

New Civic Engagement Series Launched

NOV. 2 FORUM TO ENGAGE CITIZENS IN DELIBERATION ABOUT THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN;

On Saturday, November 2nd, the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, the Charlottesville-Albemarle Commission on Children and Families and numerous other local organizations will convene a community forum to examine the welfare of young people from a local and national perspective. The forum, the first in a planned series to increase civic engagement in key local issues, will be held from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Albemarle County Office Building auditorium, 400 McIntire Road.

All members of the public are invited to participate in the forum and small-group discussions, on the theme "Our Nation's Kids: Is Something Wrong?" The program will conclude with a summary, refreshments and a community resources fair that will include volunteer opportunities at local agencies from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Child care will be provided but reservations are necessary.

"While Charlottesville/Albemarle remains a great place to raise a family," says Saphira Baker, Director, Charlottesville/Albemarle Commission on Children and Families, "this forum asks residents to consider troubling local trends -- our relatively high rates of foster care, child poverty, and the predominance of family violence among troubled youth -- and encourages bipartisan deliberation to promote more informed and fresh solutions for change." The format, developed by the Kettering Foundation, encourages productive dialogue and results on issues that can polarize communities in cities and towns across the nation.

The event is affiliated with the National Issues Forums Network, a nationwide nonpartisan group that promotes civic engagement on issues of importance for local communities. Its local sponsor is the Civic Engagement Initiative, a partnership of organizations hosted by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. "Our Nation's Kids" is the first in a series that will be held from time to time on local issues.

In addition to the Cooper Center and the Commission on Children and Families, a city-county planning advisory group of citizens and agencies, partner organizations of this first forum include the Albemarle County Department of Social Services, Charlottesville Quality Community Council, U.Va.'s School of Continuing and Professional Studies, School of Law

Public Service Center, Madison House, Jefferson-Madison Regional Library, Monticello Area Community Action Agency, Virginia Institute of Government and other groups.

To reserve a space for child care at the event please call (434) 970-3550.

For additional information about the forum or the series, contact Nancy Gansneder at (434) 982-4770 or Saphira Baker at 970-3551.

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