
Utica Safe Schools Healthy Students

Annual Report 2007-2008

Mission:

To support a comprehensive approach to service coordination and delivery that will enhance student success by reducing barriers to learning.

Goal:

To assist students to develop the skills necessary to promote positive mental health development, engage in pro-social behavior, and prevent violent behavior and drug use. These efforts are meant to ensure that all students can learn in a positive, safe, disciplined, and drug-free environment.



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Executive Director's Report

It has been a very exciting year for Utica Safe Schools. We are finishing our 7th year. Of the 32 core programs started under the original Safe Schools grant awarded to the Utica City School District in 2000, 25 of them have continued through a combination of efforts by Utica Safe Schools, the Utica City School District, Oneida County Probation Department, Utica Police Department, and other community-based agencies who were partners under the Safe Schools grant in Utica. Through the research I have done, we are the only Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grantee able to continue to this level and have been labeled as a National Model of Success.

This year started off with an eventful Board of Directors retreat, out of which came many new ideas to help build structure and capacity to a growing young agency. With the support of the Board, I was able to create a new organizational chart, which includes five departments (safe schools coordinator - Utica and Rome, Donovan After School Program, Truancy Prevention Program at Donovan, the Underground Café, and administration). With the expansion of services and programs and more funding coming into the agency, I used the new chart to develop the position of Associate Director of Programs and Services. Jeremy Butler was hired to this position in April 2008. Having him in the prior role of a Safe Schools Coordinator has been a tremendous asset, making the transition much easier. Jeremy and I are still creating the position and transitioning the position into the organization. He has been extremely busy and together we have been able to accomplish many things in just five months before the beginning of the 2008 – 2009 school year. Here are just a few of the highlights:

- Finding a home for The Underground Café Teen Center Program. Since bringing the Underground Café program under our umbrella of services in January of 2007, we have visited many potential sites and met with many community partners and leaders. Finally all the efforts led us to Westminster Presbyterian Church. Developing a strong relationship, both parties realized the hidden potential of the church to meet the desperate needs of our Utica teens – to have a place to call their own, hang out, receive support, and try new things-all while creating their future goals. Together with the church's support we began to search out funds to renovate the 5,000 square foot space. We met with many contractors and funders and our tireless work paid off, and the renovations will begin the Fall of 2008!
- We were awarded our 2nd After School Grant through NYS Office of Children and Family Services. This funding helps bring consistent programs for the Underground Café Teen Center from 3-6pm everyday school is open and hire a full-time program manager. This program will be running at full capacity the Fall of 2008.
- Hired and trained a Truancy Prevention Coordinator. Created a program, developed a wrap-around case management style of service and worked with an outside evaluator to help develop the position and services. We also met the goal of working with 40 truant youth within the first three-months of the program.
- Enhancing and expanding our evidence based Elementary Curriculum for pro-social skills groups, as well as beginning to develop an evaluation tool to measure the outcomes.
- Funding – this year the agency was awarded grants for approximately \$260,000.00 for programming and additional positions.

In addition to the above programs and initiatives, Utica Safe Schools continues to be an active voice in the community focusing on children and teen issues. We have a presence on many committees and initiatives, most notably, the City of Utica Juvenile Crime Enforcement Committee (JCEC), Tier II, and Rome Safe Schools Partnership to name a few.

Utica Safe Schools has a group of 30 full-time and about 8 part-time employees and numerous volunteers who take their work very seriously and work hard to impact the lives of children and families. We are all working together to *reduce barriers to learning!*

Board of Directors, 2007-2008

Dianne DiMeo – Board Chair
Jim Franco – Board Vice-Chair
Lori Calabrese
David Jones
Howard Mettelman
Paulette Nickerson
Judy Owens-Manley
Robert Palmieri
Chief C. Allen Pylman
Hilda Santiago
Jane Vail

Ex-Officio Members

Anne Lansing – Executive Director
Marilyn Skermont, Utica City School District Superintendent
Barbara Klein, Utica City School District Board President

