter in the Riverhead High School. Today, the early vision has evolved to become a *Comprehensive Community Model*.

At the onset, a Council for Unity Management Team organized to work exclusively with Riverhead throughout all phases of the Model's evolution –planning, program development, training, evaluation and consulting. This team continues today as Council's *comprehensive community model* has been adopted and adapted by the Riverhead Community.

CFU Management Team: Robert DeSena, Founder and President, Lisa Wright, Director of Programs, and Dino Johnson, Director, School-Based Initiatives

Riverhead High School CFU Chapter Established

Responding to concern over the increasing infiltration of gang activity from surrounding areas into Riverhead schools, the Eastern Suffolk County BOCES administrator commissioned research (financed by a Federal grant) into the community's risks and needs. The research found a level of bullying in the lower grades with a pronounced fear and expectation of gang infiltration from into the higher grades.

Motivated by these research findings and sensing the time was right in the community, Theresa Drozd, K-12 Violence Prevention Coordinator, E.S. BOCES/Riverhead School District, invited the Council for Unity (CFU) to present their model to the school/community. In 2003, a new CFU Chapter was established at the Riverhead High School in Riverhead, New York. The chapter quickly grew to 44 students and soon the entire community was taking note of what was happening.

This proactive strategy created a positive atmosphere in the schools and throughout the community.

Initial Organizers

Theresa Drozd, MSW, K-12 Violence Prevention Coordinator, E.S. BOCES/Riverhead School District, Riverhead, New York
Barry Rosen, E.S. BOCES
Donna Lyczkowski, Executive Director Riverhead Youth Bureau, Town of Riverhead, New York (former Youth Counselor, AID Bureau)

PROFILE

THE COMMUNITY OF RIVERHEAD, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK COUNCIL FOR UNITY (CFU) COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY MODEL

Key School Contributors and Advisors

Mrs. Lauran Zambrelli (Mrs. Z), experienced licensed social worker at Pulaski and Coordinator of the Council for Unity at Pulaski.

Mr. Garrett Moore, High School Teacher and Class Advisor

Mr. Justin Cobis, High School Teacher and Class Advisor

Mrs. Katherine Auer, High School Teacher and Club Advisor

Mrs. Jennifer Berzola, Middle School Guidance Counselor and Club Advisor

Mrs. Tracy Peymann, V.I.N.E.S. Counselor and Club Advisor

Mission

Council for Unity mission and the Riverhead mission is one and the same - *to empower young people, individuals and groups with the skills necessary to promote safety, unity and achievement in schools and communities.*

Programming

Members of the Council for Unity at Riverhead schools collaborate to keep schools peaceful learning environments for all students, to erase lines of division among its student bodies, to promote tolerance and to strive for unity.

Additional programs promoting Riverhead's CFU mission include:

Character Education Classes

Gang Awareness Workshops

Community Awareness Programs

Conflict Mediation

Riverhead High School (RHS) PRIDE

Special Lessons on five themes: family and self-esteem, empowerment, unity, legacy and articulation, and evaluation.

Council for Unity Chapter offers after school activities, in addition to a History/English elective, which follow the Council for Unity curriculum.

Evolution and Impact

Started in the High School – migrated to the Middle School and now includes the 6th Grade Classes.

Initially, twenty-seven kids were invited representing a cross section of the student body – kids in conflict, students representing diversity issues, disciplinary and academic problems, and students in leadership positions.

PROFILE

THE COMMUNITY OF RIVERHEAD, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK COUNCIL FOR UNITY (CFU) COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY MODEL

Evolution and Impact (continued)

Word of Mouth plays a surprisingly important and effective role in promoting the benefits of the program and recruiting membership.

