

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

### **JUNE 9, 2009**

#### **Members**

**In Attendance:** Lois Bronz, Chair, Ken Jenkins, Vito Pinto, Bill Burton, Judy Myers. Legislators Harckham and Kaplowitz were in attendance.

**In Attendance:** CE: Bill Randolph BOL: Mary Jackson, Travis Grodin, and Melanie Montalto Guests: Robert Keston, Alfreda Williams

**Items Discussed:** Center for Screen Time Awareness proposal for Turn Off Week

#### **Minutes**

Chairwoman Bronz called the Community Services Committee meeting to order at 3:10 P.M.

Robert Keston, Executive Director of the Center for Screen-Time Awareness spoke to the Committee about the affects of excessive screen use, be it television, computer, an electronic video game, or an ipod. The average family spends over 9 hours per day with a recreational screen. The use of computers all day (5-10 hours a day) at work and television in the evening is causing depression and obesity. He said it contributes to less family time, and less socializing.

Mr. Keston stated that evidence shows that reducing screen time and having family dinner reduces violence, obesity, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, lowers divorce rates, and increases grades, financial viability, and work productivity.

Mr. Keston said the CDC stated two years ago that 1 out of every 3<sup>rd</sup> child born since the year 2000 will be diagnosed with type II diabetes if we continue on the trajectory that we are on now with obesity. He stated that there were more amputations due to diabetes in 2005 alone than there were during the ten year Vietnam War, and the rate is increasing. We know that obesity is a major cause of diabetes, heart disease and cancer. He added that several studies show that since the deregulation of the cable industry in 1980 there are now more televisions in households than there are people and television viewing increased because there were more shows for every demographic. The obesity curve follows the line of the cable viewing.

Mr. Keston continued by stating that the ADHD and Autism diagnosis curves follow the early onset to screens curve. He also said that studies show that second hand television, where the screen is on but children are doing other things, is just as disruptive and hurtful as first hand screen use. Mr. Keston also discussed how disruptive early childhood television programs are to the development of children.

Mr. Keston then introduced Turn Off week in September, where communities get involved in getting children, families, and workers to spend less time using screens for one week while also encouraging family meal times. He stated that Turn Off week works best when you incorporate schools, YMCA's, libraries, hospitals and other area organizations. He stated there are materials that can be accessed for free to distribute to get the word out, and different screen free programs can be developed for families for the week.

The Committee discussed how they could get involved and promote Turn Off Week in September. They agreed to discuss further and make a commitment soon.

Moved by Legislator Pinto and seconded by Legislator Burton the minutes of the meeting on June 9<sup>th</sup> were approved with a vote of 4-0.

Moved by Legislator Burton and seconded by Legislator Myers the Committee on Community Services adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

A complete audio recording of the meeting is available for review upon request.