

Heart & Soul Hires Project Coordinators

Two Essex Residents Selected to Lead Grant Effort

The Heart and Soul of Essex, Inc. is proud to announce the hiring of co-project coordinators Susan McCormack and Elizabeth Subin. The pair was selected this month as the first step in the grant process for the newly formed non-profit that was awarded a two-year, \$100,000 grant from the Orton Family Foundation in December. The project proposes gathering citizen input in order to form a values-and-vision statement for the future of the community of Essex. Those values will then be woven into municipal government work and land use planning efforts. The joint application between the Village and the Town is an effort to capture the voices of all residents from the community.



Susan McCormack (left) and Liz Subin (right) were hired as the co-coordinators to lead the Heart and Soul of Essex Project.

McCormack and Subin were recommended by a seven member hiring team to the full 14-member Community Advisory Team and received overwhelming approval. “Sue and Liz bring a wealth of skills and expertise to this process,” explained Gabrielle Ratté Smith, resident and Prevention and Wellness Coordinator for Chittenden Central Supervisory Union. “Both have a passion for public engagement and understand the importance of engaging all parts of our community in this process, of reaching out to involve as many people as we can.”

Susan McCormack is no stranger to public engagement. For the past sixteen years she has facilitated meetings, trained community youth and adult facilitators, and designed and implemented a wide range of public engagement processes. For the past ten years, Susan has been a Senior Associate for Everyday Democracy, an organization that helps communities develop their own abilities to solve problems. From 2007-2009, McCormack was the Director of Leadership Development for The Snelling Center for Government, where she coordinated the Vermont Leadership Institute, a statewide leadership development program for public, private, and non-profit leaders. Susan lives in the Town inside the Village with her partner and is the mother of two daughters.

Liz Subin’s skills complement those of McCormack. Liz has a master’s degree in International Administration, which she put to use for five years in the British West Indies island of Anguilla. Subin was the founding Executive Director for Anguilla National, an organization dedicated to sustainable management, conservation, and enhancement of the island’s natural and cultural resources. She then served as an advisor to the Anguilla National Trust and Director of Development for the Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network. Liz has been a fundraiser, grassroots community organizer, adviser, and grant manager. She resides in the Town near the Jericho border with her husband and three children.

“Together they truly represent the full package,” said Brad Luck, member of the Advisory Team and Director at Essex Junction Recreation and Parks. “We feel fortunate to have these two smart,

experienced people lead us through this process. And, we are really pleased to have such great local talent. Sue and Liz have been involved in the Heart and Soul of Essex initiative since we started this effort. We are confident that they will successfully transition from enthusiastic community volunteers to enthusiastic project managers and hit the ground running this month.”

In January, seven of the sixteen members of the Community Advisory Team volunteered to serve on the hiring team. They created a month-long process that included generating a job description, advertising plan, application review, interview questions, and selection criteria. Once the job description was complete, the position was advertised for two weeks in the Essex Reporter, Seven Days, Craigslist, Front Porch Forum, and more. Thirty-one applications were submitted from professionals with a vast range in ages, experiences, and work histories. Several of the applicants were from Essex, many from the Chittenden County area, and several from over an hour away.

“The job ad was provocative and we were pleased with the number and quality of the applicants,” said Andrew Cimonetti, EHS sophomore and member of the hiring team.

Six of the applicants were selected as finalists for an interview. The 20-question, 45-minute interviews were conducted over several days, including Super Bowl Sunday. “I was really impressed with the time that the hiring team put into this, especially since it was crunched into such a short time span. We all spent more than 15-hours of our time engaging in this process,” explained Cimonetti.

McCormack and Subin will be joining two of the Advisory Team members in Chicago for a training February 23-25, led by the Orton Family Foundation for each of the five Heart and Soul communities. Over the next few months the group organizers will further design the details of the project and likely begin community outreach and engagement efforts this summer and next fall. For more information about the Heart and Soul of Essex project, visit heartandsoulofessex.org or find them on Facebook.com.