

Needham Youth & Family Services

Notes from November 9, 2022, Board Meeting

Meeting Commenced at 5:35 pm, in person in the Highland Room, Needham Town Hall.

Board in Attendance: Susan Patkin, David Bookston, Julie Stevens, Will Holland, Jill Mullaney, Massie! Gallardo

Director: Ms. Sara Shine

Minutes October 12, 2022. Mr. Bookston made a motion to approve the October 12, 2022, minutes. Ms. Gallardo seconded. The October 12 minutes unanimously approved by voice vote.

Update on Community Needs/Crisis Response

Ms. Shine noted that the latest theme is there is mental health stigma -seeking help-both at the middle and high school has become an issue. Ms. Shine is working with various school personnel to brainstorm how to break down the stigma.

Ms. Shine noted she would like to role out the teen mental health training but there are only five trainers, and the class requires either 6 45-minute sessions or 3 90-minute sessions. Reaching one grade requires 25 classes x 6 sessions, a total of 150 classes. The hope is that this first year will be a pilot year and some of the SALSA students and VIP/Peer Tutor "bigs" will have the opportunity to be trained.

A discussion ensued on ideas for reaching students. One idea that was discussed was having the students involved in making a video commercial about mental health, the importance of seeking help when needed and highlighting Y&FS. There was also discussion around having videos played on the HS news that plays in all homeroom classrooms so all students who see the video.

The Board also noted that all seniors need to do community service to meet graduation requirements so the video production could count.

The Board agreed that if the videos are put together by students, they will have a much greater impact.

A discussion ensued on how to reach middle school students. The Board suggested a comics/graphic novel design-to tie in with services and use the advising department to advertise for students. Middle school has community service hours too-the Board mentioned six and again this would be a peer-to-peer outreach effort.

Update on Programs, Services and Awards

- There are 59 active clients
- We currently have 34 youth on our waitlist
- We have provided 16 Parent/Community consultations
- We have had 4 emergency consults this month
- Fall Groups - planning for ongoing groups is underway.
 - o Friendship Files is a group for 6th graders. The focus of the group is to engage members in learning how to make and keep friends, develop confidence and build social skills, practice how to cope with anxiety and change, and plan for middle school success.
 - o Social Skills groups at Sunita Williams and Elliot. Multiple groups are being implemented at both schools.
 - o NHS drop in groups during X Block - topics that are addressed include social skills, depression, anxiety, work stress and relationships
 - o An elementary aged coping skills group. Staff are implementing a 6 weeks group to help elementary students address issues around stress and how to cope with these stressors.

Dr. Chris Willard's program is tonight- "Mindful Resiliency in the 'New Normal'". There are 75 people signed up for the event. This workshop will discuss coming mental health challenges and ways to help. The workshop will include many experiential exercises along with simple takeaway tips.

Youth & Family Services is working with the Needham Exchange Club on hosting **Ryan's Story** for the second year. Ryan's Story is a community presentation that is focused on bullying, social media use and suicide prevention. Last year this event was very successful and well received by the community. The presentation will consist of two presentations, one for parents and one for parents and children together. Thank you to the Needham Exchange Club for making this event possible. The hope is that next year there will be a similar presentation by other people with lived experience, such as Minding your Minds.

Y&FS is working with a local expressive art therapist, Tova Speter, on providing workshops for the community. These workshops will center around mindfulness and expressive arts. Two workshops were run last school year and both were full to capacity. The first one is scheduled for November 29th and is aimed at middle and high school. This one will involve the students helping to put together a giant Light Bright that will tour around the greater Boston area. There may be another one that involved paint that changes color with the rain but this is in the very early stages of development. **Tova Speter, LMHC** consultant based at Gorse Mill Studios in Needham, Massachusetts. With a Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling and Art Therapy, she has over 20 years of experience working at the intersection

of arts and healing, and offers art therapy and mental health counseling services through her private practice. Tova is also a practicing painter, installation artist, and community muralist. All of her work is based on her belief that engaging in art-making is inherently therapeutic and formative. More at www.tovaspeter.com.

The next Family Fun Night is December 8th; advertising begins the week of November 14th. This has proved to be a good outreach program for Youth services and fun for the families. Families will engage in art projects, bingo and cookie decorating.

The annual **Patrick and Patricia Forde Good Person Memorial Award** is being planned for. Nominations are being collected with a deadline of December 9th. The Forde Award will be held in person for the first time since COVID. Ms. Shine noted she needed a review committee and Ms. Stevens, Ms. Patkin and Ms. Gallardo volunteered. The awards ceremony will be on January 30, 2023, at Powers Hall.

Students Helping Older People (SHOP) - Y&FS is piloting an intergeneration program where we pair students with older adults to make connection and help the older adults with their grocery shopping. We hope that this program will give students volunteer opportunities in addition to connecting with the older population. The hope is that this program will pick up this fall.

Youth & Family Services staff have taken on the role of the adult advisors in for the Take Back the Night club. This club organizes the Take Back the Night event every year in addition to building awareness around domestic violence.

The Peer Tutoring Program is back up in running with 20 pairs. All matches have been made and students are meeting at the library.

The VIP Program is up and running. A training was held for the big VIPs and there have been 2 sessions so far with 23 pairs. The room is full of youth engaging and having fun together.

Volunteers Around Needham was a huge success this year. Youth & Family Services had over 30 volunteers who registered and earned community service hours. Staff hosted 6 days with Parks and Forestry, the Council on Aging, Needham Community Council, Needham Fire Station and the Needham Community Farm (2 days). Staff are planning dates for February and April school vacation weeks.

Employment Program Update: Youth & Family Services help connect residents to students who are looking to do various residential jobs such as lawn care, shoveling, babysitting and odd jobs. Staff are in the process of reaching out to students who are currently on the list and recruiting new students. Staff are also hoping to start a volunteer list as well so that people who need assistant but may not be able to afford to hire someone can still receive the services.

Community Collaborations: There are a number of meeting that continue to occur regularly to help support community members. These include the Substance Prevention Alliance of Needham, the Domestic Violence Action Team, the Community Crisis Intervention Team,

Youth Resource Network, Youth Commission MetroWest Meeting and the Community Health Resource Group.

There is a need for more funds in the Crisis Donation Fund. This past year the fund helped a family avoid eviction by paying some bills and paying for a hearing aid for another family's child. The Rotary Club will help raise funds in January as an emergency can quickly deplete the funds. Youth & Family Services is also spending a significant amount of time helping families in crisis, connecting to resources and helping them to stabilize.

Ms. Shine is serving as the gatekeeper for Interface Referral Services. Youth & Family Services is assessing the usefulness of the service compared to the MetroWest Care Connection, another free referral services.

The budget has been submitted and Ms. Shine is attending the various budget meetings that are coming up. Y&FS has requested a minimal increase in budget for consultation services in addition to keeping on the ARPA funded FT position longer term.

New/Old Business

The Board discussed the letter re: staffing and reviewed the edits made at the October meeting. Final edits were agreed on. Ms. Stevens will send it this week. Ms. Fitzpatrick, Town Manager, may attend a future Board meeting. The letter argues strongly for increased staffing and office space support for Youth and Family Services due to the length and acuity of the counseling wait list.

Mr. Bookston made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Gallardo seconded the motion. Unanimous vote to adjourn by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 6:10 pm by voice vote.

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