

Can I Pick Your Brain?

I am beginning this article with the words so often used to start many of my meetings, "Can I pick your brain?" In the last two weeks I've had two such meetings, one with Joyce Yarrow, Executive Director, and Building Committee members Fran Halloran and Sharon Griffin of the Middlesex Habitat for Humanity and Cynthia H. Clegg, President & CEO and Board Member John Biddiscomb of the Middlesex County Community Foundation. Both these organizations would like to work in and for our community and need our help.

Middlesex Habitat for Humanity is actively seeking a property in Durham to build or renovate for a Habitat home. The Middlesex United Way has committed funding to assist in this effort. As many of you may know, Habitat for Humanity is a world-wide group that forms partnerships with people in need to build houses. Homes are sold to new homeowners at no profit and with zero interest rate mortgages. A family will be considered if its annual total income is between 25-50% of the median income for Middlesex County, which depending on how many in the family can be between \$14,200 and \$53,550. Homeowners must demonstrate a need, must commit to work a minimum of 200 hours of "sweat equity" and must have the ability to repay the mortgage. We currently have residents in Durham who may qualify.

We believe that a Habitat for Humanity project in Durham would be a great communal project, one that residents of all ages can participate in one way or another. In fact, CRHS Principal Steve Wysowski endeavors each year to choose a school wide community project (this year they chose Americorps). If a Durham (or Middlefield) Habitat project came to fruition, I'm sure we would have the support of Dr. W and our students. We have funding and volunteers, we just need a spot. If you have any property that you think may work, to donate or sell, please contact Joyce Yarrow at 343-9179. For more information about Middlesex Habitat for Humanity please visit www.habitatmiddlesex.org.

Middlesex County Community Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in Middlesex County. Their mission is to work to support local non-profit organizations with grants to address community needs. Over the past 10 years, they have granted more than \$1 million for projects promoting the arts; feeding the poor; providing transportation for seniors; mentoring youth-at risk; improving the environment; supporting education and historic preservation. The Foundation also has an endowed restricted Fund for Women & Girls that supports programs that empower Middlesex County women and girls to be self-reliant and reach their potential.

The leadership of MCCF is very interested in supporting programs in Durham. Contact the foundation at 347-0025 if you have a project that needs funding to continue or grow. If you simply have an idea for a project or program that may meet a community need, contact Ms. Clegg. Her staff can provide mentoring and organizational support to get you started. For more information about MCCF, please visit www.middlesexcountycf.org.

So, what do you think? How can these two organizations benefit our Town of Durham? How can they help enhance our quality of life by helping promote or develop a program filling a need? How can they give us an opportunity to help those less fortunate than ourselves? Put your thinking caps on and give us a call!