

**REPORT OF THE YOUTH COMMISSION  
Westborough Youth and Family Services**

The Youth Commission is a five member volunteer board, appointed by the Board of Selectmen to advocate for the needs of the youths and families of Westborough. The Youth Commission created Westborough Youth and Family Services (WYFS), in 1984. Since that time, WYFS has provided mental health and substance abuse counseling, prevention and education programs, information about mental health and substance abuse issues, and referrals to appropriate service providers for the residents of Westborough. WYFS has also taken an active role in the coordination of mental health and social services for the town. The department is staffed by a full-time Director, two part-time Counselors, a part-time Administrative Assistant, and a summer Youth Activities Coordinator. The Youth Commission meets monthly with the WYFS Director to guide the direction of the department.

During 2008, WYFS has provided a number of programs:

Our Clinical Services provide individual and family counseling for children, adolescents and adults who are residents of Westborough and who are finding it difficult to access services elsewhere. During the last year, we provided treatment for the following issues: abuse and trauma, anger management, anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder, behavior problems, divorce, domestic violence, family problems, grief and loss, parenting, relationship problems, school adjustment, self injurious behaviors, and substance abuse. We have received referrals from the schools (32), Westborough Police Department (6), Board of Health (1), courts (8), Department of Social Services (1), other physicians or therapists (13), a local hospital (1) and clergy (2). The balance was from friends and family members who were

familiar with the department, or were previous clients. We provided over 1400 hours of treatment to 81 families for a total of 139 people served. We were aided in our work this year by having a clinical Intern from Lesley University. This year we have continued to provide a group at the Gibbons Middle School for eighth grade girls.

We offered National Depression Screening Day again, on October 16, in collaboration with Assabet Valley Pastoral Counseling Center. We offered depression screening and informational materials and screenings for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Bipolar Disorder and Anxiety Disorder to 7 people this year. These screenings are available throughout the year.

The Youth Diversion Program is a voluntary program for youths who exhibit at-risk behavior to avoid going to court. It also provides parents an opportunity to deal with at-risk behaviors in their teens without having to involve the police. This year we received 10 referrals from the Police Department, Westborough District Court, Worcester Juvenile Court and local schools. The program consists of a four session evaluation, designed to identify underlying issues for the youth or the family that may be contributing to the delinquent or troublesome behavior. We presented the program at a conference of local human service officials interested in addressing teen substance abuse in April.

Providing Information and Referrals is also an important function of the department. We receive about 15 to 20 calls a month from people looking for information and assistance. We also provide a wide variety of pamphlets that are available for free.

Hot Summer Nights is a summer activity program for teens in middle school and early high school. We offered

**13 events between mid-June and mid-August, including: an Ice Cream Social, 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament, Wii Tournament, Bingo and game night, Golf Night, Extreme Bowling, Scrapbook Night, two Movie nights, and trips to Hampton Beach, Boston Aquarium, Six Flags, and the Providence Place Mall. We had a total of 322 attendees to all our events.**

**We also offered Red Cross Certified Baby Sitter Training 5 times this year, in February, April, August and October, to 48 boys and girls. We continue to provide a Job Board for teens to post their availability for jobs.**

**During 2008, the Youth Commission decided to survey youth in town to determine their mental health and social needs. They created an online Teen Activities Survey and with the help of the school department, sought input from all the middle school and high school students in town. We received 208 responses and are in the process of analyzing the data to identify unmet needs.**

**We had a summer intern from Boston College, who developed a curriculum called Achieving Financial Stability through Home Ownership about the process of purchasing a home. There were three installments broadcast on the local cable channel during September, October and November.**

**We organized a Backpack Donation Program with the local elementary schools and provided backpacks and school supplies for 17 students with donations from the Civic Club and the Rotary Club.**

**We have also worked with others agencies and departments to enhance the services provided to Westborough residents:**

**WYFS continues to provide the organizational leadership and support for the Westborough Human Service Alliance. This is an organization of human service providers in and**

around Westborough, who come together about every other month to identify gaps and overlaps and to coordinate the provision of the services we provide to Westborough residents. We also have guest speakers to inform us of other services available.

Our Young Family Program focuses on providing support and educational opportunities for families with pre-school age children. We collaborate with the Assabet Valley Area Family Network Program and the Together We Can Community Partnership for Children (CPC) to benefit from over \$600,000 in grants from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. These programs provide such benefits as child care tuition subsidies for working parents of pre-school aged children, improvements in the pre-school and child care facilities in Westborough, parenting education for parents of pre-school age children, a weekly play group for special needs children, a family fun event in March with a performer and pizza dinner attended by nearly 80 people, enrichment programs, and an every other month newsletter filled with lots of fun ideas for spending time with young children.

Along with the Senior Center, Police Department and Fire Department, we organized a program to help residents with Winter Heating problems. One of the Police Chief's cable shows was devoted to ways to conserve energy. We reached out to the community for donations to help people pay for winter heat, and to sign up for fuel assistance. We offered a community supper in October, November and December to help convey information to people. Our Administrative Assistant also trained to be able to fill out fuel assistance applications should there be a need to assist the Senior Center for this program.

Part of our role in providing referrals is to act as a vehicle for local churches, companies, and private individuals to

assist needy families. This year, we continued our relationship with the Rotary Club of Westborough to operate the Free Holiday Store, which has been so successful the past few years. This year we provided Thanksgiving meals for 13 families, and over 1800 Holiday gifts and \$1080 in 45 gift cards for another 112 families (236 children), all through the Rotary Gifts for Kids and Teens program supporting the Free Holiday Store. We are so grateful for the generosity of the community in providing gifts and donations to allow us to fulfill this strong need in our community.

We continue to work with the Police Department and Westborough District Court to provide on-going support for cases of domestic violence.

We are involved in the District Attorney's Round Table along with school and public safety personnel, to coordinate services with the middle school and high school. We offer a group in the Middle School weekly from October through May for eighth grade girls, to help with school adjustment and preparation for the transition to high school. In addition, we are involved in a School Health Advisory Council to provide input to the school system about health related concerns. We participated in the Community Health Fair sponsored by the School Department, and Healthy Kids Day at the YMCA Burroughs Branch.

The Police and Youth and Family Services Departments of the five towns that are connected to Westborough District Court (Grafton, Northborough, Southborough, Shrewsbury and Westborough) have created a coalition called Partnership for Healthy Pathways. We received a Safe and Drug Free Communities grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to reduce underage drinking through implementing the

**Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol nationally recognized model. We have hired a coordinator with the grant funds, who will be working with community members in each of the five towns to design strategies to reduce underage drinking in each of the five towns. It is our plan through this program to replicate our Youth Diversion Program in the other four towns.**

**Westborough Youth and Family Services is dedicated to advocating for the needs of youths and families in Westborough. Input from the community is always welcomed, whether regarding present programs, or new programming ideas. Please feel free to call us at 508-366-3090, on line at [yfs@town.westborough.ma.us](mailto:yfs@town.westborough.ma.us) or to stop by at the Forbes Municipal Building, second floor, Room 21, or speak to any of the Youth Commission members. The Youth Commission generally meets the second or third Monday of each month, at 7:30 p.m., in the Forbes Municipal Building, Room 21, and we welcome any community member to our meetings.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**John Badenhausen, MA, LMHC**

**Youth Commission Members:**

**Cheryl Amey**

**Kristin French**

**Michelle Grasso, Chair**

**Andrew Rosenshine**