Utica Safe Schools Administrative Staff

Anne Lansing, Executive Director
Jeremy Butler, Associate Director of Programs and Services
Kathy Wells, Associate Director of Finance
Michelle MacEnroe, Associate Director of Information Technology
Geneva Rhodes, Administrative Assistant

Program Management

Barton Paczkowski, Truancy Prevention Coordinator
Haley Reimbold, Underground Café Manager
Kelly Wolfe, Donovan Advantage After School Manager

Safe Schools Coordinators – Utica

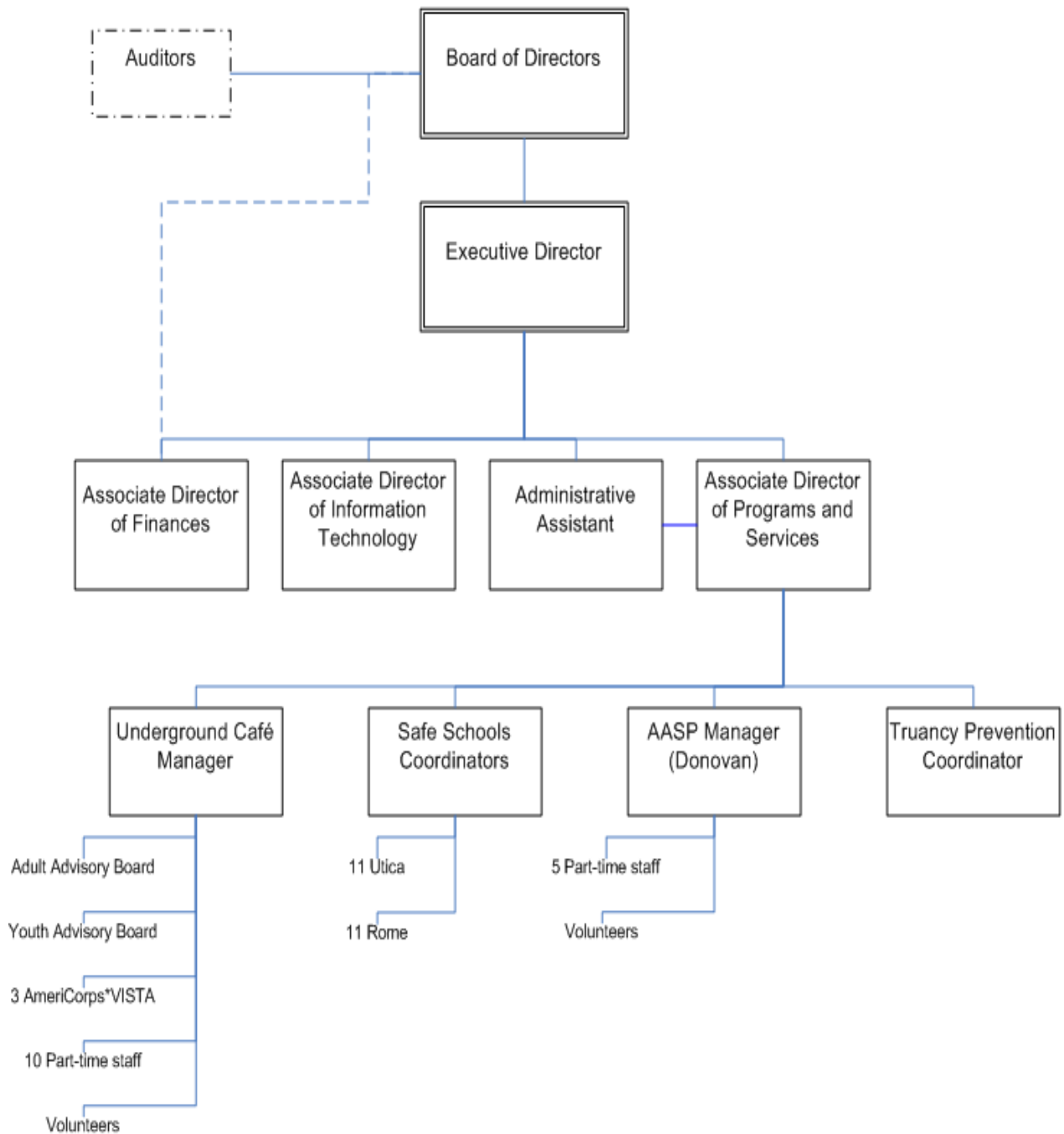
Jeremy Charles
Carson Cunningham
Natasha Daniels
Bernadette Leone
Jen Neal
Lonny Snyder
Russell Syrotynski
Ben Vennero
Barb Wendt
Michael Woods
Mark Zalocha

