

YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14

Youth and Family Services is a community resource that will be celebrating 40 years of service to the town in 2015. The community & town government continues to see the value in consistent prevention education, positive youth development, and clinical counseling support for residents and family members. There are programs and services available to provide education and support for every developmental phase, and here are some examples:

- OS Early Childhood Council provides pre-school readiness programming and assessments,
- Socialization groups for K-3rd grade
- After School Clubs provide creative and physical outlets in supervised settings for grades 4-8
- High School transitional program at Camp Hazen
- Parenting resources in English and Spanish
- Grandparents raising Grandchildren group

Youth and Family Services has grown and changed over time, accommodating changes in the community and its' needs. When reviewing our statistics for this year, it is easy to see that the need for counseling services and social services support has grown, and in some areas, more than doubled. How and where YFS offers services is inherently flexible to accommodate the competing demands experienced by our student body and adult population. Responding to feedback from several "Community Needs" surveys, groups/services have been developed and offered for support around parenting, relationship building, anger management/conflict resolution and substance abuse prevention and education. In response to the increased need for supportive services, YFS has diligently developed counseling practices for a broad range of therapeutic services, and continues to work to increase access to services, and connect families with other therapeutic resources. Working collaboratively with the Old Saybrook Public Schools enables earlier detection and intervention for behavioral health issues with students, and YFS is able to offer support to the entire family system, whether through parenting resources, or by offering scholarship opportunities for student/youth to become involved in our 'Positive Youth Development' programming.

An area of continuing development is the Intern Training Program. YFS has Master's level interns across disciplines of Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Social Work and Marriage and Family Therapy. The interns offer additional support for our Positive Youth Development Coordinators, thereby allowing us to offer extended programs that are able to accommodate more students. YFS has agreed to provide training and supervision for students this past year from CCSU, UCONN, St. Josephs, SCSU, & Cappella. Their involvement allows YFS to provide more comprehensive coverage for in-school collaboration, and allows the agency to offer more varied services to individuals and families. The intern program adds a benefit to YFS at no cost to the taxpayer, and our connection to these schools offers our staff some additional training experiences at no cost.

Volunteerism and community involvement continues to increase steadily as we invite and encourage people from varying sectors of the community to become involved in our programs,

perhaps as an instructor for OSMS After-School Clubs, or a student who wants to mentor younger students, or business partners who help sponsor and ‘man the tables’ at some of our many community functions i.e. The Hidden Treasures Community Variety Show and Family Day. We would like to thank all who have contributed to our efforts over the past years.

The focus of our youth programming has been the intentional building of ‘Assets’, qualities and characteristics that have been determined through research to support positive growth and development of youth. It has been evidenced that youth with a higher percentage of developed ‘Assets’ are also less likely to be involved in high risk behaviors. Some of these ‘Assets’ are “Community Values Youth”, “Positive Peer Influences”, “Social Competence” and “Adult Role Models”. The language and philosophy of the Healthy Community Healthy Youth initiative, centered on the 40 Asset Developmental Model, is woven through everything YFS is involved in. We continue to seek opportunities within the community to develop meaningful roles for our youth, interning in businesses or serving on town boards and commissions. To learn more about the 40 Asset model, visit www.searchinstitute.org. We have implemented the Youth Action Council with students to provide opportunities for skill development in areas of leadership, community service and mentoring relationships.

In the Fall of 2014, there will be several Developmental Asset initiatives happening concurrently. Our intention is to work towards a common language to assess need in the community and an organized, intentional response to those needs. There will be more information forthcoming about the “Asset Building Challenges—the building blocks of our community.”

Youth and Family Services has been a part of the Old Saybrook Community fabric for almost 40 years. Looking back over Annual Reports from years ago, it is easy to see the tremendous change and growth of not only the agency, but of the many relationships in the Community that continue to be an integral part of how YFS is able to do the work that is so vital to the residents of our town. Counseling services for individuals and families/couples, and the need for increased Social Services interventions are reflective of the societal pressures being felt not only in our community, but across the nation. In response to the increased need for supportive services, YFS has diligently developed counseling practices for a broad range of therapeutic services, and continues to work to increase access to all services. Working collaboratively with other town departments, organizations and schools, Youth and Family Services has strengthened many of the community partnerships that have long been the foundation for programs and initiatives designed to promote relationship building and positive role-modeling for youth.

The staff of YFS have demonstrated their commitment to providing quality, compassionate care for the residents of Old Saybrook by the level of their involvement, receiving additional training, the development and facilitation of many programs targeted to meet specific needs in the community and more. We continue to focus on Positive Youth Development Programming, and the development of the Youth Action Council “Assets in Action” to provide opportunities for leadership, community service, and mentoring relationships.

Detective Samuel B. Barnes

Heather McNeil LMFT, LADC

**Youth and Family Services Commission
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Program/Service Listing

Counseling Services

- ◆ Served 122 cases at the Agency.
- ◆ Served numerous students at the schools: 25 at Goodwin (in socialization groups); 57 at the Middle School and High School in groups and 24 individually.
- ◆ Provided 2050 individual and family counseling sessions.

Positive Youth Development

Through these programs young people learn new life skills, take leadership roles and build self-esteem:

- ◆ *Youth Summer Stock Theatre Programs* – engaged seventy-three youth: Forty-four 7th – 9th grade students and fourteen 5th & 6th grade students performed productions of “*Fame*” and “*Honk*”, respectively, assisted by an additional 15 students from 10th grade through college age who were graduates of past Summer Stock productions. The upperclassmen volunteered as Director’s Assistant, Choreographer Assistants, Lighting and Sound Crew, Stage Managers and Creative Crew.
- ◆ *Summer Community Services Programs* – provided an opportunity for thirty-six 7th- 12th graders to serve their community while completing service learning in either of two major areas: Hunger Awareness and Environmental Stewardship (of our geographic area). Each project worked collaboratively with local organizations such as Shoreline Soup Kitchen, OS Land Trust, Regional Recycling and others.
- ◆ *Wilderness Challenge Program* – During the summer of 2013 eleven students transitioning from 7th to 8th grade successfully completed our intensive challenge program and participated in follow-up activities throughout the year. An additional ten 7th grade students began pre-Wilderness team-building and leadership training during May and June 2014 in preparation for meeting their own Wilderness Challenge.
- ◆ *High School REACH Team* (Responsible Educated Adolescents Can Help): a youth-driven initiative – twenty-six members of the High School REACH Team planned and carried out activities and service projects at the school and in the community this year. Group members also benefitted from leadership training to help them in their mission of promoting substance-free activities for their peers and awareness of prevention efforts in the community. Activities included a Sticker Shock Campaign (working with local businesses to raise awareness of adults about purchasing alcohol for underage youth and about social hosting liability); Family Fun Night; Family Pasta and Bingo Night, fundraising events; Middle School Wellness Day; Easter Egg and Rock Hunt; Primp for Prom. They also volunteered at the Saybrook Stroll and Family Day.
- ◆ *Youth Asset Team* – Twenty-six students served on the Youth Asset Team at the High School, receiving training in asset development and assisting with a multitude of programs including Youth Summer Stock, Community Variety Show, Family Day, serving as mentors for Freshman Retreat; Community Leaders’ Youth Summit; Winter and Summer Strolls;

Chili Fest, Student Wellness Classes at the Middle School, and other community events – whew!

- ◆ *Middle School After School Clubs* – 4 sessions offering a choice of 8 – 10 Clubs each session were offered this year. 441 registrations over the course of the school year were a testament to the success of this opportunity for students in the critical after school hours.
- ◆ *Teen Trips* – Fifty-six teens (grades 7 to 12) participated in trips coordinated by Youth and Family Services in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department during the summer of 2013. Excursions were diverse, including Horseback Riding; Lake Compounce; Brownstone Exploration and Discovery; Providence Place Mall and IMAX Theatre; Tubing; and Lazer Tag. Youth and Family Services also coordinated trips to the Statue of Liberty and the Museum of Tolerance, with 93 participants registered for the 2 trips.
- ◆ *Grade-Appropriate Summer Fun Groups* met weekly at the Agency.
- ◆ *Lunch Bunch Groups* met weekly at Goodwin School
- ◆ *Tween Tribe, Boys Group and Girls Group* met weekly at the Middle School. *Adventure Therapy Group* met after school for middle-school aged students as did the *Magic Club Group* for high-school aged students.
- ◆ *Youth Art Booth* featured 17 young artists between the ages of 7 and 19 at the annual Arts and Crafts Festival July 2013. The artists were able to discuss their work with patrons and professional artists while staffing the booth.

Family Programming

Opportunities were developed to provide topical information and affordable, social events for families.

- ◆ *Family Matters Series* provided speakers and panel discussions on topical issues of interest to parents, teachers, youth and other community members.
- ◆ *Family Events* included Family Bingo Night, Family Day, and Community Variety Show.
- ◆ *Ladies Night* provided a special learning experience and fun night out for girls entering puberty and their female caregivers. Twelve girls and their caregivers participated in this year's programming facilitated by a guest RN/Educator.
- ◆ *Toddler Tunes* – Over the course of 2 extended sessions 38 children and 33 parents participated in the fun, interactive music and movement program with their peers.
- ◆ *Movies on the Beach*, a collaboration with the OS Department of Police Services, included games and other activities prior to the free family-friendly films.

Support Groups and Therapeutic Groups at the Agency

- ◆ *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* met monthly.
- ◆ *Dialectical Behavior Therapy Groups* met weekly.
- ◆ *Asperger's Parents/Grandparents Support Group* met monthly.

Community Collaboration

Youth and Family Services works closely with the schools, police, agencies, businesses and organizations to assess community needs, develop strategies and implement effective programs.

- ◆ Healthy Communities·Healthy Youth
- ◆ After School Clubs at Middle School

- ◆ Early Childhood Council
- ◆ Girl to Girl High School Empowerment Program
- ◆ Local Drug and Alcohol Prevention Council
- ◆ Community Conversations and Community Leaders' Youth Summits
- ◆ Freshman Retreat
- ◆ Movies on the Beach
- ◆ Community Treasures Variety Show
- ◆ Family Day
- ◆ Historical Society Junior Docent Program
- ◆ Student Wellness Programs at the Middle School and High School

Social Services

Social Services assists many Old Saybrook residents in a variety of ways, including emergency food, prescriptions and medical care, dental care, help with transportation, energy assistance, budget counseling, help applying for federal, state and local programs, employment workshops and networking, children's clothing, footwear, back to school needs, etc

To meet the continued increase in need we have been running Social Service Help Day once a month with CT Food Bank to help provide emergency food requests which have risen this past year. Almost 19% of our school aged children qualify for food assistance and over 770 residents are using the local food pantry and need additional help. We encouraged backyard gardening and provided healthy eating on food stamp budgets. We are also holding dental clinics, hosting the DSS mobile bus and End Hunger SNAP outreach and have helped with over 200 SNAP applications for food assistance at these events. In addition to the numbers that follow we are regularly seeing up to 100 families at these events monthly.

We also hosted weekly job workshops bringing in CT Works in partnership with Acton Library to help over 100 unemployed residents find or train for new employment. New this year, was the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and we helped process, through a grant from Access Health, over 700 applications for health care insurance. The majority of these were for state HUSKY insurance which 25% or 1 in every 4 of our children that you see heading off for school in your neighborhood is currently on.

This year we provided and coordinated the following to meet basic needs and emergency requests:

- ◆ Received 5024 requests for assistance / up from 4580 the previous year and 3640 the year before
- ◆ Provided financial aid for 357 Old Saybrook households / up from 253 the previous year and 215 the year before that
- ◆ Provided emergency food for 880 individuals / up from 660 the previous year and 471 the year before that
- ◆ Processed Energy Assistance applications for 210 households / up from 209 and 161 the two years prior
- ◆ Provided emergency oil deliveries to 107 households / up from 81 the previous year and 73 the year before that
- ◆ Coordinated Holiday Giving Program for 306 children / down from 337 the previous year but up from 272 the year before that

- ◆ Coordinated Warm the Children assistance for 153 children / down from 186 the previous year and 154 the year before that.

Municipal Agent for the Elderly

Our Municipal Agent for the Elderly is an officially appointed Town representative responsible for providing the elderly and their families with information and assistance on programs, services and benefits. Senior citizens continue to face numerous challenges, especially as changes occur in their physical health, the economy, etc. Requests from the elderly have increased this year from elderly residents who are struggling on only social security incomes. Food needs have risen this year with more requests for SNAP food assistance applications with 25.6% of our seniors qualifying for this assistance. Seniors also are in need of emergency fuel assistance with over 35% qualifying for state low income energy assistance programs. Disabled individuals also on social security incomes raise this percentage to account for over half of all our energy assistance applications.

Issues of particular concern this year included:

- ◆ Heat and Utility Expenses
- ◆ Food Needs
- ◆ Unavailability of enough affordable Senior Housing
- ◆ Health Costs and Issues

YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES COMMISSION 2013/2014

Chairman	Samuel B. Barnes, O.S.P.D. Representative
Vice Chairman	Jennifer Welsh, At-Large Member
Secretary	Ray Allen, Parks & Recreation Dept. Representative
	William Burton, Student Representative
	Juliana Jacobowski, Student Representative
	Catherine Kane, School System Rep.
	Dylan Lyons, Student Representative
	Dorothy Shearer, At-Large Member
	Janet Temple, Public Health Nursing Board Rep.
	Peggy Viggiano, At-Large Member

YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES STAFF 2013/2014

Director	Heather McNeil, LMFT, LADC
Administrative Assistant	Linda McCall
Clinical Consultant	Kathleen Laundry, Psy.D.
Counselor	Salvatore Bruzzese, MS, LPC., CAGS
Counselor/Early Childhood Specialist	Melinda Tyler, LMFT
Counselor/R.E.A.C.H. Coordinator	Chelsea Graham, MSW
Counselor/Wilderness Coordinator	Brenda Partyka, MSW
Group Facilitators	Joanne Deal, MA
	Linda Knightly, MS, LPC
Program Coordinators	Wendy Mill

Social Services Coordinator/
Municipal Agent for Elderly

Julie Moskowitz

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