

Governor Rendell Appoints Local Representatives to Statewide Commission on Children and Families

Quakertown, PA (April 28, 2004) — Governor Edward G. Rendell (D-PA) announced on April 14th the formation of a 39 member, statewide commission to advise and support the work of the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families. Among those named to the commission are two area representatives, Dr. Francis Barnes, Superintendent of Palisades School District and Lee Rush, M.Ed., Executive Director of justCommunity, Inc.

Governor Rendell signed an executive order Sept. 18, 2003, establishing the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families to coordinate and streamline services for children and families among the many government agencies throughout the state. The Governor's Cabinet is made up of the Secretaries of Education, Health, and Labor and Industry; the secretary of the Budget; the Insurance commissioner; the directors of the Office of Health Care Reform, the Governor's Office of Policy; the Governor's Chief of Staff; and the chairpersons of the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission and the Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

The members of the commission will advise the Cabinet on Children and Families and help to identify the barriers that impede effective and efficient services to children and families throughout the Commonwealth. The commission will also make recommendations on forming new solutions to address current challenges. "The representatives on this commission are family members, advocates and people who work on the front lines with service providers in the Commonwealth," Governor Rendell said. "We are creating a diverse group of stakeholders representing the unique regions of Pennsylvania and a rich pool of talent, passion, skills and expertise—all tasked with helping improve the lives of children." The statewide commission is expected to hold its first meeting later this spring to map out its strategy.

"I am pleased to see two area professionals named to this important statewide commission," commented Senator Robert Wonderling (R-PA). "Both Lee and Frances will be able to share much of the success of successful school/community collaborations such as the Upper Bucks Healthy Communities Healthy Youth Coalition which focuses on the 40 developmental assets for children." Senator Wonderling's district covers portions of Upper Bucks County.



Dr. Francis Barnes is the Superintendent of the Palisades School District located in the Northeast corner of Bucks County. Dr. Barnes was recently selected to be the first person to be tapped as a "Superintendent on Assignment" by Secretary of Education, Vickie Phillips. On loan to the Department of Education for one semester, he is assisting other schools in PA to help improve their student performance, leadership and staff development. Three of Palisades Schools have been designated as Blue Ribbon Schools, a high honor bestowed by the federal Department of Education. The district employs 325 professional and support staff, educates 2200 students and has an operating budget of \$27 million dollars.



Lee Rush, M.Ed., is the Executive Director of justCommunity, Inc., a non-profit organization based in Quakertown, PA, which provides consultation, education and training services in the areas of youth development, community mobilization and restorative practices. justCommunity offers a variety of prevention programs to the community including LifeSkills, Project ALERT, Tobacco Cessation and a youth diversion program called Community Accountability Circles. justCommunity also sponsors a national youth development conference each year and is the coordinating agency for the Upper Bucks Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth Coalition (UBC) which represents over 35 individuals and organizations working together to raise the level of 40 assets in children and reducing the risk factors associated with unhealthy behavior.

For more information call 215-538-4796.