



**Carroll County United  
Annual Report  
Including Action Team Progress**

June 16, 2011

An initiative of the Lakes Region United Way  
& the Annette P. Schmitt Foundation



## Introduction

We are pleased to share the progress of Carroll County United. Carroll County United relies on the knowledge that community participation is central to reaching a deeper understanding of



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Regional Director

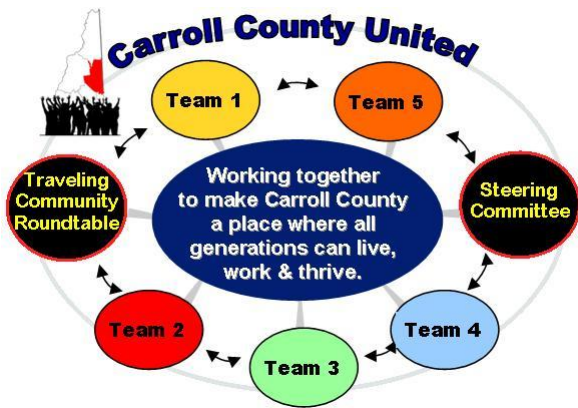
issues as well as the source of richer, more creative solutions for moving forward. Simply put, people who live and work in a place know their community best. We expect solutions to evolve as we continue to learn from our actions and the new information and ideas that come to the forefront within our rapidly changing environment. At Carroll County United, there is always an open seat at the table and we welcome new participants at any time.

**Our future:** The first conversation about a new way of working that would reach across town lines and work to bring citizens, businesses and community organizations to work together was held in the spring of 2009. Though these ideas were not brand new, putting a structure in place dedicated to working in this way was a new approach. Community forums in the fall of 2009 led to the establishment of a county-wide aspiration and the formation of the Carroll County United action teams in January of 2010. Carroll County United is grateful to Tri-County CAP for being our home organization throughout the exploration and launch of this community-centered movement and is pleased to have merged our efforts with Lakes Region United Way in April of 2011. We are looking forward to serving the community for years to come.

**In this report** you will find a brief summary of what we have learned over the past year as well as progress reports from each of the Action Teams. For more information about Carroll County United and the work of each Action Team please visit [www.CarrollCountyUnited.org](http://www.CarrollCountyUnited.org).

### **Our overall lessons learned**

- The more diverse the membership of a group, the deeper the understanding of an issue and the richer the ideas and resources for moving forward.
- Working with the community is more like a movement than a destination. It requires a different mindset to put the community in the driver's seat and a willingness to trust that those who live and work here know their community best.
- The landscape is rapidly changing and will continue to do so. This requires a process that respects that the community's effort to make Carroll County a place for all generations to live, work and thrive will evolve.
- This work requires patience and perseverance as well as an ongoing active commitment to working in new ways.
- Community outreach focused on increasing engagement tied to the specific team actions and goals is a top priority.
- We need to develop a clearer way to talk about who we are/how we do our work and consistently weave that into our communications.
- We need to continue to develop effective ways to track and communicate progress and build this into the team and steering committee work.



### Team 1 – Childhood Readiness & Success

Team Goal: In Carroll County, all children are ready for Kindergarten and achieve at or above grade level success by the end of third grade.

#### Progress/Accomplishments – What the team is working on and why

**Surveyed all public elementary schools and produced report** – to increase our understanding about the wide variations of school readiness and in early learning opportunities with concrete local data and to share this information back with the schools and communities.

**Created working definition of Kindergarten Readiness** – The team realized that without a common understanding of what school readiness is it would be difficult to know how many children in Carroll County were not ready and what kind of support they might need.

**Offered Kindergarten Readiness Train the Trainer Workshop** – This was an opportunity to train those interacting with parents and young children and to learn how to coach parents to support their children’s learning.

**Supporting the expansion of Watch Me Grow developmental screenings for children 0 to 5** – Early intervention has a proven track record; helping parents know if their children are growing and developing well is a critical first step. As the WATCH ME GROW program states, “Screen early, screen often, because young children can’t wait!”