Safe Schools Coordinators – Rome

Robert Beer
Ed Carolla
Ellen Cook-Jamison
Jeffrey Crippen
Maureen Gifford
Rachel Horton
Tiffany Martin
Vanessa Siderine
April Watson-Smith
Leslie Taylor
Phil Trela

Utica Safe Schools Healthy Partnership, Inc.

January 2008



Safe Schools Coordinators

Safe Schools Coordinators are accessible in each Utica and Rome City School District buildings providing the following services:

- 1) Coordinate Outside Agency Programs – Secure a space in the buildings, help with parent permission slips, and recruit students with other district staff.
- 2) Identify Gaps in Services – Make recommendations to the administration about local agencies that can provide identified services on campus.
- 3) Maintain a Resource List – List of providers in the community to make referrals and/or recommendations for students, families and school personnel.
- 4) Individual Student Support – Short-term support provided to student/families. Coordinators address issues/concerns and facilitate connecting students and families to area agencies and services either on school campus or within the community.
- 5) Pro-Social Skills Groups – Groups focus on improving and obtaining social skills through shared discussion, games, role-playing and journal writing. Skills taught and enforced include active listening, what to do when you are angry, being a team player, how to be fair, how to get along with others, making and keeping friends, effective communication, empathy, honesty, respect, leadership and responsibility.
- 6) Family Support – Work with families to encourage involvement at the school level, make referrals to school and community based agencies, develop plans to support and encourage their children in pro social skills and academic achievement.

Utica City School District Programs

- 1) Aggression Reduction – This group assists students in identifying different types of aggression and positive ways to deal with these feelings or actions.
- 2) Grief & Loss Support – Program provides grief support to students who are experiencing a loss in their family either through death, divorce, and/or incarceration such as jail or prison. Hospice or Coordinators do the program in small groups or individually.
- 3) Bullying Prevention/Intervention Services – This service is designed to address issues of bullying others, being bullied by others, and witnessing bullying. Individual and small group discussions on what bullying is, as well as ways of preventing bullying from the viewpoint of the bully, the victim, and the witness.
- 4) Conflict Resolution Services – Coordinators provide mediation and conflict resolution between students and supports Peaceful Schools when they are not available.
- 5) Homeless Assistance Program – Coordinators provides assistance to students that lack permanent housing. Students are linked to area agencies and services as needed.

Advantage After School Program At Donovan Middle School



Funded through the Office of Children and Family Services, we are going into our 5th year of the program. The program services about 90 students every day that school is open. It runs from 2-5pm daily and provides homework assistance, positive adult role models, art classes, music lessons, recreational activities, computer classes, etc. We also offer programs through our community partners such as Insight House, Catholic Charities, The Peacemaker Program, and Planned Parenthood.

Truancy Prevention Program At Donovan Middle School

The newest program of Utica Safe Schools started in April of 2008 through a grant by NYS Department of Criminal Justice. The Truancy Prevention Program strives to reduce chronic truancy among middle school aged students. Once students are identified as “in need of service” our Truancy Prevention Coordinator will then meet with both the student and family to assess the student’s needs. A service plan will then be developed with the family to help the student reduce their truancy and improve their overall success in school. Students enrolled in the program will receive support for the entire school year.

The Underground Café Teen Center

Believing in the power of youth voice, The Underground Café endeavors to transform the experiences and perceptions of teens in Utica, NY by creating venues for leadership, civic engagement, and creative expression. The program is open to all Proctor High School Teens ages 13 – 18.

