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Jonathan Sherwood - Amesbury District 6

Information for the residents of Amesbury's District 6

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The Pettengill House and its new Amesbury Resource Center

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Deborah Smith (Executive Director) and Detective Robert Wile (Board member and [Amesbury Police Department Detective](#)) at the Pettengill House's new Amesbury Resource Center.



The Amesbury Resource Center is located at 21 Water Street, in the Lower Millyard area.

I went there just to get a tour and to hear a little about what the Resource Center and what it had to offer Amesbury residents. What I learned about was just how much Pettengill House is doing for our community.

The mission of the Pettengill House, based in Salisbury, is to "support and empower children and families by providing education, comprehensive case management and basic needs; and by coordinating community supports that contribute to individual and family stabilization, personal growth and development."

Known for its annual winter coat and student backpack campaigns, the Pettengill House provides a variety of services for parents and their children. Working in Amesbury, Byfield, Groveland, Merrimac, Newbury, Newburyport, Rowley, Salisbury, and West Newbury, Pettengill served over 3,000 children and adults in FY14. Amesbury is only 2nd to Salisbury in the number of persons served. In FY14, the House served 700 adults and 503 children in Amesbury (out of a population of about 16,500).

Ms. Smith and Det. Wile focused on the close collaboration in place among Pettengill House, the Amesbury Police Department, and the Amesbury Public Schools, in the 'Amesbury School Link' program. Like all of Pettengill House's services, the School Link program is not income-based but rather is a matter of referral from either the schools or the Amesbury P.D. of a family in need of support. Pettengill House works with families and children at all income levels.



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Children & Family Services

Part of what the School Link collaboration does with the Amesbury Schools is work with homeless families. This means working with the homeless families to retain connections to their community of origin, help them integrate with the Amesbury schools, and connect them with services. In FY14, Amesbury had 55 homeless students, out of a total of 336 children supported by the School Link program. The School Link program conducts intakes, home visits, conducts needs assessments, and works on family stabilization and crisis intervention.

The School Link program expresses the organization's belief that "Education is key to ending poverty and improving the quality of life for children and families," as the program brief that Deb provided me put it. As it turns out, this program is pretty exemplary in Massachusetts, helping set the standard for collaboration among local service providers, public schools, and public safety departments.

Both Ms. Smith and Det. Wile noted that they have presented to their peers around the Commonwealth regarding this collaboration, which represents something of an alternative to more normal lack of connection among homeless and family service providers, public schools, and local police departments. As someone whose day job centers on homelessness issues, I can attest to that.

For more information about the Pettengill House's services and about the Amesbury Resource Center, call their main number at: 978-463-8801. Or visit their website at: www.pettengillhouse.org.

Organizations like the Pettengill House often work behind the scenes in a community like Amesbury but really represent what is best about our town. My meeting gave me confidence that Amesbury is doing well by its residents and that they are well served by collaborations such as the School Link program.

Posted by Jonathan Sherwood at 10:36 PM 

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