



**Westwood Youth  
& Family Services**

**Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting September 29, 2014**

**Members Present:** *Trish Tucke, Karen Poreda, Domenic Cianciarulo, David Russell, Arlene Kasarjian, Kathy Sullivan Wallace, Gioia Cianciarulo, Emily Keith, Connor Connaughton, Matt O'Connor, Brad Pindel, John Loughnane, Alicia Lamonda, Danielle Sutton, Sarah Cleveland, Mary Ellen LaRose*

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting convened in the ICC Sanctuary and was called to order at 7:15pm. Introductions were made around the table for our new board members.

**II. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the June 16, 2014 meeting were accepted.

**III. Director's Report**

\*Danielle introduced Sarah Cleveland the new Youth Services Counselor and Mary Ellen LaRose, the new part-time Administrative Assistant.

**Clinical Services**

\*There are currently 35 clients on the WY&FS caseload. 29 individuals, two (2) families and four (4) ongoing parent consultations. Ten [10] new individuals or families came off the waitlist and began receiving services in September. Eleven [11] new intakes for counseling services were received in the month of September.

\*To give a sense of the impact of our new full-time clinical position: Y&FS had a record waitlist of 15 residents this past July. After bringing on our new Youth Services Counselor in August, we were able to reduce that by more than half and entered the first week of September with only six (6) residents on the waitlist.

\*Placement to all staff and to our graduate intern is ongoing. At this time we are able to place most ongoing parent consultations, high-school aged and middle-school aged residents immediately (depending on their availability). Elementary-school aged clients are typically taking longer to place with clinicians due to limited afternoon availability. As always, referrals are triaged so that those residents in most immediate need are prioritized.

**Program Updates**

\*Over the summer the Single Parent Support Group ran for 8 weeks with ten [10] participants. Free child care and pizzas were provided weekly thanks in part to funding from the Early Childhood Council and Westwood Young Women's Club.

\*Thanks to the help of the IS department, and the work of our Youth Services Counselor, Joanna, Y&FS was able to move to online registrations for our Structured Play Group and Girls Only! Group programs. The response from residents to these programs continues to be robust, with all groups for 2014-2015 filling to capacity and carrying waitlists.

\*The Mentor Program for high-school aged volunteers is up and running! A mailing went out to each Westwood High School student in September and Y&FS promoted the program at WHS from the start of the school year. To date, approximately 100 high school students have applied for the various Mentor programs!

\*Thanks, again, to the departmental reorganization and the addition of a second full-time Youth Services Counselor, we are able to once again offer the much-acclaimed *Bullying Prevention Theater* as a Mentor volunteer program in 2014-2015. Auditions and rehearsals for high school volunteers will begin in October and we're looking forward to collaborating with the Thurston to offer this program to the sixth-grade classes in early 2015!

\*The *Teen Center* Mentor program has evolved going into this new school year, and we're happy to report that Y&FS and the Thurston Middle School will now be in full collaboration, with Teen Center Mentors chaperoning all Thurston dances for 2014-2015 and the proceeds for the dances being split 50/50 between Y&FS and Thurston! –A win-win for both groups as it allows for more volunteer opportunities for Mentors, more consistent chaperones for dances, more consistent attendance by middle school students, only ONE permission slip process for parents, and of course, the *Joan Courtney Murray Mentor Scholarship* can continue to thrive! The first Thurston Dance/Teen Center event will take place this Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>. (revised to 10/24)

### **Community Connections**

\*In early September, Y&FS staff joined with school staff and Riverside Community Care staff to offer support to the Thurston Community following the sudden death of an eighth grade student. Y&FS was also able to provide open office hours for parents on Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup> where parents could gather to receive resources, speak with other parents and with Y&FS staff about parenting during times of grief and loss. Ten [10] parents attended over the two nights, and several more have reached out for resources and/or consultation. There have been several referrals directly related to grief and loss or other associated mental health issues for young people since the death of this student.

\*Sarah, Joanna and Danielle attended the WHS Activities Fair on the evening of Wednesday, September 17<sup>th</sup> to promote the Mentor program and its various volunteer activities. Y&FS also hosted a table outside the cafeteria at WHS on 9/18 and 9/19 to promote the Mentor programs and to collect applications.

\*On Friday, September 26<sup>th</sup> Danielle attended a Youth Commission Director's meeting in Concord with similar departments from a dozen different towns represented. At the same time, Sarah, Joanna and graduate intern, Carolyn, attended the regional Internship Collaborative with the neighboring towns of Needham and Dedham.

\*Once again this year the Y&FS Staff, along with WHS Guidance staff, will co-lead a Stress Management Group at WHS. The first group is scheduled for this Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### **IV. Liaison Reports**

**Westwood High School** – David noted that after an alcohol related incident at the first WHS football game Principal Bevan and Assistant Principal Harrigan hosted an informational/town hall style meeting on the topic for parents. It was well attended. Matt reported that the Call to Excellence was held in late August. Gioia reported there is a new Performing Arts Director, Mr. Price. Godspell has been chosen.

**Thurston Middle School** – John and others talked about the difficult start to the school year with the loss of an eighth grade student. They noted it was nice to know a protocol for these types of situations is in place and seems to have run smoothly with this situation. Emily mentioned that her sister and friends were grateful for the support that the TMS counselors working together with WY&FS provided for students. As a result of this incident she has noticed that the school seems to be coming together and becoming more inclusive of one another.

**Elementary Schools** – WY&FS assisted in the coordination of babysitters for Curriculum Night. New principals have been appointed at Deerfield, Mr. Joshua Baumer, and Hanlon, Ms. Sarah Cronin.

**Community Policing** – Brad reported that he is visiting the elementary schools and running through bus evacuation drills with the students. The police department has hired 4 new officers. They will start the academy on December 1. The department has a canine in training that will be out on patrol.

**Community Liaisons** – Trish reported the new director of the COA, Lina DeRosa has started. The Ride for Food was a success raising \$48,000 to be split between 8 food pantries. The Boy Scout Food Drive is planned for Mid-November which benefits the Food Pantry. Trish asked the student board members for assistance gathering volunteers for the sorting of these canned goods.

**V. Old Business**

The subcommittee Substance Education and Awareness has a new name, Westwood Cares. They are working on a mission statement and recruiting new members.

**VI. New Business**

Danielle reports WY&FS booth at Westwood Day went well. A new banner and poster purchased recently by the department were displayed. Staff ran a make your own stress ball activity station.

**VII. Adjournment** - All business completed and meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

**Next meeting will be on October 27, 2014, at 7:15pm at the ICC.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose