

# **Needham Youth & Family Services**

## **Notes from March 9, 2022, Board Meeting**

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

**Board in Attendance:** Susan Patkin, Karen Mullen, David Bookston, Julie Stevens

**Director:** Ms. Sara Shine

**Minutes February 9, 2022.** Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the minutes; Ms. Patkin seconded. The February 9 minutes unanimously approved.

### **Community Needs/Crisis Response**

Ms. Shine mentioned mental health needs continue to escalate due to ongoing COVID. Ms. Shine noted she has used American Rescue Plan money to hire full time staff. The current wait list is thirty-one. She noted that the acuity remains an issue and that she is meeting regularly with Tom Denton, the Director of Guidance and Counseling, to discuss the current mental health crisis and how Youth & Family and the school can work collaboratively. She tries to prioritize higher acuity students, students with limited means to access services elsewhere or whose family has limited resources to access. Ms. Shines goal remains a single digit wait list. She noted that the team's basic crisis intervention is complete. The staff is also forming groups to manage anxiety, depression, and social connection issues. This also helps meet the community needs. The groups will either be by age and specific need and will collaborate with the guidance staff and assistant principals. The groups advertised through Youth's listserv, Facebook, and Instagram as well as PTC list serves.

Ms. Shine is also partnering with Lighthouse Initiative to provide parenting groups on specific issues such as eating disorders and anxiety and middle school groups focused on expressive therapy. The hope is that these groups will help connect families to resources while there are such big waitlists for individual therapy.

Ms. Shine also discussed changed in leadership at the housing authority and how Youth & Family Services is working on supporting clients who are already struggling with mental health challenges who now have more anxiety due to these changes.

The Board discussed some mental health initiatives at the High School in addition to the Own Your Peace (Piece) One Day. Also discussed was the mask mandated being lifted and how this has impacted the student/teacher population.

### **Update Programs, Services and Awards**

#### **Community Presentations:**

**Ryan's Story** is a community presentation that is focused on bullying, social media use and suicide prevention. Ryan Halligan was a 13 year old boy who died by suicide. His father,

John Halligan, presents on his story and how to help people be kind and addresses various issues around bullying. This event will include 3 separate presentations, one virtual event on March 1<sup>st</sup> for just parents, one student presentation at the Rosemary Recreation Center on March 16<sup>th</sup> at 2:30PM, and one Parent/Child presentation on March 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30PM. The parent presentation was a huge success with 76 participants. These presentations are 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.

Y&FS is working on a parent presentation on 4/27 with Christopher Willard who is going to discuss mental health, anxiety and how to help youth. Y&FS is in the beginning stages of planning this event and is collaborating with the Becca Schmill Foundation on this event.

Y&FS is collaborating with BID Needham on hosting an event for professionals and community members with Dr. Patricia Conrod. Dr. Conrod is a Clinical Psychologist and Professor of Psychiatry at the Universite de Montreal as well as an associate member of the department of Pediatrics and Neuroscience. She is going to be presenting on May 10<sup>th</sup> around the impact of social media and ways that the negative impact can be contained.

NY&FS helped to support **Take Back the Night** on February 17<sup>th</sup>. TBTN is a student led event that works to raise awareness for domestic violence and sexual assault. This event was a huge success with student and survivor speakers.

Ms. Shine noted that the **Mural** project had a successful brainstorming event on March 1. Ms. Shine is working with students, local artists and interested adults to finalize the mural, which we will be working on this month. 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.

**Paintfest** through the Foundation for Hospital Art is going well. 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 includes 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. This has been a success so far as we have 5 of the tiles painted. **Thank you BID Needham** for sponsoring this event!!! The painting was done in time blocs due to COVID. Next year hopefully everyone can paint together which would provide more of a community effort and would be especially rewarding for kids with special needs.

**Needham Unplugged.** Calendar looks great and all the staff collaborated on its design. This will be the program's 21<sup>st</sup> year of operation. The success of "Unplugged" is directly related to the active support of the Needham Public Schools (without whom we would not have a no-homework night), the Select Board (without whom we would not have a no-meeting night),

and of course Needham families who following the unplugged calendar. This year other community members got involved - Needham House of Pizza, Nichols' Pizza, Hearth, the Needham Public Library, the YMCA and Needham Park and Rec all made this year possible.

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 also collaborating with Tova Speter a local expressive art therapist on new parental self-care programs and a set of three split by age group. Ms. Speter has a grant for the parent one and Ms. Shine is searching for funding for the other three.

**Peer Tutoring and VIP** are both running smoothly.

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. Eating Disorders, depression, anxiety and LGBTQ+ are some of the topics that will be discussed.

Ms. Shine explained that the peer tutor program and the peer mentor program are all going very well. There are 43 pairs meeting regularly for tutoring and 21 pairs meet Tuesday nights for peer mentoring. Y&FS staff are working hard to create new therapeutic activities for the youth to do during the peer mentoring program and this is all getting a lot of compliments from family members.

Ms. Shine explained that the Youth Mental Health First Aid program continues to run very smoothly. Youth Mental Health First Aid is a public education program that teaches participants how to recognize and respond to the signs and symptoms that suggest a potential mental health challenge, how to listen nonjudgmentally and give reassurance to a youth who may be experiencing a mental health challenge, and how to refer a person to appropriate professional support and services. There are 2 trainings coming up this Spring, one for High Rock Church who helps to fund the program, and one with BID Needham. Ms. Shine is also working with Karen Shannon in Public Health on getting a virtual teen Mental Health First Aid program up and running in Needham. The contract is being reviewed currently but with approval Y&FS is hoping to roll this out in the fall. Unlike the other versions there is a longer and more complex approval process. The plan would be to train larger groups of students (starting with the entire 11<sup>th</sup> grade) which is a large time commitment as each training is 4.5 hours. Ms. Shine is working with the new Director of Health and Wellness to get this scheduled in.

Volunteer list is on hold until the new administrative assistant is on board. The employer program list is up but will not be extensively updated until the new administrative assistant, Alyssa Cellucci arrives on March 21.

Ms. Shine helped to present at a SPAN community presentation - "Changing the Culture around Mental Illness. All Y&FS staff have also had taped interviews for the SPAN social

media campaign to give residents information about mental health. In addition, Y&FS staff is involved with all SPAN meetings including the 3 actions teams.

Ms. Shine explained that she has been more involved with conversations around how to support the rising issues of homelessness in the area. There have been a number of meetings to discuss how the town can help support these residents in crisis.

Ms. Shine discussed the various meetings that help to discuss other individuals and families in crisis and Y&FS continues to chair the Youth Resource Network which is very well attended by community members, and CCIT.

Y&FS continues to sit on a number of other community committees including the Cometic Violence Action Committee, Youth Commission meetings, Community Health Resource Group, Chapter 84 and the Alliance for Safety and Wellness of the Greater Needham Community.

Ms. Shine also explained that she has been involved in a very intensive Children's Hospital working group of local agencies to make decision about needs in the area and ways that the hospital can help support these areas.

### **New/Old Business**

No Board member replacement yet for Kevin Keane. Ms. Shine is interviewing a candidate for Arina Collins student replacement, and they may be able to begin early during this school year.

Ms. Shine is looking at the GATH for the May Board potluck.

All Y&FS staff are using trauma informed care and the SMART training continues for all staff. Ms. Stein has started to be trained in EMDR which is a very extensive trainings to work with youth trauma.

**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 of Youth & Family Services

