

THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

Submitted by Caroline E. Donnelly, candidate for Board of Health



Caroline Donnelly

Caroline invites voters to contact her via email

donnelly-reid@comcast.net

TWO BEDFORD CITIZEN QUESTIONS FOR BOARD OF HEALTH CANDIDATES

Q1: Give an example of a situation in which you played a role in helping people of different opinions or perspective develop a mutually agreeable solution to a problem. This could be an example from work, volunteer commitments or a previous experience in a public role. How was this accomplished? What did you learn?

I found myself on a somewhat difficult panel at work a few years ago. We were assigned the task of prioritizing projects for scientists at our company. Our panel had a difficult time reaching its goals, I believe, because some members became biased and attached to their own work. The panel did eventually succeed because I was able to recognize and address the bias.

We decided that each panel member would choose potential projects and prepare to defend them to the group. The group was quite amiable. We shared information and had lively discussions when we met. However, when we voted on which projects were most important, we could not agree. Panel members became very attached to the projects that they had investigated.

My role in moving our work forward was to respectfully suggest that members focus on the facts and/or statistics of each case. I was able to convince my fellow panel members that they need not be so personally attached to the projects that they were responsible for. There were no “winners” and “losers” in our deliberations. We were after the facts. We then had some thoughtful debates about the pros and cons of the projects.

When the details and facts became the most important consideration, it was much easier for us to agree on which projects should be at the top of our list. Everyone has biases. We

are not always aware of how our biases affect our decision-making. But the facts are not easy to ignore if we take a hard look at them. Through thoughtful discussion and concentration on the facts (and not on wishful thinking) our panel was able to accomplish its goals.

Q2: What role does the Board of Health have to promote information in the community about domestic violence and elder abuse as public health issues?

The mission of the Bedford Board of Health is “...dedicated to serve all Bedford residents, particularly the under served, and to promote healthy people, healthy families, and a healthy environment through compassionate care, education, and prevention...” Domestic violence, elder abuse and other types of preventable violence are of great concern to our neighborhoods and communities. What makes these issues more difficult to address is the hidden nature of the crimes. The more our community can do to help bring this abusive crime out of the shadows, the better we will be able help our whole community. The Board of Health is equipped and responsible to educate the citizenry about measures that can reduce the prevalence of domestic violence in all of its forms in our community.

What can the Board of Health do to promote communication about domestic violence in Bedford? Many resources are available at federal and local levels of public health to draw from. The Centers for Disease Control states, “We do know that strategies that promote healthy behaviors in relationships are important.” Many local programs, such as REACH – Beyond Domestic Violence and The Safing Center at the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital and many more, are resources for information about this problem.

Domestic violence and elder abuse are preventable community issues. Where criminals, and victims of all age groups are involved, the cooperation of various parts of the community – including police, schools, churches and other institutions – is required. But, we must recognize that the entire community benefits from education about and prevention of abuse.

CAROLINE'S CANDIDATE STATEMENT

As a member of the Bedford Board of Health, I intend to advocate for the best physical, mental and social health available for Bedford residents. My background is in biomedical research in academia and in the biotech industry. Although my specialties are in infectious disease and immunology, I believe that public health is best served by considering all avenues to better health for the community. I aspire to use the seat on the Board of Health to serve all of Bedford residents, including the most needy, as passionately and completely as I can.