

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from February 9, 2022, Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:30 pm, via Zoom per Governor's Order of Spring 2021 allowing virtual public meetings

Board in Attendance: Susan Patkin, Karen Mullen, David Bookston, Julie Stevens, Nicole McMahon, Police Liaison; Jill Mullaney, Student Representative.

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Minutes January 12, 2022. Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the minutes; Ms. Mullen seconded. The January 12 minutes unanimously approved.

Community Needs/Crisis Response

Ms. Shine mentioned mental health needs continue to escalate due to ongoing COVID.

- Significant increase in mental health symptoms including anxiety and depression. The American Academy of Pediatrics joined with the Children's Hospital Association and recently [declared](#) a national state of emergency in children's mental health.
- According to the [CDC](#), suicide attempts have risen - 51% for 12-17 year old girls from early 2019-early 2021
- Behavioral problems have increased significantly across the country - we have seen this in Needham

Ms. Shine noted she is working with Walden Behavioral Health to provide a training to staff around eating disorders. They have a 6 week waiting list which is short compared to other groups Staff training is on eating disorder issues. Ms. Shine is also working with staff on additional trainings to ensure that all staff are equipped to manage the current mental health crisis. These training include various modalities including trauma informed care.

The Board discussed various issues in the school around mental health and school discussions around diversity and equity. There was also a discussion around absenteeism in the schools - the schools are being more lenient due to the pandemic but it has been hard to track when students are out due to pandemic related issues and when they are missing for other reasons. Board discussed issues around absent so much and how this could also impact mental health.

Update Programs, Services and Awards

- There were 47 clients seen for counseling this month
- We currently have 26 youth on our waitlist
- We have provided 13 Parent/Community consultations
- We have had 0 discharges this past month.
- We have had 17 emergency consults this month
- We are running 2 coping skills groups for elementary aged youth and planning a High School Group

The temporary two-year clinical services position is filled; Kelsey Nichols will be filling this position - she is moving from Maine so has done some work remotely and will be fully in person at the end of this month.

The **Lighthouse** Initiative is gathering information on community needs. This will involve expressive therapy in the middle school where behavioral issues have been more pronounced due to two years of COVID. Both expressive art, play, sports and music will be utilized along with parent groups. The parent groups will be three sessions and if the parents want to continue in each subgroup they will do so on their own. Depression and LGBTQ issues are two of the six. The initiative started with two parents meeting. Y&FS is being strategic about when to hold these groups to pair with some other programming for youth so parents do not have to find child care.

A parent workshop on **anxiety** issues and overall mental health is being planned for late April. Y&FS is working with some local professionals to help with this presentation.

Ryan's Story which discusses bullying and suicide prevention - is planned for March. This event will include 3 separate presentations, one virtual event on March 1st for just parents, one student presentation at the Rosemary Recreation Center on March 16th at 2:30PM, and one Parent/Child presentation on March 16th at 6:30PM. This presentation is a partnership between Park & Rec, the Needham Public Library and Youth & Family Services. Thank you to the Needham Exchange Club for making this event possible.

Work continues with BID Needham on social media impact - a parent/professionals workshop is being planned with Dr. Patricia Conrad who is well known in the field. She has done a lot of work around the impact of social media and how adults can help to decrease the negative impacts. She also noted that gaming studies do not show the negative impact that social media use does. The board discussed the study. One Board member noted that the use of video games keeps young people from other activities but may not have the deleterious mental health perception effects. This event will take place on May 10th.

The Ford Goode person award ceremony was virtual January 31, 2022, at 5:30 pm and over fifty attendees were on Zoom - the zoom link had some issues, but a tapped ceremony was given to those who could not get on. Needham Cable filmed it and Ms. Shine will distribute link to the Board. Lisa Tedeschi Vergara the awardee was pleased. Lisa Tedeschi

Vergara, an inspirational community member who has dedicated her life to promote literacy through inspiring art, spreading kindness, and involving the community. Lisa grew up in Needham, MA and has a BFA in Graphic Design from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Lisa started her community service work 10 years ago when she was inspired to create fun furniture out of children's books to promote literacy. These chairs were donated to various schools, libraries, doctors' offices and other community areas to help make the stories come to life. This led Lisa to collect books to donate to various schools and organizations that don't have libraries, to creating free little libraries for people to always have access to books, to developing her non-profit organization in 2019, Storytime Crafts. She also has a strong focus on ensuring there are books for every child, focusing on inclusion and diversity. This organization is now expanding beyond what it was initially designed to do, helping the community in so many ways and now, during the pandemic, also provides free books to children and families in need, in addition to masks, hygiene products, bikes, games and baby formula. To date the organization has collected 47 Storytime crafted chairs/tables, 67, 089 books, 6, 012 games, 623 bikes, has donated to 107 community partners and created 12 little free libraries. Lisa is truly deserving of this award as she has a dedicated work ethic and generous personality which are consistently reflected in her commitment to inclusiveness, empathy, generosity, and a willingness to help others in need in Needham and the greater Boston Community.

