

November 24, 2009

Dear Commission Members,

As I stated at our October Commission meeting, it is with mixed emotions that I retire as Director of Youth and Family Services.

As I end my tenure, it is important for me to not only thank you for your service but also to share some insights as you begin the important work of transitioning the Agency. My hope is that as you deliberate the future of Youth and Family Services you will consider the past successes and challenges, as the dedicated work of many has contributed positively to where we stand today.

I am proud to say that together we successfully coordinated an effective system of prevention, intervention and treatment services that benefited our children, their parents and all community members. We formed meaningful partnerships with the schools, police, parks & recreation, churches, agencies, non-profits and community members to produce valuable and cost-effective programming to meet our children's needs. We developed the Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth collaborative and have been able to closely monitor the progress of our children through data collection and work strategically to engage all sectors of the community to ensure their ongoing success. We have worked directly with and for our young people and have seen first-hand the rewards of our work. We have received Statewide and National recognition as a model agency and a progressive community for the work we had accomplished and the documented positive impact on our children.

With great achievements often come challenges. As you all are aware, the last 3 years have been very difficult for me both personally and professionally. Over this time period, we openly discussed the frustration of not being able to move the agency forward in a manner that many of us thought was appropriate. We talked about the roadblocks in hiring staff, in developing new programs and in spending grant dollars in the manner they were intended. We discussed the frustrations of returning grant money to its originators knowing quite well it could have been used for our children. We watched and were helpless when a successful and cost-effective system of school-based counseling services was dismantled.

It is sometimes hard to understand the reason things like this happen and this has often left us feeling unsettled. I have often felt these decisions were made without adequate input and sometimes question whether they were made in the best interest of our children, which should be our bottom line.

With my departure, I ask all YFS Commission Members to remain active and fully involved in all upcoming decisions. I ask you to move Youth and Family Services in a positive direction and to build on the foundation that has helped so many of our children along the way. You are responsible for a system that works, that is positive, proactive and the envy of other communities across the State. I ask you to be apolitical, ask questions and commit to an agenda that is best for our community. You are the pulse of the town's people; in your hearts you know what is best.

I leave my position proud and with a sense of accomplishment. I leave with a fond feeling for Old Saybrook, its people and its children. I feel extremely fortunate to have served this wonderful community for 29 years. I will always cherish the experience.

I wish you the best of luck with the critical task at hand and thank you for your support and friendship through the years.

Sincerely,

Larry Freundlich MS, LPC