#### What we’ve learned

- There are wide variations in children’s early learning experiences and school readiness in Carroll County as established by the school survey.
- There is a critical link between early learning success and long-term educational and employment success. This is well-established through a plethora of national research. A report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, contains eye opening information about the state of our nation’s – and our state’s – school-age children and their ability to read and consequently succeed.
- There is local interest in improving the situation for our young children. The Kindergarten Readiness training participants also see the variations in children’s school readiness and want to help more children come to school “ready to learn”.

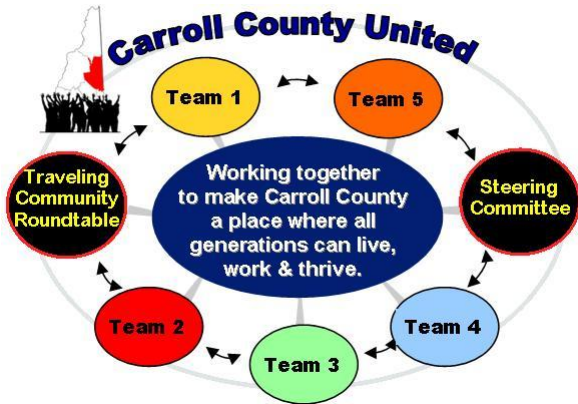
**What’s Next? “Now that we know the wide variations in children’s early learning experiences and school readiness in Carroll County and understand the impact this has on children’s success in school, what do we want to do about it?”**

- Host a fall conversation among early childhood educators, caregivers, Kindergarten teachers and community organizations to begin to address how we can all work together to improve the outcomes for our kids.

- Watch Me Grow – how do we support its expanded use in other childcare settings? Is there a way for the information to travel with youngsters into school?

**How you can help**

- Help plan fall meeting.
- Become trained to administer the Watch Me Grow Ages & Stages Questionnaire with parents.
- Be a liaison between Carroll County United and your organization or community.
- Help to offer Kindergarten readiness workshops for parents.
- Gather school data.
- Support early learning.
- Contribute your knowledge to the Childhood Readiness & Success Team.



## Team 2 – Aligning Education to Careers

Team Goal: Working together in Carroll County to educate world-class citizens so that our young people and communities thrive.

### Progress/Accomplishments – What the team is working on and why

Surveyed all public middle & high schools and produced draft report – Questions focused on defining and tracking student success, community and business volunteers, goal setting, career education and planning, and following students’ success post graduation. The team was particularly interested in improving their overall understanding, learning what current initiatives were yielding strong results and looking for areas where stronger community involvement would make a difference.

Looked at Gallup Student Survey as possible action – deferred due to timing

Drafted Survey for Businesses – deferred

### What we’ve learned

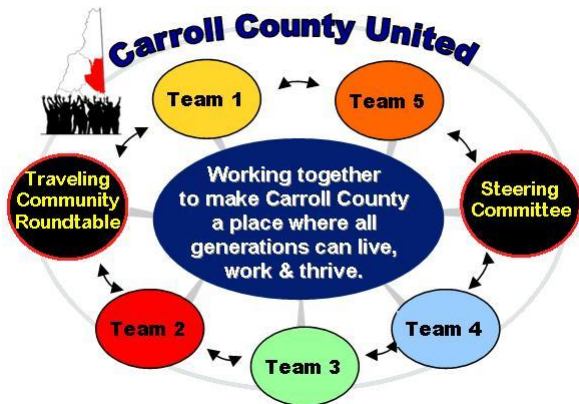
- The 4–12 education system is in flux with the landscape changing quickly at the local, state and federal levels with regards to policy and funding.
- Increased adult involvement with youth for career exploration and/or as mentors was identified as two impactful ways to increase community involvement with schools.
- A number of NH students going on to community college need remedial course-work. The more courses they need, the less likely they are to graduate. More alignment between the community college and public school systems has potential for increasing student success.
- Student success in grades 4–12 is strongly influenced by student success in the K–3 years, particularly sufficiently developed reading skills.
- There is no formal system to track graduating students to see if their graduation plans for work, college or the military work out and whether students felt prepared to succeed.
- Labor laws and volunteer policies can create unintended barriers due to complexity or cost.

