

**YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES COMMISSION**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012**

Like our community, Youth and Family Services has grown and changed over time. When reviewing our statistics for this year, it is easy to see that the need for counseling services and social services support has grown, and in some areas, more than doubled. How and where YFS offers services is inherently flexible to accommodate the competing demands experienced by our student body and adult population. Responding to feedback from several “Community Needs” surveys, groups/services have been developed and offered for support around parenting, relationship building, anger management/conflict resolution and substance abuse prevention and education. In response to the increased need for supportive services, YFS has diligently developed counseling practices for a broad range of therapeutic services, and continues to work to increase access to services. Working collaboratively with the Old Saybrook Public Schools enables earlier detection and intervention for behavioral health issues with students, and YFS is able to offer support to the entire family system, whether through parenting resources, or by offering scholarship opportunities for student/youth to become involved in our ‘Positive Youth Development’ programming.

An area of continuing development is the Intern Training Program. YFS currently has 6 Master’s level interns, across disciplines of Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Social Work and Marriage and Family Therapy. The interns offer additional support for our Positive Youth Development Coordinators, thereby allowing us to offer extended programs that are able to accommodate more students. YFS has agreed to provide training and supervision for students this past year from CCSU, UCONN, St. Josephs, SCSU, Liberty and Fordham University. Their involvement allows YFS to provide more comprehensive coverage for in-school collaboration, and allows the agency to offer more varied services to individuals and families. The intern program adds a benefit to YFS at no cost to the taxpayer.

Volunteerism and community involvement continues to increase steadily as we invite and encourage people from varying sectors of the community to become involved in our programs, perhaps as an instructor for OSMS After-School Clubs, or a student who wants to mentor younger students, or business partners who help sponsor and ‘man the tables’ at some of our many community functions ie. The Hidden Treasures Community Variety

Show and Family Day. We would like to thank all who have contributed to our efforts over the past year.

The focus of our youth programming has been the intentional building of 'Assets', qualities and characteristics that have been determined through research to support positive growth and development of youth. It has been evidenced that youth with a higher percentage of developed 'Assets' are also less likely to be involved in high risk behaviors. Some of these 'Assets' are "Community Values Youth", "Positive Peer Influences", "Social Competence" and "Adult Role Models". The language and philosophy of the Healthy Community Healthy Youth initiative, centered on the 40 Asset Developmental Model, is woven through everything YFS is involved in. We continue to seek opportunities within the community to develop meaningful roles for our youth, interning in businesses or serving on town boards and commissions. To learn more about the 40 Asset model, visit [www.searchinstitute.org](http://www.searchinstitute.org)

Youth and Family Services has been a part of the Old Saybrook Community fabric for 36 years. Looking back over Annual Reports from years ago, it is easy to see the tremendous change and growth of not only the agency, but of the many relationships in the Community that continue to be an integral part of how YFS is able to do the work that is so vital to the residents of our town. Counseling services for individuals and families/couples, and the need for increased Social Services interventions are reflective of the societal pressures being felt not only in our community, but across the nation. In response to the increased need for supportive services, YFS has diligently developed counseling practices for a broad range of therapeutic services, and continues to work to increase access to all services. Working collaboratively with other town departments, organizations and schools, Youth and Family Services has strengthened many of the community partnerships that have long been the foundation for programs and initiatives designed to promote relationship building and positive role-modeling for youth.

The staff of YFS have demonstrated their commitment to providing quality, compassionate care for the residents of Old Saybrook by the level of their involvement, receiving additional training, the development and facilitation of many programs targeted to meet specific needs in the community and more. We continue to also focus on Positive Youth Development Programming, and the burgeoning Youth Asset Team at both

OSMS and OSHS, and the REACH team at OSHS are proof that our youth have a desire to be the change they want to see in the world!

Detective Samuel B. Barnes  
YFS Commission Chair

Heather McNeil LMFT, LADC  
Director OSYFS

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**PROGRAM/SERVICE LISTING**

**Counseling Services**

- ◆ Served 121 cases at the Agency.
- ◆ Served numerous students at the schools: 9 at Goodwin (in socialization groups); 19 at the Middle School and High School (in groups and individually).
- ◆ Provided 1,331 individual and family counseling sessions.

**Positive Youth Development**

Through these programs young people learn new life skills, take leadership roles and build self-esteem:

- ◆ *Youth Summer Stock Theatre Program* – engaged over 70 youth: 33 students (entering 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grades) and 15 (entering 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grades) performed productions of “Grease”. 23 students (in 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades) who were graduates of past Summer Stock productions volunteered as Director’s Assistant, Choreographer Assistants, Lighting and Sound Crew, Stage Managers and Creative Crew.
- ◆ *Summer Community Services Programs* – provided an opportunity for 33 7<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> graders to serve their community while completing service learning in either of two major areas: Hunger Awareness and Environmental Stewardship of our geographic area. Each project worked collaboratively with local organizations such as Shoreline Soup Kitchen.
- ◆ *Wilderness Challenge Program* – During the summer of 2011 10 students transitioning from 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade successfully completed our intensive challenge program and participated in follow-up activities throughout the year. 8 additional 7<sup>th</sup> grade students began pre-Wilderness team-building and leadership training during May and June 2012 in preparation for meeting their Wilderness Challenge.
- ◆ *High School REACH Team* (Responsible Educated Adolescents Can Help): a youth-driven initiative - 22 members of the High School REACH Team planned and carried out activities and service projects at the school and in the community this year. Group members also benefitted from leadership training to help them in their mission of promoting substance-free activities for their peers and awareness of prevention efforts in the community. Activities included a Sticker Shock Campaign (working with local businesses to raise awareness of adults about purchasing alcohol for underage youth and about social hosting liability); Spaghetti Dinner; Movie Night; Walk Like MADD fundraising events; Anti-Bullying Day; Middle School Wellness

Day; Easter Egg and Rock Hunt; Mini-Golf Tournament; Pot-Luck Substance Free Dinner; Primp for Prom; and regional LEAD Conference.

