

"Building on family strengths, creating environments that are caring, stable and supportive of the children and families that we serve"

Taalial Hasan, Executive Director

Agency NEWSLETTER



Building Blocks for Kids—BBK Working in the Iron Triangle

BBK'S Mission

Committed to supporting the healthy development and education of all children and self sufficiency of all families by engaging the Iron Triangle community, block by block.

Historical Background

The Iron Triangle area of Richmond is challenged by issues of low income, racial tensions, poor school performance, and high crime. It is exposed to environmental problems from nearby industrial, railroad and highway sources, many of its residents are not fluent in English or have limited literacy.

In 2005 a group of people representing more than two dozen public and private agencies, (including YSB) elected officials and individuals serving West County started meeting and within a year, the Building Blocks for Kids Collaborative was born. Knowing first hand the overwhelming problems facing West County and children, and recognizing that most previous projects had done little solve these problems, collaborative members were determined to replicate the successes of the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) in New York City.

For the past five years, BBK has undertaken multiple strategies and activities designed to "touch" families in the zone with education, health, safety, and social programs to enable children to realize the BBK mission. BBK Focus areas are: to increase educational opportunities & improve academic performance; better health for children; and improve safety and calm in the neighborhoods and schools resulting from decreases in random violence, neighborhood tensions and urban crime. The approach in the theory of change is one of a "conveyor belt" model that calls for beginning, whenever possible, with young children and adding interventions at each step of the maturation process until these

children reach adulthood. The Collaborative believes that parents and community play an essential role in BBK's success, therefore we are committed to community engagement as a component of all BBK programs. With this involvement, BBK has tapped into the strengths and hopes of the community and obtained essential community support. Via Dinner Dialogues where community members, representatives of individual agencies and elected officials share meals and discuss relevant issues and plan community events, to the CETF program that provides computers and training to area residents, BBK is determined to assist families with the multiplicity of community needs.

For more detailed information, please see the BBK Business Plan located at www.bbkrichmond.org.



Executive Directors Corner

As a proud member of the BBK Collaborative, YSB has played a major role in assessing the needs of the Iron Triangle community, developing strategies for long-term stable funding, and providing direct services to residents. We look forward to continuing our participation in this important, exciting and worthwhile project.

Taalial Hasan

Executive Director

Meet: ANNETTE LEWIS Program Manager—Building Blocks for Kids

After working with YSB for three years as a Facilitator, Annette (pictured above right with BBK Staff members Sonya Hodge Smith, Ebony Blake, Claudia Montoya-Mejia and Carolina Mejia-Flores. Not pictured are Kendra Tramiel and April Davis) is now the Program Manager for BBK. Responsible for the supervision of 4 staff members, she also oversees the SAMHSA program and the Community Engagement component of BBK. Annette attended Cal State University Northridge, obtaining a BA in Sociology. She received a MA in Interdisciplinary Studies from San Francisco State. Annette can be reached at the BBK office located at 401 1st Street and by telephone