### What’s Next?

- The Steering Committee is suggesting that we keep this issue on our radar screen but focus on the Childhood Readiness and Success team work for the time being.
- Possibly change name to “Connecting Education to Careers”
- Listen to others thoughts

### How you can help

- Stay up to date about education issues in your community.
- Volunteer to mentor or tutor students.
- Host students at your business for job shadowing, internships, or other work experience.
- Present at a career fair.
- Encourage young people that you know to follow their interests and develop their talents.



**Team 3 – Individual & Family Economic Security**  
**Current focus: Buy Local effort**

Team Goal: Carroll County becomes one of the top three counties in NH by supporting the achievement of individual and family economic security.

**What we've learned**

- **Most people's economic security is based on income from their job.** Carroll County has the lowest level of livable wage jobs in NH and more seasonal and part time jobs. Teaching money management skills can only go so far. People need income. Others are already working on traditional economic development as well as teaching money management. The question that emerged was, **"What can local citizens and businesses do to maintain or increase local jobs?"**
- **Most employers would like to better compensate their employees** with higher wages or more benefits if they had the revenue to do so.
- **A Buy Local effort is something that local citizens and businesses can launch.** Buy Local efforts in other places have resulted in increased sales at locally owned businesses making it possible to maintain or increase local jobs by keeping more dollars in the local economy.
- Carroll County leaks roughly 42% of its economic output outside of the county. Some of that can be recaptured through a Buy Local effort. If a Buy Local effort yields an increase of 1% in new jobs in the wholesale/retail, accommodation/food service and related sectors – it could result in 13.9 million dollars of GDP. (Connect NH Northern New England Economic Model)

**Progress/Accomplishments – What the team is working on**

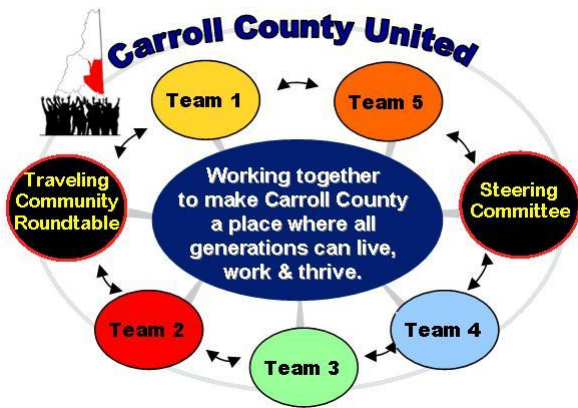
- Researched Buy Local outcomes, successful projects and practices.
- Created working versions of business welcome packet, logo, window decals
- Adopted working definition of locally owned independent business to define membership.
- Created draft website & investigated creation of full-service website including functions such as posting specials and coupons.

**What's Next?**

- Broaden working committee membership.
- Make final decisions about launch and secure needed resources.
- Put website, campaign materials in place. Recruit business members and promote the effort.

**How you can help**

- Help to get the web-site established
- Join the working steering committee or recommend someone else
- Help with promotional materials for businesses and/or general promotion of the effort.
- Help the group secure additional resources (volunteers, sponsorships, etc.)
- Ask locally-owned businesses in your area to become members.
- Think local first when making your own purchases!



## Team 4- Balancing Economic Development & Environmental Stewardship

Team Goal: Community members steward both a vibrant economy and our human and natural resources so that all generations thrive.

### Progress/Accomplishments – What the team is working on and why

**Conducted Town Surveys** about broadband, energy, business incentives, Master Plans and natural resources, and waste and recycling to better understand circumstances related to the team’s goal in our towns. The results of the survey led to the following additional actions.

**Promoted access to broadband** by producing reports for towns with recommendations for local actions and promoting the “NH I want broadband survey” county-wide through the media and a public service video. Broadband access allows business development with less environmental impact. Lack of high speed access is impacting existing businesses and home owners.

