

## Community and Schools Working Together

The communities of Mont Vernon and Amherst have had a long history of working together, usually through their governance and support of their schools in SAU #39. Now with the death of Kim Cates and also with the spread of the H1N1 virus, our towns have even more reason to communicate with one another and the schools.

In the aftermath of the tragic murder in Mont Vernon, many school children, their parents and their neighbors in both towns were significantly affected. The staffs of our schools also have needed support as they respond to individual and group needs. The victim's daughter and two of the alleged perpetrators are in our schools and their friends and families are adjusting to the new reality that surrounds them. The schools could not address these issues without working cooperatively with the towns.

In response to this "new normal", the Selectmen and Boards of Education of both towns and the Souhegan Cooperative School District have formed a Community Team whose mission will be "to facilitate community resiliency and healing through coordination of resources, education and support." Consultants hired through Department of Education grant monies, emphasize that many small initiatives already in effect, can help make subtle changes in a positive direction in the months ahead. Future initiatives also can benefit from the review and support of this Community Team.

In like manner, the towns of Amherst and Mont Vernon have come together with the schools to plan an H1N1 vaccination clinic for our young people and those citizens with serious medical conditions. School officials and the Emergency Planning Committee will hold this clinic on Saturday, December 19th, from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at Souhegan High School.

The schools have sent emails to all parents requesting they complete a survey indicating whether they would attend this free clinic and the number and type of H1N1 vaccinations they would need. These estimates are due by December 5<sup>th</sup> so that the vaccines can be ordered and ready.

Difficult circumstances have brought the towns and the schools together these past months. Let's remember that our children's daily life most often is filled with optimism and good things as they share a common future that knows no boundaries of town or state.