



Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting – February 22, 2016

Attendance: Gioia Cianciarulo, Domenic Cianciarulo, Sarah Baroud, Austin Bushey, Brad Pindel, Conor Connaughton, David Russell, Danielle Sutton, Simone Greenberg, Olivia O’Shea, Sophia Paravalos, Arlene Kasarjion, Trish Tucke, Emily Keith, Jan Midiri, Danielle Sutton, Mary Ellen LaRose, John O’Brien Jr.

I. **Call to Order:** The meeting convened at the Islington Community Center and was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. **Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:** Minutes from the January board meeting were accepted.

III. Director’s Report:

Clinical Services

*There are currently **37 counseling clients** on the WY&FS caseload, three fewer than in the month of January: 26 individual clients; 5 family clients; 6 parent consultations.

*There have been **3 new intakes** for counseling services so far in the month of February. There is not currently a waitlist for services, and residents are able to be placed with a clinician or graduate intern with an average turn-around time of two weeks. As always, referrals are triaged so that those residents in most immediate need are prioritized.

*The next round of weekly **Structured Play Groups** begins in February and March, with a total of **25 participants**.

Program Updates

*Congratulations to our **Bullying Prevention Theater (BPT) Mentors**, and to our staff members, Sarah Baroud and Nina Banozic, who coordinated the program, on another successful year of BPT performances and activities with the sixth grade classes at the Thurston Middle School! The program took place on January 26th and 28th, and over the February break a large wall hanging of the sixth grade students’ responses to the program question of, “How can *you* make a change in bullying situations?” was hung in the Cafeteria at the Thurston. Thanks to Austin Bushey, and to the other Thurston staff members, for their collaborative efforts and ongoing support of this program! Danielle gave an overview of how the BPT program started. Austin expressed appreciation for the program.

*The third Thurston Middle School Dance/Event of the year, scheduled for Friday, February 5th, was canceled due to that day's snow cancellation of school. The next event will take place on April 1st with our **Teen Center Mentors** and Y&FS staff acting as role models and chaperones for the event.

*The **Friends Network** program continues, with two groups of 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students meeting with their 9th-12th grade Mentors each Wednesday night at the Senior Center.

*The **Thurston Thursday Club** program continues, with middle school students and high school Mentors hanging out and playing games at the Thurston each week.

*Auditions for the 2016 **Body Safety Theater (BST)** program took place on January 28th. **Seventeen (17) Mentor volunteers** are attending weekly rehearsals that began in the first week of February and will continue until the performances at all elementary schools in May.

Community Connections

*On January 28th, Y&FS attended the **Regional Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition grant meeting in Needham, MA**. This grant, secured by the Boards of Health in Westwood, Norwood, Dedham and Needham, aims to reduce issues related to underage drinking and substance abuse in the region.

*On Monday, February 1st, Y&FS staff led a discussion with the **Sheehan Faculty** around responding to grief and loss in their school community, utilizing best practices and accessing available resources, following the death of a Sheehan parent.

*Y&FS has been invited to support WHS in the implementation of their **Signs of Suicide (S.o.S.)** program and first-time (for WHS) depression screening with the 9th grade Wellness classes in May of 2016. Sarah will be taking the lead on this. Austin added that the Middle School will help with the implementation of the program. Norwood Public Schools have reached out to WPS for advice as they are thinking of implementing this program at NHS.

*Youth & Family Services continues to take a leadership role with the local community group, **Westwood Cares**. The group now has active Facebook and Twitter accounts, with a web page in development and plans for a Spring speaker event for Westwood parents around the issue of Social Host Liability.

*The work to support the families in **Emergency Shelter at the Budget Inn** has evolved as the state has implemented a new voucher program that provides families in Westwood with opportunities to move to more permanent housing between December 2015 and March 2016.

*In February, Y&FS has attended or will attend meetings of the **WHS Site Council, Westwood Early Childhood Council, Westwood Cares, Islington Center Task Force** and the **Westwood Community Chest**.

IV. Old Business

WY&FS is continuing to accept nominations for the annual **Recognize-a-Youth (R.A.Y)** program. R.A.Y. awards are given to young people in Westwood who have shown an extraordinary commitment to community service and volunteerism. Mary Ellen and Danielle gave examples of what students have been awarded for in the past. The deadline to submit a nomination is March 31st.

V. New Business

Community Liaisons:

Westwood Food Pantry: Trish Tucke mentioned the food pantry is in good shape at the moment. From time to time the pantry has been sharing surplus with a church in Jamaica Plain. Food pantry requests from residents in the transitional assistance program are slowly winding down as these residents transition to other housing. Danielle and Trish talked about a new partnership with the Council on Aging and Westwood Community Chest. Financial assistance from WCC is allowing the COA to connect seniors with a service that provides intensive case work as necessary.

WPD: Brad mentioned that in February officers received recertification in CPR and defensive tactics. He described recent changes in department policy regarding underage drinking enforcement. The board had a longer discussion regarding this.

Thurston Middle School – Austin shared that WHS students recently came to the Middle School to speak with 8th graders regarding course selection and what to expect at the high school. The WHS students always do a tremendous job. 239 eighth graders will be attending the trip to Washington D.C. in June. This is the largest group of students ever to participate. Austin will be taking the lead on a new Community Service Group at TMS named Choose to Be Nice. The group's mission will be to spread kindness wherever and whenever possible.

Westwood High School – Conor updated the group on WHS course selection process. Sophia spoke about the upcoming WHS musical 9 to 5.

VI. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m. Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose