

YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT 2012-13

Like our community, Youth and Family Services has grown and changed over time. 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. 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 currently has 6 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.

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 ie. The Hidden Treasures Community Variety Show and Family Day. We would like to thank all who have contributed to our efforts over the past year.

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

In March, YFS and Healthy Community Healthy Youth hosted a 'Community Leaders Youth Summit' with a goal of mobilizing sectors of the community towards common goals to meet the needs of our youth and move towards greater community partnerships. From this summit came four ongoing work groups. They identified and have facilitated such goals as a community calendar (that is accessible through the Chamber of Commerce website), enhanced internship and work opportunities, community networking (look for the "Block Party 2014!" to come in May), and a volunteer database that can be utilized by different youth organizations.

Youth and Family Services has been a part of the Old Saybrook Community fabric for 37 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 also focus on Positive Youth Development Programming, and the burgeoning Youth Asset Team at both OSMS and OSHS, and the REACH team at OSHS are proof that our youth have a desire to be the change they want to see in the world!

Detective Samuel B. Barnes
YFS Commission Chair

Heather McNeil LMFT, LADC
Director OSYFS

PROGRAM/SERVICE LISTING

Counseling Services

- ◆ Served 105 cases at the Agency.
- ◆ Served numerous students at the schools: at Goodwin in socialization groups; at the Middle School and High School in groups and individually.
- ◆ Provided 1,576 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 over eighty youth: thirty-four 7th – 9th grade students and thirteen 5th & 6th grade students performed productions of “*Beauty and the Beast*, assisted by an additional 34 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 forty-four 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 2012 eight students transitioning from 7th to 8th grade successfully completed our intensive challenge program and participated in follow-up activities throughout the year. An additional eleven 7th grade students began pre-Wilderness team-building and leadership training during May and June 2013 in preparation for meeting their own Wilderness Challenge.
- ◆ *High School REACH Team* (Responsible Educated Adolescents Can Help): a youth-driven initiative – twenty-three 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); Movie Night; Walk Like MADD fundraising events; Middle School Wellness Day; Easter Egg and Rock Hunt; Primp for Prom; and REACH Rejoice. They also volunteered at the Saybrook Stroll and ran a bake sale to help fund their activities.
- ◆ *Youth Asset Team* – Thirty-two 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, Family Bowling and other community events – whew!
- ◆ *Middle School After School Clubs* – 8 – 11 Clubs were included in each of four sessions offered this year. A total of 431 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* –Teens entering 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 2012. Excursions were diverse, including to Horseback Riding; Lake Compounce; Ocean Beach Park; Brownstone Exploration and Discovery; Providence Place Mall and IMAX Theatre.
- ◆ *Grade-Appropriate Summer Fun Groups* met weekly at the Agency.
- ◆ *Lunch Bunch Groups* met weekly at Goodwin School
- ◆ *Navigators, Tween Tribe, and Boys Group and Girls Group* met weekly at the Middle School.

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 youth issues of interest to parents, teachers and other community members.
- ◆ *Family Events* included Free Family Bowling, Free Winter Movie and Dinner Night, Lego Build, Family Day.
- ◆ *Ladies Nights* provided a special learning experience and fun night out for girls entering puberty and their female caregivers. Thirteen girls and their caregivers participated in this year's programming facilitated by a guest RN/Educator.
- ◆ *Toddler Tunes* – Over the course of 5 sessions 81 children and 66 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 twice/month.
- ◆ *Dialectical Behavior Therapy Groups* met weekly.

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 and High School
- ◆ Early Childhood Council
- ◆ Local Drug and Alcohol Prevention Council
- ◆ Community Conversations
- ◆ 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

Our Social Services Coordinator continues to assist many Old Saybrook residents in a variety of ways, including emergency food, prescriptions and medical care, help with transportation, energy assistance, budget counseling, help applying for state and/or federal programs, employment workshops and networking, children's clothing and footwear, etc. Illustrated by the numbers shown below of this year and the previous year, residents can see that the demand for social services has increased considerably.

To meet the continued increase in need we have been running Social Service Help Day once a month with CT Food Bank to supplement food needs on the fourth Thursday of the month when food stamps have typically run out as well as coordinating a Feed the Children distribution

to over 200 families. We are also holding dental clinics, hosting the DSS mobile bus and End Hunger SNAP outreach. In addition to the numbers that follow we are regularly seeing up to 100 families at these events. We also hosted a job fair this year to supplement our nearly weekly job workshops bringing in CT Works to help over 100 residents find or train for employment.

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

- ◆ Received 4580 requests for assistance/ up from 3640 from the previous year
- ◆ Provided financial aid for 253 Old Saybrook household emergencies, up from 215 the previous year.
- ◆ Provided emergency food for 660 individuals up from 471 the prior year.
- ◆ Processed Energy Assistance applications for 209 households vs. 161 households last year
- ◆ Provided emergency fuel deliveries to 81 households vs. 73 last year
- ◆ Coordinated Holiday Giving Program for 337 children vs. 272 children last year
- ◆ Coordinated Warm the Children assistance for 186 children vs. 154 last year

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. 867 requests for assistance came in from elderly residents who are struggling, most on only social security incomes.

Issues of particular concern this year included:

- ◆ Heat and Utility Expenses
- ◆ Unavailability of Senior Housing
- ◆ Medical-Related Issues
- ◆ Food and basic home care needs

YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES COMMISSION 2012/2013

Chairman	Samuel B. Barnes, O.S.P.D. Representative
Vice Chairman	Jennifer Welsh, At-Large Member
Secretary	Ray Allen, Parks & Recreation Dept. Representative
	Juliana Jacobowski, Student Representative
	J.T. Giegerich, Student Representative
	Catherine Kane, School System Rep.
	Diane Aldi DePaola, Public Health Nursing Board Rep.
	Dorothy Shearer, At-Large Member
	Peggy Viggiano, At-Large Member

YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES STAFF 2012/2013

Director	Heather McNeil, LMFT, LADC
Administrative Assistant	Linda McCall
Clinical Consultant	Kathleen Laundry, Psy.D.
Counselors:	Salvatore Bruzzese, M.S., L.P.C., C.A.G.S.
Counselor/Early Childhood	

Specialist
Counselor/R.E.A.C.H.
Coordinator
Counselor/Wilderness
Coordinator
Group Facilitator
Program Coordinators

Melinda Tyler, M.F.T.

Chelsea Graham, M.S.W.

Brenda Partyka, M.S.W.

Patricia Rivers, L.P.C.

Wendy Mill

Julie Moskowitz

Brittany O'Neil Eckert

Social Services Coordinator/
Municipal Agent for Elderly

Susan Consoli, M.A., L.P.C.