Y&FS is working with the Own your Peace (Piece) group on supporting their **One Day event**. This was previously Make a Statement Day but has changed as various activities have been planned on this day. Prior to the pandemic we created a mural of puzzle pieces that student decorated and put together making their statement. This year's group is in the beginning planning stages.

The work on the **mural project** continues. Y&FS has worked with a number of students, local artists and interested adults to start designing what the final product will be. The hope is that all planning will be completed by April so that the painting can start. The project is going to be in the tunnel connecting Defazio Park and Pollard Middle School, which has also been the target of graffiti. We have put in multiple applications with the MBTA and are waiting for approval to move forward. The first mural project done on the fence near Red Wing Bay was a huge success. Youth & Family Services got the community involved in creating and painting a mural that would focus on unity. We had over 100 people participate in this project ranging in ages from 3 to 76.

Needham Unplugged: The 2022 edition is not far off and it is its 21st year of operation. Staff are being very creative around new and exciting activities for the calendar in addition to some collaborative efforts with local businesses. The calendar will be released later this month.

The Peer Tutoring Program continues to run smoothly with 43 pairs. Hannah Stein has taken over this program from Carolyn Tracey and will be focused on this program moving forward.

The VIP Program has been running successfully with 21 pairs meeting every Tuesday night. Ellen Whirley and Christine Weitzel have been running this program this year and have incorporated some clinical aspects to the program and increased the activity planning.

The Paint Fest Project sponsored by BID Needham will start February vacation. The Paint Fest Project is through the Foundation for Hospital Art. The Foundation for Hospital Art was established in 1984 and is dedicated to involving patients and volunteers worldwide to create colorful, soothing artwork donated to hospitals to help soften the often stressful hospital experience. The event would include youth and families who may have some special needs to come together and create a piece of art that will then be donated to a local hospital. To learn more about their history here is the link to the website: [Foundation for Hospital Art - Painting a bricliter world.](#)

Y&FS is working closely with Park and Rec on a Spring Fair Wellness Day. This will be aimed at Middle School students and will take place on a half-day in May. The goal will be to keep the free part of this half day more structured in addition to having some wellness activities and resources.

Ms. Shine is working with Karen Shannon in Public Health on rolling out a **Teen Mental Health First Aid** program in the high school. It is more difficult to become approved to teach the teen version of the class due to some stricter guidelines but Y&FS is working with the Director of Health and Wellness to ensure that the guidelines can be met. Y&FS is working to train 4 staff members in this and train the 10th and 11th grade. Each group requires 3 90 minute sessions. NPS is on board with this initiative as mental health is so important at this time.

Y&FS regularly attends the meetings of **SPAN** --- Substance Prevention Alliance of Needham (formerly known as the Needham Coalition for Youth Substance Abuse Prevention). Youth & Family Services is represented on all 3 action teams and a staff member chairs one of these action teams. We are also represented on the steering committee. There are several initiatives coming out of this group including creating online substance use supports, peer support, community activities and educational webinars. Y&FS staff is being interviewed for 1-minute mental health minutes that are being posted online. The purpose of these is to get important mental health information out into the community.

Y&FS continues to be involved in the **Community Crisis Intervention Team (CCIT)** and attends these meetings regularly. This meeting is attended by the police department, fire, town social workers from various divisions, the health department, a SPAN representative, and Riverside Crisis Team. We discuss community members in crisis who may need additional supports. Quarterly there is a larger meeting that includes other community partners including the hospitals, Walker, local mental health and substance use organizations. Quarterly this team meets with larger community providers (including local mental health agencies, BID, NWH, Walker) to discuss the overall community needs and trends.

The Youth Resource Network has been very busy this year with multiple families presented every month. YRN is a roundtable including representatives from multiple youth-serving organizations that meets during the academic year to address specific needs of school-age youth and families that reside and/or attend public school in Needham.

The **Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC)** is meeting regularly. Youth & Family Services has a representative at these meetings.

New/Old Business

No Board member replacement yet for Kevin Keane. One applicant so far. Kevin as a member of Select Board is requesting an earlier replacement.

Tent may be up on the Common to allow for March meeting to be outside. Ms. Shine will update. She will also investigate Potluck May or June on the roof of the Center at the Heights (CATH). Ms. Shine is reserving a conference room as backups.

Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Patkin seconded the motion. Unanimous vote to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm

Notes by: Faith Crisley, Recording Secretary
Edited by: Sara Shine, Director