Program Effectiveness Evaluation

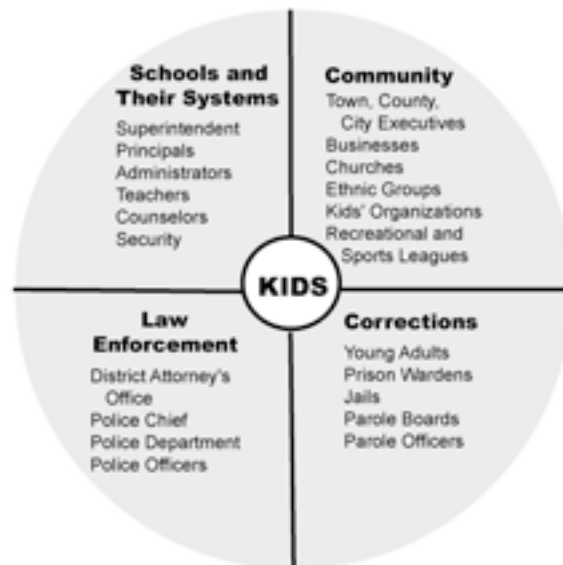
Kids now apply to the program – writing an essay which is reviewed by an Executive Board of their peers which determines acceptance. Membership is currently over-subscribed. This Chapter started as a Club and has evolved into a series of Classes. Program management uses a variety of methods in evaluating the programs' success. Some of those methods include:

1. CFU Pre and Post Attitudinal Surveys
2. School Reports tracking attendance records, behavior records and academic reports.
3. Student 'self reporting'
4. Police Department evaluations

Management Organization Today

The Riverhead Model encompasses four components – Schools, Community, Police and Corrections. Schools: Theresa Drozd, as MSW, K-12 Violence Prevention Coordinator, E.S. BOCES/Riverhead School District, is responsible for oversight of the School Component. Community: An Executive Board oversees the Community Component (assume this since an Ex Bd oversees the Adult and Family Partnership. And, Police and Corrections.

FOUR POINT STRATEGY



Several funding sources provide financial support – including: BOCES grants, Senator Lovell's Office, and the District Attorney, Safe and Drug Free Programs.

PROFILE

THE COMMUNITY OF RIVERHEAD, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK COUNCIL FOR UNITY (CFU) COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY MODEL

Programming Activities Today through the Schools Component

In its fifth year, the CFU Riverhead Model, which began as an after-school club at RHS, encompasses an expanded landscape and offers a varied menu of programs for kids and adults.

The Riverhead Model currently encompasses three schools with Council Chapters:

High School

3 classes with 89 students;
1 after school program with 24 students;
approximately 300 additional students who have gone through the program but not currently in CFU classes.
Approximately an additional 80 who have graduated
District staff members (15)

Middle School

65 students participate in after-school chapter
35 who went through the program

Pulaski Street School (6th Grade)

66 students in a lunch time program

Past/Present School Principals, Administrators (12)

School Security Members (20)

A **Council Mentors Program** was established – Council members are partnered with students who may be having difficulties academically, socially or emotionally.

Programming Activities Today throughout the Community Component

Community Adult Family Partnership includes representation includes parents, grandparents, sibling, clergy, business groups and civic groups

Additional community organizations engaged include:

- Suffolk County District Attorney's Office
- Riverhead Policy Department
- Suffolk County Correctional Facility
- Religious and Ethnic Organizations
- Adult Family Partnership
- Local Business Community

PROFILE

THE COMMUNITY OF RIVERHEAD, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK COUNCIL FOR UNITY (CFU) COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY MODEL

The Community Model

The *Comprehensive Community Model* in Riverhead began as an answer to the violence prevention needs of Riverhead High School. Over the past five years, the Model has emerged to encompass the entire Riverhead School System, Police Department, Correctional Facility, Community Organizations and Local Businesses. The following represents its evolution:

Phase I – 2003

E. S. BOCES conducts needs assessment and brings Council for Unity into Riverhead High School to address fears of gang and violence influences from surrounding communities.

Phase II – 2004

Riverhead Police Department engaged through the programming in the schools.

Phase III – 2005

Parent Group formed.

Phase IV - 2006

Children were invited to present at an *Anti Bias Task Force Community-Wide Meeting* (January 11th 2006). Kids' parents participated in this presentation.

Children separately present to a community-wide Anti-Bias Task Force. Parents participate in this initiative.

Kids speak to Church Congregations about the program and its results. Kids' parents participate in this initiative also.

Phase V – 2006/7

The Comprehensive Community Riverhead Model is operational and still evolving.

Awards

- Quadrae Mims (Grade 12) has won Steve Levy's/Rabbi Moss 2006 Suffolk County Anti-Bias Award for his leadership in promoting racial and ethnic harmony.
- Under the student leadership of the Council and its President, Quadrae Mims, the Council's adult leaders, advisors, and the District's K-12 Violence Prevention Director, Theresa Drozd, RHS's Council has become the

PROFILE

THE COMMUNITY OF RIVERHEAD, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK COUNCIL FOR UNITY (CFU) COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY MODEL

Awards (continued)

recipient of several grants and a model for other Suffolk County Communities such as Brentwood, Patchogue/Medford and Central Islip.