**Planned Wood Biomass Tour** for November to encourage schools and towns to consider the use of wood biomass for heating public buildings as a way to manage costs and support the local economy through purchases of locally produced fuel.

### What we’ve learned

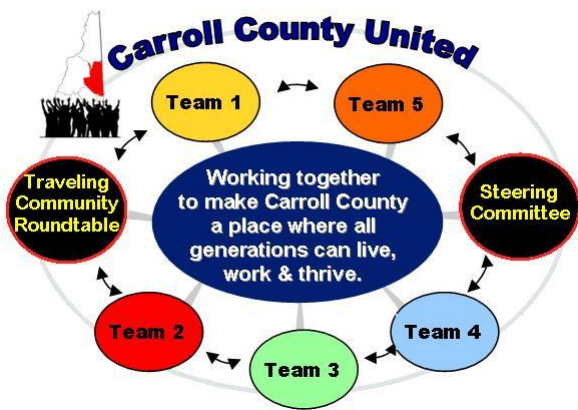
- Residential and business density is the driving force for broadband expansion. Local solutions in less dense areas are possible (and happening!) such as wireless neighborhood nodes.
- Wood biomass is an efficient heating source that can help schools and municipalities reign in their heating costs while investing their heating dollars back into the local economy. Changes in technology and financing are making this a viable option.
- No towns in Carroll County offer business incentives. However, the region and state have many advantages that could be more intentionally promoted.
- There are wide variations in costs and practices around waste and recycling. The team needs to gather more data but this looks like a promising future action area.
- The team’s approach is to focus on actions that are timely and impact the broadest number of people economically and environmentally.

### What’s Next

- Finalize plans for fall biomass tour
- Business incentives – explore and decide on strategy for elevating positive aspects of region.
- Also on our radar – 1) waste and recycling (research success stories and borrow shamelessly); 2) form broadband subcommittee if there is enough interest

### How you can help

- Research what towns and other entities are already doing regarding business.
- Help the committee work on a county-wide strategy to promote the region capitalizing on existing information and resources.
- Be a liaison between your community and the team.



## Team 5 – Health & Wellness

Team Goal: Carroll County is the leading county in NH in supporting its citizens in pursuing and achieving balanced health.

### What we've learned

Carroll County is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> out of the 10 NH counties in the Robert Wood Johnson Health Rankings largely due to the high rate of uninsured adults (20%) and high death rate due to motor vehicle accidents. Some social/economic factors such as our higher percentage of children in poverty (15%) also contribute to our low rank. The key questions that emerged are, “How can people meet their health care needs if they don’t have insurance?” and “What actionable areas can a community group focus on that would impact this?”

### Progress/Accomplishments – What the team is working on and why

**Video Project** – Produced video for northern part of the county with help from Valley Vision that shows the health service locations that people can get to using the new Carroll County Transit system and explains how to use NH Health Access. The video addresses how people without insurance or transportation can still access existing services. The original idea was to offer a physical tour. The group opted to produce a video because it could reach far more people by using Community Access TV and sharing copies of the video with various providers.

**Health Campaign** – Outlined goals for a health campaign focused on simple, concrete actions. The team made the decision to start with promoting walking because it is an activity for all ages. They have begun to gather information about possible approaches, existing walking efforts and walking locations through the town’s recreation departments. The emerging health campaign came from the idea that the least expensive option for people is to stay as healthy as they can. And, there are free and low-cost choices within people’s control. “What can we do to help people to make simple, concrete healthy changes?”

### What’s Next:

- Distribute northern video pending the start of the Carroll County Transit Fixed Route Service. Then, work with Wolfeboro Community TV to make a southern video.
- Decide on an approach for the health campaign with input from other community entities and work with others to implement.

### How you can help

- Help distribute the health videos.
- Let the team know what is already happening in your town (school, recreation, senior center, etc.) to promote walking.
- Help the team to research and decide on an approach to promote walking.
- Serve as a connector between your town, the groups you belong to and this team.

### Stepping along into health . . .

