

What is BRIC (Building Resiliency in Individuals and Communities)?

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Special to The Graphic-
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Mental health challenges, substance abuse, emotional and behavioral concerns, disengaged families, fragmented services, generational poverty and poor health outcomes.

In the months leading up to January of 2019, educators at the South Central Calhoun Community School District realized that these issues increasingly dominated their conversations. At the same time, providers at Stewart Memorial Community Hospital and Calhoun County Public Health were discussing the same challenges.

Knowing that the problems were more complex than what a single entity could address, a partnership was formed that has since become a grassroots community action group known as BRIC: Building Resiliency in Individuals and Communities.

The group's first step was to provide joint training for their employees in which staff members watched the documentary, Resilience, giving staff the opportunity to learn about adverse childhood experiences (ACES), toxic stress, and resiliency.

The resulting discussion among the teachers, nurses, home visitation workers, and others led to the conclusion that it would take collaborative, sustained, and solution-focused efforts to address the challenges facing the schools and communities of South Central Calhoun.

Administrators from the school, hospital, and Public Health committed to building a coalition to continue the discussion and work that was started. This coalition has grown so that now the monthly BRIC meetings include representatives from mental health providers, churches, law enforcement/County Attorney's office, Department of Human Services, New Opportuni-



Pictured in the front row (from left to right) Glenna Nockels of Plains Area Mental Health; Darci Peterson of Stewart Memorial Community Hospital, Marc DeMoss of South Central Calhoun and Heidi Billmeier of New Opportunities. In the middle row are Michelle Shaver of SMCH; Nicole McChesney of SCC, Barb Riley of Calhoun County Public Health and Dillon Brandt, Rockwell City Church or Christ. Standing the back row are Dan Schaffer of Lake City Police Department, Morgan Struchen of Community and Family Resources, Joleen Schmit of CCPH, Kristy Vogel of CCPH and Randy Martin of SCC. Not pictured are Anne Reiter and Ashlyn Schettler of Seasons Center, Calhoun County Attorney Tina Meth Farrington, Emilea Lundberg of Juvenile Court, Janelle Nesbitt of Reach Youth Group, Leisa Mayer of Rolling Hills Mental Health Region, SCC Superintendent Brad Anderson, Brooke Minnehan of SMCH, Melissa Drey of PAMH, Kim Bodholdt of Prairie Lakes AEA, Brigid Burns of the Department of Human Services and Mickie Shubin, CFR. [Provided photo]

ties and Community and Family Resources.

The established mission of BRIC is to work collaboratively as individuals and agencies in order to counteract the effects of ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) through the spreading of hope and the building of resiliency.

The work they do addresses four goal areas: provide education about and prevent ACEs; screen for ACEs and provide linkages to resources; collaborate across agencies to improve services and outcomes; foster resiliency in youth and families.

The ultimate vision of the group is happy, healthy families and communities.

A multi-agency team meets on a monthly basis to address the needs of specif-

ic students and formulate an action plan for meeting them.

In the area of public awareness and education, the BRIC group has brought evidence-based training to providers in Calhoun County including "Lemonade for Life" and "We Can Prosper." They also worked with SCC High School students to create a public service announcement video about ACEs.

BRIC has helped health professionals and preschool staff implement universal screening for ACEs, and a system for following up with families with high scores.

To improve collaboration, they have established protocols like HWC texts and SERT meetings.

HWC stands for "Handle

With Care," a code that law enforcement officers text to school administrators when a situation may potentially affect a student.

SERT stands for "Student Empowerment and Resiliency Team," a multi-agency team that meets on a monthly basis to address the needs of specific students and formulate an action plan for meeting them.

BRIC has committed to building resilience in youth by helping to bring school-based therapy and community mentoring programs to South Central Calhoun schools.

If you or someone you know who would be interested in being a mentor to a young SCC student, please contact Keri McAlexander at (515) 571-8495 or Nicole McChesney (712) 210-5168.