

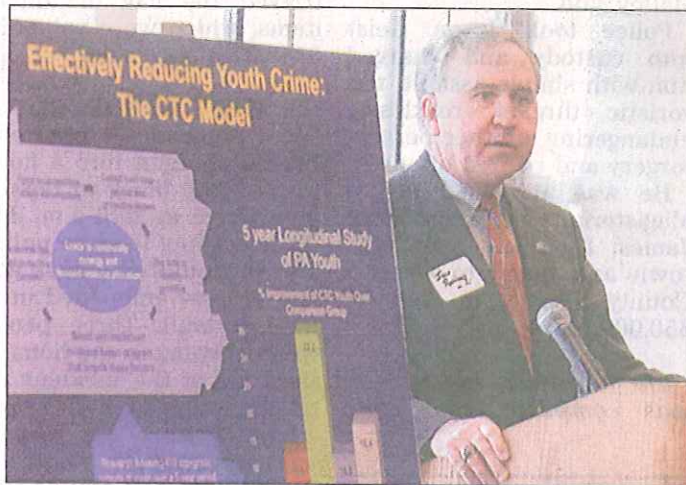
DAILY LOCAL NEWS

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Staff photo by Larry McDevitt

State Sen. John Rafferty, R-44th, of Collegeville, speaks Monday at the kickoff for the Communities That Care site, a project with the Coatesville Youth Initiative.

\$50,594 to aid city's youth

Grant to support Communities That Care site

By DANIELLE LYNCH
Staff Writer

COATESVILLE — State, county and local officials discussed plans for a Communities that Care site to be established jointly with the Coatesville Youth Initiative.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency gave \$50,594 to the Coatesville Youth Initiative to establish a Communities That Care site in Coatesville.

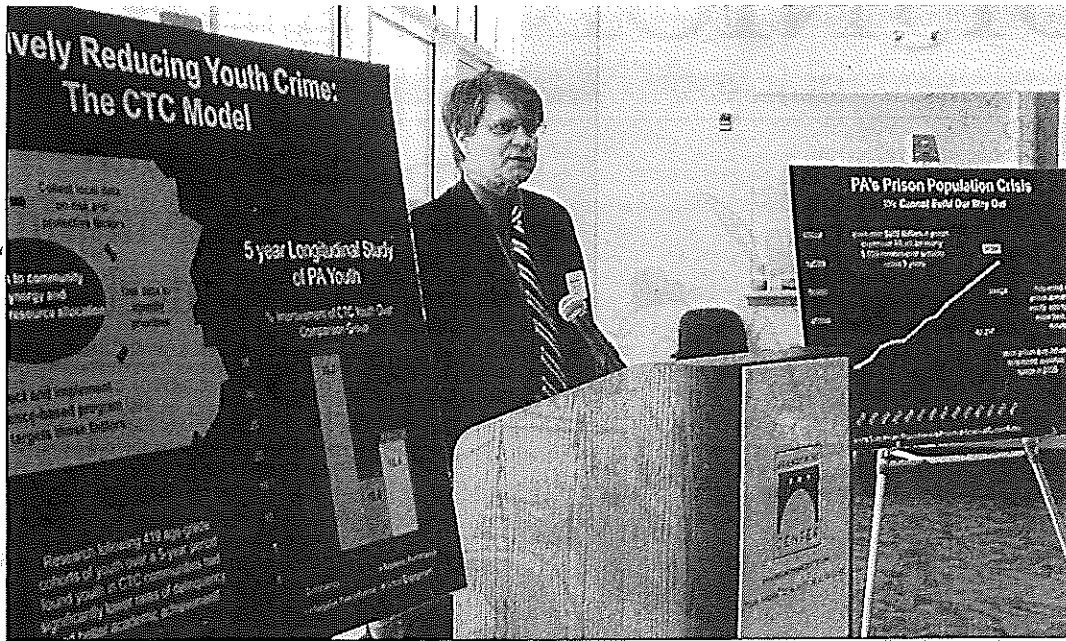
Officials said the funds will

be administered by the Brandywine Health Foundation, the official grant applicant, on behalf of the initiative.

About 75 people gathered Monday morning at the Brandywine Health Foundation to discuss the effort.

"This is a positive step for the City of Coatesville and a positive step for the state of Pennsylvania," said state Sen. John Rafferty, R-44th, of Collegeville.

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Staff photos by Larry McDevitt

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Chester County District Attorney Joseph Carroll said these efforts are a perfect example of collaboration between government and charitable organizations. He said it's important for the city's youth to see they have opportunities to make a better life for themselves.

"Those are all things I put in the category of priceless," Carroll said.

Michael Pennington, director of the office of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention for the state, said a Communities That Care model helps communities support the healthy development of youth and reduce problem behaviors.

The Communities That Care site in Coatesville is "part of an initiative across the state, country and world," said Brian Bumbarger, director of the Evidence-based Prevention and Intervention Support Center at Penn State University. "This isn't about Coatesville getting a grant ... this is about promoting a new way of thinking and strengthen-

ing youth and families." Bumbarger, who is also director of policy research and outreach at the Prevention Research Center at Penn State University, said a five-year longitudinal study of Pennsylvania youth shows children with access to the Communities That Care model have better adolescent development than youth in comparison communities.

Youth living in areas with the Communities That Care initiative reported nearly 11 percent less delinquency and 33 percent better academic achievement during the five-year period, he said.

"What better investment can we make, than an investment in our kids," said Chester County Commissioner Kathi Cozzone.

Cozzone and Chester County Commissioners' Chairman Terence Farrell presented a citation that recognizes the Coatesville Youth Initiative and the establishment of a Communities That Care site.

Clay Yeager, an evidence-based policy and program consultant, stressed the importance of these approaches in the Coatesville area.

"Healthy and well-adjusted 15-year-olds don't just wake up one day and think, 'I'm going to become a delinquent,'" Yeager said.

More than 100 communities throughout the state have adopted the Communities That Care model. In addition to Coatesville, there are six other sites in Chester County.

The Coatesville Youth Initiative was launched by the Brandywine Health Foundation on Oct. 20, 2009, following a yearlong planning process geared toward the city's youth.

In July 2008, the health foundation asked Urban Ventures Group Inc. to facilitate a 12-month community planning process as part of the youth initiative.

Urban Ventures Group is a national consulting firm based in Philadelphia.

Nearly 80 individuals and representatives from 40 organizations and agencies in the greater Coatesville area participated in the process. A steering committee was also formed and met monthly.



Going forward, the goal is to expand the community

prevention board to include representation from all area stakeholders, said Chaya Scott, director of the Coatesville Youth Initiative. The board members will undergo training and oversee the Communities That Care process, she said.

After training is complete, the board will review statistics, including data collected for the Coatesville Youth Initiative. The board will then determine what strategies are important for the Coatesville community, Scott said.

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