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Join the Metro-York team

YorkCounts group has put forth good ideas. Now, can we put them into action? Soon?

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Nov 18, 2007 — On Monday, "Tucker's Team" appeared on the "Today Show." The NBC morning program shared with America the wonderful story of how the Central York High School football team had "adopted" and raised money for 7-year-old Tucker Haas of Mount Wolf, who has been battling cancer.

It's a heart-warming tale of humanity, love and caring - quintessential York County values.

But wait a minute. Tucker lives in the borough of Mount Wolf. That's not even in the Central school district - it's Northeastern. Why would the Central team adopt a boy who, when he grows up to play football, will be a Bobcat rather than a Panther?

It may seem like a stupid question. But many of our community attitudes and political structures are hemmed in by these invisible walls between school districts or municipalities:

• *I don't have to worry about York*

High's alarming dropout rate. My kids go to Central.

• *Why should I worry about crime in the city? I live in Spring Grove. (Where there was recently a shooting at a suburban shopping center.)*

• *Why should I care about the plight of a child who lives outside my school district?*

Why? Because we're human beings. Because we care about one another. Because we want people in our community to be healthy, happy and prosperous.

Or do we?

That's the question at the heart of a revitalization program unveiled Thursday by the Metro-York subgroup of the YorkCounts organization.

Do we really care about our neighbors? Even if they live across the street in "the city"? Do we have the love in our hearts or the will in our politics to truly work together to solve some of the problems festering at the core of our county? Are we willing to join a sort of Tucker's Team for York County?

We sure hope so, because the future health and welfare of our community depend upon it.

The folks behind the Metro-York proposal have taken an important step forward in that effort with the release of eight things we can do to break down barriers and begin working together

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for the overall good of our region.

Some of them are easy to grasp and have already gained traction. For instance: a proposal for a regional police force encompassing the city and most of the inner-ring suburbs.

Other proposals are more "wonkish" and less specific - but they're important just the same:

- Engage in meaningful regional land-use planning.
- Study ideas for modernizing York County's form of government.
- Reform local taxation through a local tax study commission.

These are things that can and must be done - though they face the threat of meandering into the oblivion of endless study by blue-ribbon commissions.

But it's the education recommendations that will truly test whether our community buys into the old cliché "there's no 'I' in team."

Are we willing to make the sacrifices and commitments necessary to stop the cycle of failure that exists in our city's schools?

Are we willing to send our kids to an integrated charter or magnet school in the city - if it offered, say, an outstanding baccalaureate

program, or a focused math or science curriculum?

Would middle-class residents consider moving into the city if there were some incentive like the Kalamazoo Promise, which offers college scholarships to graduates of that Michigan city's school district?

Are we willing to invest \$3 million per year over the next decade to provide "intensive care" for at-risk students?

Time will tell. And history suggests it will take time for these plans to bear fruit. The Rusk Report came out more than 10 years ago, and we're only now getting to some action. YorkCounts has been struggling for several years to sell the ideas of a county human relations commission and a county health department to our elected officials.

But as Metro-York Co-Chair Eric Menzer points out, the attitudes of many local leaders have changed. They "get" that they can't wall themselves off in their little suburban boxes. There is a willingness to talk about new ideas and changes.

Oh, and by the way: Tucker lives in Mount Wolf, which is taking concrete steps toward merging with East Manchester Township. The Central team that has adopted him plays at a school patrolled by Springettsbury Township Police - whose chief has spoken out in favor of a Metro-York police force.

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ON THE WEB

• Read the full Metro-York proposal at <http://www.yorkcounts.org> .

• Comment on the proposal at <http://exchange.ydr.com/Metro-York-proposal-t3843.html> .

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STAY TUNED

Over the next couple of weeks, Daily Record editorials will focus on each proposal in the Metro-York plan.

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