We have finally found our home at Westminster Presbyterian Church located 714 Washington Street in downtown Utica. The space is located in a great location, being on a major City bus line, it does not belong to only one neighborhood and it is centrally located and accessible to all teens, and it is across the street from Utica City Hall, which is a perfect place for an outdoor event. We have developed a strong relationship with the Church and we have received requested funds from Community Foundation for about \$25,000.00 and another \$25,000.00 from Senator Joe Griffo’s office. Both of the funds will help support the renovations costs. We still need more funds for a complete renovation, but this will help get started in the Fall of 2008!

Additionally, Utica Safe Schools was awarded another Advantage After School Program through the NYS Office of Children and Family Services for \$112,500.00, which has enabled us to finally give Haley Reibold a paid position for all her hard work. The grant will allow us to open after school everyday that school is open from 3-6pm. We will also be able to pay for staff and programs for the teens. Through this grant we will collaborate with Insight House, Catholic Charities, Planned Parenthood, Workforce Investment Board, Oneida County Dept. of Health and the Peacemaker Program. We will also hire instructors to teach dance, music, theatre, and art.



Underground Café Programs



In collaboration with Hamilton College we offer the following programs:

- 1) **OuterGround** is a program started in partnership with Hamilton College, which creates venues for team building, character development, and self-discovery through outdoor adventures such as rock climbing, hiking, canoeing, and cycling. 3 youth interns organize and lead at least two outdoor activities each month with support from one staff member.
- 2) **The Accepted College Prep Program** guides 15-20 Proctor High School juniors and seniors through the college application process each year. With a total of 16 two-hour college prep sessions each year and three college visits, participants in the program, who are often the first in their families to apply to college, are trained in every aspect of the college application from the college interview to financial aid opportunities. A team of Hamilton College students, admissions officers, and professors facilitates each session with assistance from teens who have previously "graduated" from The Accepted College Prep Program. In addition, each participant is paired with a Hamilton College student mentor.

In Collaboration with the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL):

- 1) The **Youth Impact Program**, a collaborative initiative with the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL), works with an inclusive, core group of twenty 16-26 year olds with and without developmental disabilities. These young adults learn important leadership and self-advocacy skills and help to bridge the gap in society that is often placed between people with and without disabilities.

Other programs:

- 1) The **Youth Board** is comprised of 15 low-income teens from Proctor High School and John F. Kennedy and Donovan Middle Schools. Led by the high school student Youth Board Director, these teens meet weekly to discuss pressing issues in their community and design events and programs for The Underground Café and the community.
- 2) The **Couper Art Center** works to strengthen student's artistic skills and encourage creative self-expression through visual arts, dance, music, and literature. This program hosts workshops that lead up to youth-led arts-based events in partnership with local arts organizations such as Sculpture Space, The Resonance Center, and the Neptune Gallery. Current initiatives include a City-Wide Mural Project, a weekly outdoor film series, and a teen film contest.
- 3) **GlobalYouthUnite**, which began in July 2007, has significantly expanded outreach to refugee youth. GlobalYouthUnite aims to raise awareness among teens about pressing global issues that impact our local community by engaging refugee and immigrant youth in exploring identity and nationality in an inclusive environment.



Collaborative Programs Brought Into The Utica City Schools

- 1) Functional Family Therapy was brought into the Utica City Schools through a grant between the City of Utica and Utica Safe Schools. This program works with an at-risk youth between 11-18 years of age to provide in-home services to the entire family. This service is offered by Cayuga Home.
- 2) Bigs In Blue is a police officer mentoring program modeled on the nationally recognized model program of Big Brothers Big Sisters. The program brings Utica Police Officers into Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School to mentor students in 3-5th grade. This program is brought into the Utica City School District through a grant between the City of Utica and Utica Safe Schools.
- 3) Big Brothers Big Sisters is a national certified program run by Upstate Cerebral Palsy. The program was brought to Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School through grant of the City of Utica and administered by Utica Safe Schools. The program trains bigs from Proctor High School to provide one-to-one mentoring to students in grades 1st – 3rd.
- 4) Olweus Bully Prevention Program – Utica Safe School has a nationally certified trainer on staff and is currently working with Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary starting its 3rd year of the program, we hope to bring the program to other schools in Utica. The program started three years ago through a grant and contracted with YWCA of the Mohawk Valley. The program is meant to be enmeshed into the school building culture and works with all adults and students in building so that everyone know what bullying is and how to prevent it, address it, and keep the school a bully free zone.
- 5) Community Agency Supports – We support other community-based agencies in the community that provide services on campus and off campus. Staff are consistently updated to link the community to the school district at Child Study Meetings, we work with families to link them to community based programs to help support and address their needs, we coordinator programs on campus by addressing logistics such as space, permission slips, and getting students signed up. We support agencies such as HOSPICE, Girls and Boy Scouts, Peaceful People, After School Activities, etc.

