

## **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 youth 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. This fall, there are three high school seniors and one junior who are Youth Members for the 2011-2012 school year.**

**During 2011, WYFS 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, anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder, behavior problems, divorce, domestic violence, financial stress and loss of housing, grief and loss, hoarding, parenting, relationship problems, school adjustment, and substance abuse. We have received referrals from the schools (30), Westborough Police Department (3), Board of Health (1), courts (4), housing (2), National Depression Screening Day (2) and other physicians or therapists (6). The balance was from friends and family members who were familiar with the department, or were previous clients. We provided about 1193 hours of treatment to 71 families for a total of 137 people served.**

**We offered National Depression Screening Day again, on October 6, in collaboration with Assabet Valley Pastoral Counseling Center. We offered screening and informational materials for Depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Bipolar Disorder and Anxiety Disorder to 12 people this year. We noticed this year that many screened were dealing with the financial strain of the down economy. We make these screenings available throughout the year as well.**

**The Youth Diversion Program is a voluntary program for youth who exhibit at-risk behavior at school or in the community. Participants can avoid going to court or have reduced consequences. We receive referrals from the Police Department, Westborough District Court, Worcester Juvenile Court and local schools. The program also provides parents an opportunity to deal with at-risk behaviors in their teens without having to involve the police. This year 6 families participated in the program, which is 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.**

**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. In addition, we have started an every other month on-line newsletter to inform the community about our programs as well as provide information about mental health and parenting. To sign up to receive a notice that the latest newsletter is ready to be viewed you can contact our office. We also had a booth at the Rotary Club's Spring Festival to provide information and inform the community about our services.

Hot Summer Nights is a summer activity program for teens in middle school and early high school. We offered 17 events between mid-June and mid-August, including: an Ice Cream Social, 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament, two Movie Nights, an evening of origami, jewelry making, an evening at Claytime, 2 evenings of Extreme Bowling, Bingo and game night, beading, volunteering at Community Harvest, a Worcester Tornados game, and a Nature Safari on the Charm Bracelet. This is the second year we had to raise funds to run the program. We ran our Buy a Bus program to raise funds as well as sought grants from local organizations. We were able to raise the money we needed and brought back the popular bus trips. We offered trips to Hampton Beach, a Whale Watch in Gloucester, Six Flags, and Providence Place Mall. Overall attendance at all events was 367 including over 200 to the ice cream social and 167 to our other events. Eighty-five individuals signed up for events. We also worked with the Public Library to advertise their three summer programs for teens. Again this year at the end of the summer, we sent a survey to all the families who participated in events requiring registration. We sent out 85 surveys to the participants and had 23 responses indicating the participants had "fun being with friends and making new friends". "Affordable", "friendly and responsible staff", and "freedom" were the attributes that attendees used to describe HSN activities.

We also offered Red Cross Certified Baby Sitter Training 4 times this year, in April, July, August and October, to 48 girls and boys. We continue to provide a Job Board for teens outside our office for babysitters to post their availability for jobs.

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 administrative 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 invite guest speakers to inform us of other services available. This year we heard from the Safe Plan Court Advisor about programs available for victims of domestic violence and from the Director of the newly opened Westborough Family Center.

Our Young Family Program focuses on providing support and educational opportunities for families with pre-school age children. We work with the Together We Can Family Network to promote child literacy, offer parenting training and information on pre-kindergarten and kindergarten transitions, increase the quality of child care environments, and facilitate collaboration between early education and care providers and the community. The Family Network also offers a free indoor play space in Marlboro for families with pre-school age children.

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 years. This year we provided Thanksgiving meals for 21 families, and over 600 Holiday gifts and gift cards for another 52 families (112 children), all through the Rotary Gifts for Kids and Teens program supporting the Free Holiday Store. Six other families were “adopted” for additional support by local companies and families. Due to a generous donation from the Civic Club we gave away 9 real trees. Due to the economy and anticipated demand, we worked with the Interfaith Giving Tree and the Food Pantry to ensure we didn’t duplicate our aid to families. 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. Girl Scouts from Troops 30195 and 30635 helped us in setting up and decorating the store this year.

The Girl Scouts of Central Massachusetts offered free camperships to people referred by WYFS. We referred three girls for camp this summer.

We continue to work with the Police Department and Westborough District Court to provide on-going support for cases of domestic violence. We appeared on the Police Chief’s cable TV show Police Report in May to discuss the Adolescent Health Survey conducted every other year at the High School and Middle School. This survey asks students about their experience of a variety of health and at-risk behaviors.

The 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. This year we offered training for local youth coaches on Developing Respectful Teams. We videotaped this talk and will make it available to any local coaches or teams interested.

We are involved with several projects with the Westborough Public Schools. We are involved in the District Attorney’s Round Table along with school and public safety personnel, to coordinate services with the high school and middle school. In addition, we are involved in the High School’s School Community Council to facilitate communication between the school and the community.

We partnered with the town and school Libraries and Westborough TV to sponsor a town wide read. Westborough Reads Together has chosen Please Ignore Vera Dietz by A. S. King. We had our kick off in November 2011 and gave away 200 copies of the book. Throughout the spring of 2012 we will have a variety of discussions and activities to generate interest in the book and the topics it raises, which include issues faced by many teens. These include underage drinking, depression, divorce, suicide, and bullying.

We are members in two statewide organizations: Local Officials Human Service Council (a division of the Massachusetts Municipal Association), and the Youth and Family Services Directors. These help us to stay informed of state wide trends and services, as well as the ways other communities are working to address them. We are also representing Westborough’s needs in the development and monitoring of the new Children’s Behavioral Health Initiative, a comprehensive change in the way mental health services are being delivered to youth in Massachusetts. We host two meetings a year in Westborough, to

allow members in the western part of the area to be able to attend a meeting more conveniently.

Westborough Youth and Family Services is dedicated to advocating for the needs of youth and families in Westborough. Input from the community is always welcomed, whether regarding present programs, or new programming ideas. Please feel free to contact 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 Badenhause, MA, LMHC  
Director

Youth Commission :

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Youth Members:

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