



KAREN VIBERT-KENNEDY/Sun-Gazette

An aerial view shows the LAM development in Wolf Township Thursday morning. A 2018 Community Needs Assessment report recently was released as a guide for planning and development to improve services in Lycoming and Clinton counties.

Looking ahead

Drugs, affordable housing among local concerns

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The newly released 2018 Community Needs Assessment report is a guide for strategic planning and development directed toward improving services in Lycoming and Clinton counties.

The report is the result of census data, telephone surveys of registered voters, online surveys of social service agencies and their customers, and focus group sessions, according to Dr. Jonathan Williamson, Community Needs Assessment director.

The report, he said, can be used by communi-

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

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**Dr. Jonathan Williamson,
Community Needs Assessment director**

ty agencies and organizations and individuals to advocate for needs, resources and solutions.

“I like to think of it as a reference document,” he said.

The research is a collaborative effort of four area organizations: STEP Inc., Lycoming County

United Way, First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania, and River Valley Health and Dental Center.

Various community leaders, business and government officials and educators gathered Wednesday to get a first

look at the report and to query Williamson on the data and the methodology used.

He said the report does not push any particular agenda, but can be used to better understand community needs and problems and work to solve them.

“There are many different needs but there is interconnection of those needs,” he said.

The hope, he noted, is to leverage limited resources available within the community in the most effective way.

The report gathered feedback in seven key categories: children and

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youth, community engagement, employment and financial stability, families in crisis, housing and homelessness, medical and dental care, and seniors and persons with disabilities support services.

Among the most important problems given by respondents for Lycoming County in the community survey are: abuse of drugs and alcohol, economy and jobs, and crime and gangs.

Problems related to drugs and alcohol were listed as the No. 1 concern in the partner survey. Other concerns included access to mental health services, affordable housing, child abuse and neglect, and quality of and access to early childhood education.

Community needs assessments are conducted every three years, and over time a number of trends and recurring problems appear, Williamson noted.

“We all need a resource that assembles the best available data for decision making,” he said.

The full report may be found at www.stepcorp.org/CNA2018.