Summer 2008 Programs

- 1) The Underground Café Teen Center – Westminster Presbyterian Church has been gracious enough to allow us to use other parts of their facility while and until the renovations on the space we will rent is completed. This allowed us to start running programs for area teens this summer. These programs included dance parties, youth leadership, arts and cultural events, as well as gathering support for the new space.
- 2) Rome and Utica City School Districts – The Safe Schools Coordinators support the district with summer school by providing additional support, coordinating arrival and dismissal and supporting student's needs.
- 3) Fort Stanwix Elementary School Summer Program – Five-week summer program run Monday – Friday for Elementary Students. The program runs from 8am – 3pm. Students partake in pro-social activities and aggression reduction in a recreational format. We have run the program for three summers in conjunction with Rome City School and Rome Safe Schools.



4) Kernan Elementary School Summer Program – A four-week summer program run from Monday – Thursday from 1-4pm. Students ages 11-14 partake in pro-social activities and aggression reduction in a recreational format. We have run the program for two years in collaboration with Catholic Charities.

5) Utica Municipal Housing Summer Project – A four-week summer program run from Monday – Thursday from 1-4pm run at Gilmore Village and Adrean Terrace for ages 5-18. Students partake in pro-social activities and aggression reduction in a recreational format. We have run the program for two years in collaboration with Municipal Housing Authority.

Highlights

Utica Safe Schools Coordinators

The Safe Schools Coordinators worked with **2033** students for the school year providing individual student support, social skills groups and referrals

Supported and participated in school building programs that serviced about 2700 students

Social Skills Groups:

- A total of 169 groups were offered in the Utica City School District
- Average length of each group is 8-10 weeks at 2x per week
- Average number of participants is 5-10 students depending on age and topic of conversation

Worked with approximately 1711 families and we made 106 home visits which is a 43% increase from 2006 –2007 school year

Of the 2033 students we worked with

- 1439 (71%) maintained a “C” or above average
- with 1881 (93%) maintained at least a 75-80% attendance rate
- 1694 (83%) were receiving free or reduced lunch

Worked with 83 students and or families who were homeless (either temporary or permanently)

We attended 24 Superintendent’s Hearings to support the students and families

Collaborated with the School Resource Officer to support 112 students

The total number of Utica City School District students receiving free or reduced lunch this school year was 5300, of that total we worked with 32% of those students

Safe Schools Coordinators participated in the following committees at the school buildings:

- Bully Prevention Committee
- Discipline Committee
- Instructional Support Team – address student academics and discipline
- PBIS – Positive Behavioral Intervention Support Coach
- Recycling
- School Building At-Risk Team and Safety Committee
- School Health Index

- Shared Decision Making
- Wellness Committee
- West Side Concerned Citizens Committee
- Youth Homeless Coalition
- Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition

Rome Safe Schools Coordinators

The Safe Schools Coordinators worked with 1577 students providing a variety of services such as referrals into Safe Schools programs, before and after school programs, provide support with school based programs, referrals to outside services.

Worked with approximately 146 families through programs offered by Safe Schools, direct contact for school related business and after school activities, supporting parents to get involved with school and their students academics.

Provided pro-social skill based activities through recreational programs before and after school and during lunch. The coordinators provided about 70 groups with an average of 8-10 students per group for a length of 15-20 sessions.