- Riverhead Town Board, with Supervisor, Phil Cardinale, paid tribute to Mr. Robert DeSena (CFU Founder and President) at a special town board meeting, December 6, 2007, at Riverhead Town Hall. Mr. DeSena received a key to the town, which is unheard of in the history of the town. He also received a town proclamation appointing him a Riverhead Town Citizen.
- The Riverhead Chamber of Commerce awards the Riverhead Council for Unity "Persons of the Year" at their dinner Thursday, December 6, 2007.

Media Coverage

See www.riverheadnewsreview.com

In Their Own Words

A few minutes with any of the adults who act as advisors to these groups of kids and it is obvious that their influence in the lives of the young people they touch will last a lifetime.

Riverhead Web Site

I saw such a change in my child, I wanted to be a part of it.

CFU Member's Parent

What we learn in Council, we couldn't learn in any other class.

CFU Member

Students outside of Council are beginning to ask for mediations to resolve their 'issues', but many times a council member will be present during the 'situation' and invite the parties to hold a mediation. These kids are terrific. They're brave. If you give them responsibility and trust, what you get in return is amazing.

Mrs. Z, experienced licensed social worker at Pulaski and coordinator of the Council for Unity at Pulaski.

The Program has been so successful and has had such an important impact on Riverhead High School and the community that enrollment in the 2006-07 school year is projected to double.

Dr. Joseph Connolly, RHS Director of Guidance

PROFILE

THE COMMUNITY OF RIVERHEAD, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK COUNCIL FOR UNITY (CFU) COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY MODEL

In Their Own Words (continued)

I like it because kids in the school didn't get along before Council. Problems in our communities affected the whole school. There were a lot more kids going to ISS (In School Suspension) before Council started. It's a lot better now. Kids are learning to get along better. They've stopped screaming at each other. That's the first thing you have to do – get them to calm down and stop screaming. It takes a lot of patience. It has made a big difference in my life. I go to counseling at night now, too, and things are getting better. It has helped me decide what I want to be. I want to be a counselor or social worker when I grown up. Definitely, just like Mrs. Z.

Shanea, Student at Pulaski Street School

This thing is like a runaway freight car. Right now in our entire network, there is no community that is using this model to greater effect than Riverhead. It has become a learning laboratory for all new programs going forward, as to how you can bring about the kind of desired social changes you want to see.

Mr. Robert DeSena, Council Founder and President

As with any town prior to council, our police and some youth had strained relationships. I have watched both sides in pain. Police were getting fed up with pulling the same kids off the streets, and kids were getting fed up with police actions – not understanding they too have a job to do. This is where I notice the change since Council got involved. Kids are recognized because of their efforts with Council by police. A Perfect Example: The library uses off-duty Suffolk County Police Department as security guards. First thing SCPD noticed was that there are different types of kids in town. The 'unity' kids smile, talk to the guards, joke around. The 'non-unity' child, always disrespectful, is looking for confrontation. Riverhead police are now seen as coaches, fathers, and community family. I have actually seen the police sit with a child on a bench and befriend them. When a police officer enters our classes, the kids look beyond the uniform and see someone who is there to help them.

PROFILE

THE COMMUNITY OF RIVERHEAD, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK COUNCIL FOR UNITY (CFU) COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY MODEL

In Their Own Words (continued) A police officer once told me he dreamed of helping kids by being a cop; he had never dreamed he would be cuffing those that he had watched grow up. CFU renews that trust, with a handshake and a big smile. It is a beautiful thing to see.

Liz Stokes, Circulation Supervisor, Riverhead Free Library

Contact Information **Council for Unity**
Lisa Wright, Director of Programs, Council for Unity, 50
Broadway, Suite 1503, New York, New York 10004,
212/701-9440-; www.councilforunity.org

The Riverhead Model
Theresa Drozd, MSW
K-12 Violence Prevention Coordinator
E. S. BOCES/Riverhead School District
700 Harrison Avenue
Riverhead, New York 11901
631/369-6724 Email: theresa.drozd@riverhead.net

www.helpouryouthtoday.org (unofficial web site developed by
a member of the Riverhead Adult and Family Partnership)