- ◆ *Youth Asset Team* – 38 students served on the Youth Asset Team at the High School, receiving training in asset development and assisting with a multitude of programs including Youth Summer Stock, Community Variety Show, Family Day, serving as mentors for Freshman Retreat; Community Conversations; Winter and Summer Strolls; Chili Fest.
- ◆ *Middle School After School Clubs* – 5 Sessions offering from 8 – 11 Clubs each session were held this year. A total of 461 registrations over the course of the school year were a testament to the success of this opportunity for students in the critical after school hours.
- ◆ *Teen Trips* – 56 teens participated in trips coordinated by Youth and Family Services in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department. Excursions were to Horseback Riding; Go-Kart Racing; Ocean Beach Park; Brownstone Exploration and Discovery; Providence Place Mall and IMAX Theatre and Six Flags Amusement Park!

### **Family Programming**

Opportunities were developed to provide topical information and affordable, social events for families.

- ◆ *Family Matters Series* provided speakers and panel discussions on topical youth issues of interest to parents, teachers and other community members.
- ◆ *Family Events* included Free Family Bowling, Free Winter Movie and Dinner Night, and Family Trips.
- ◆ *Ladies Nights* provided a special learning experience and fun night out for girls entering puberty and their female caregivers. A total of 92 participated in this year's programming facilitated by a guest RN/Educator.
- ◆ *Toddler Tunes* provided 61 children and 58 parents a fun, interactive music and movement program with their peers.
- ◆ *Movies on the Beach*, a collaboration with the OS Department of Police Services, were expanded to include games and other activities prior to the family-friendly films.

### **Support Groups and Therapeutic Groups at the Agency**

- ◆ *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* met twice/month.
- ◆ *Dialectical Behavior Therapy Groups* met weekly.

### **Community Collaboration**

Youth and Family Services works closely with the schools, police, agencies, businesses and organizations to assess community needs, develop strategies and implement effective programs.

- ◆ Healthy Communities-Healthy Youth
- ◆ After School Clubs at Middle School and High School
- ◆ Early Childhood Council
- ◆ Local Drug and Alcohol Prevention Council

- ◆ Community Conversations
- ◆ Freshman Retreat
- ◆ Movies on the Beach
- ◆ Community Treasures Variety Show
- ◆ Family Day
- ◆ Student Wellness Programs at the Middle School and High School

### **Social Services**

Our Social Services Coordinator continues to assist many Old Saybrook residents in a variety of ways, including emergency food, prescriptions and medical care, help with transportation, energy assistance, budget counseling, help applying for state and/or federal programs, employment workshops and networking, children's clothing and footwear, etc. Illustrated by the numbers shown below of this year and the previous year, residents can see that the demand for social services has increased considerably.

This year we provided and coordinated the following to meet basic needs and emergency requests:

- ◆ Received 3640 requests for assistance/ up from 1720 from the previous year
- ◆ Provided financial aid for 215 Old Saybrook household emergencies, up from 145 the previous year.
- ◆ Provided emergency food for 471 individuals vs. 235 families
- ◆ Processed Energy Assistance applications for 161 households/up vs. 93 households last year
- ◆ Provided emergency oil deliveries to 73 households vs. 84 last year
- ◆ Coordinated Holiday Giving Program for 272 children/up by 44
- ◆ Coordinated Warm the Children assistance for 154 children/up by 69

### **Municipal Agent for the Elderly**

Our Municipal Agent for the Elderly is an officially appointed Town representative responsible for providing the elderly and their families with information and assistance on programs, services and benefits. Senior citizens continue to face numerous challenges, especially as changes occur in their physical health, the economy, etc. Issues of particular concern this year included:

- ◆ Heat and Utility Expenses
- ◆ Unavailability of Senior Housing
- ◆ Medical-Related Issues
- ◆ Transportation

### **YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES COMMISSION 2011/2012**

Chairman	Samuel B. Barnes, O.S.P.D. Representative
Vice Chairman	Jennifer Welsh, At-Large Member
Secretary	Ray Allen, Parks & Recreation Dept.
Representative	Katie Prozesky, Student Representative
	J.T. Giegerich, Student Representative

System Rep. Kathryn Hanratty /Catherine Kane, School  
Diane Aldi DePaola, Public Health Nursing  
Board Rep. Dorothy Shearer, At-Large Member  
Peggy Viggiano, At-Large Member

**YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES STAFF 2011/2012**

Director	Heather McNeil, LMFT, LADC
Administrative Assistant	Linda McCall
Clinical Consultant	Kathleen Laundy, Psy.D.
Counselors:	Salvatore Bruzzese, M.S., L.P.C., C.A.G.S. Sal Perruccio, Masters School Psychologist
Counselor/Early Childhood Specialist	Melinda Tyler, M.F.T.
Counselor/R.E.A.C.H. Coordinator	Chelsea Graham, M.S.W.
Counselor/Wilderness Coordinator	Brenda Partyka, M.S.W.
Program Coordinators	Wendy Mill Julie Moskowitz Brittany O'Neil
Social Services Coordinator/ Municipal Agent for Elderly	Susan Consoli, M.A., L.P.C.