The IRT (Initial Response Team) has been very successful at the middle and high school. The coordinators help facilitate the meetings and support the students involved. It is a program overseen by Probation in order to keep students from being PINS or Pre-PINS – to keep them out of the system.

Coordinators are involved in the following committees in their buildings:

- AIS (child study team)
- IRT (Initial Response Team)
- Prevention Action Team
- RRT (Rapid Response Team)
- School Improvement
- Violence Prevention
- Other individual building teams

Rome & Utica 2008 Summer Programs

Rome and Utica City School Districts

The Safe Schools Coordinators support the district with summer school by providing additional support, coordinating arrival and dismissal and supporting student's needs.

Fort Stanwix Elementary School Summer Program – Five-week summer program run Monday – Friday for Elementary Students. The program runs from 8am – 3pm. Students partake in pro-social activities and aggression reduction in a recreational format. We have run the program for three summers in conjunction with Rome City School and Rome Safe Schools. Summer of 2008 we serviced about 40 consistent students.

Afternoon program at two municipal housing sites in the City of Utica:

- Mentored an average of 43 students per day (ages 4-18)
- Provided pro-social skills activities with 43 students per day (ages 4-18)

Six-week afternoon summer program at Kernan Elementary School:

- Daily attendance of 30 students with a total of 50 students enrolled (ages 10-14)
- Offered recreational and pro-social skill building group activities

Truancy Prevention Program

The program started in April 2008 with the Coordinator's hire. For the first three months, which also happened to be the last three months of the school, there were many students with excessive absenteeism. The coordinator quickly began working with Truant Officer to identify students, create a case management system, and begin to create a referral base. 57 Families were offered the services of the Coordinator to avoid a PINS petition. 48 families accepted the help. Out of these 48 the truancy declined significantly. The coordinator contacted the families and students over the summer to keep them on track as they start another year. The program was originally only going to be funded for one year. However, Utica Safe Schools was notified by the State that there will be funding for a year two!

The Underground Café

Outerground Program – 17 youth enrolled in this collaborative program with Hamilton College. 2 participants were awarded a scholarship through the Masons to participate in a 20-day wilderness camp. The program sessions were offered to all the participants that included rock climbing, ropes course, survival skills training, and hiking.

College Prep Program – 13 Proctor High School Juniors were enrolled. 16-2-hour sessions were offered by 15 college mentors to help the participants through the college application process.

Couper Art Center – 19 youth enrolled working in various medias to learn to express themselves through art.



GlobalYouthUnite – ACLU trained 25 Utica teens to become peer educators in the areas of cultural diversity and awareness.

Youth Impact Project – in collaboration with RCIL 14 youth aged 16 – 26 with varying degrees of disabilities, meet weekly for 3-hours to discuss self-advocacy, team building, and leadership skills.

Utica Safe Schools Goals For 2008 – 2009

We are reaching a pivotal time in the development of the agency especially in light of its continuous growth, funding streams and the current conditions of the economy. As has been discussed by the agency and the board of directors, I propose to develop other avenues of revenue aside from grants, which have been unstable up to this point and are time sensitive.

At the last board retreat in June 2008, I was charged with looking at other ways to find funding and stabilize our budget as well as to establish an unencumbered reserve.

Over the course of the next year these are my goals to address the above:

Short-Term

- 1) Create a Management Team to address programmatic goals of all the departments and financial opportunities for the agency;
- 2) Create a product to sell to other school districts through the role of the Safe Schools Coordinators, Truancy Prevention Coordinator and Bigs in Blue;
- 3) Create and evaluation tool for the above mentioned programs to address the impact of our preventative programs on district needs such as graduation rate, truancy, drop-out rates, and student academics;
- 4) Address and support the sustainability of the Rome Safe School Initiative, especially our Safe Schools Coordinator positions; and
- 5) Develop a stronger publicity campaign for the agency, which will include brochures, newsletters and the website.

Long-Term

- 1) Plan the expansion of our programs and services beyond Utica and Rome;
- 2) Develop a strategic plan for the agency over the next 5-10 years; and
- 3) Support other school districts who may wish to apply for a Safe Schools Grant.

