



Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting – February 27, 2023

Attendance: Brad Pindel, Katy Colthart, Ethan Walsh, Lucy Park, Julia Ritzenberg, Jeremy Stern, Christy McKenney, John Loughnane, Mary-Carol Waters, Mary Ellen LaRose, Diana Martucci, Jan Midiri, Nyla Bacchus, Trish Tucke, Nicola Midiri

I. Call to Order: The meeting convened at Wentworth Hall at 7:03 p.m.

II. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes: A motion was made by John Loughnane to accept the 1/23/23 minutes. Brad Pindel seconded the motion. All were in favor of approving the meeting minutes.

III. Department Report:

Administrative Updates

We began the interview process for our ARPA-funded part-time positions. Two candidates stood out and we are in talks with HR regarding the next steps. We hope to onboard new staff in March.

Next up will be filling our Graduate Intern positions for next year. We are receiving interest from applicants and local graduate schools and we have begun accepting applications. We hope to start interviewing after the February vacation.

Clinical Services

There are currently **46 counseling clients** on the WY&FS caseload, 35 individual clients; 1 family client; 6 parent consultations.

There were **5 new referrals** since our last report and we anticipate more referrals as school progress reports came going out and the term is ending this week.

There are currently **29 individuals or families on our “waitlist” for counseling services**. Whenever there is a waitlist, we also share the William James INTERFACE Referral Service information as another option for residents and offer a one-time meeting with a Y&FS clinician so that families might have some initial resources while waiting. As always, referrals are triaged so that those residents in the most immediate need are prioritized.

We are just past the half-way mark for our winter groups. We are offering a **K/1st Structured Play Group social skills group on Mondays, 2/3 Structured Play Group on Tuesdays and 4/5 SPG on Thursdays**. In addition, we are piloting a **K/1 Structured Play Group during the day** at the Sheehan Elementary School. Registration has begun for our Spring groups. We are offering a **K/1st Structured Play Group social skills group on Mondays, Girls Group on Tuesdays and Tackling our Troubles on Thursdays**. We will also be running a Calm and Cope group for **2nd/3rd graders at Hanlon**.

Program Updates

The **R.A.Y. (Recognize-A-Youth) Award program** is currently being marketed and nominations are being accepted. WY&FS manages the marketing and acceptance of nominations, and the Westwood Rotary picks the winners and hosts an event to honor recipients in the Spring.

Be SMARRT (Students Modeling and Advocating Respectful Relationships @ Thurston has wrapped up for the year. The performance went great as did the class discussions. We are currently collecting feedback from students and

teachers on how we might improve the program. Once this data is collected we will meet with Thursday administration to discuss how the program will look next year.

Adina and Christa, as well as our former intern, Liz are coordinating and supervising two back-to-back, in-person sessions of the **Friends Network** program each week in Wentworth Hall. The thirty (30) 1:1 pairs of high school students and 3rd, 4th and 5th grade residents are enjoying games, crafts and conversation each Thursday evening.

Teen Scene @ the Library is a partnership with the Teen Librarian at the main library coordinating volunteer shifts for Mentors on early release Wednesday and on Friday afternoons. We have 10 mentors helping at the library this season.

Westwood Writes continues to run with 25 pairs exchanging monthly letters. A new addition to the program this year, an ice cream social for the pairs to meet in person and socialize in person will be held in May.

Body Safety Theater (BST) started up with an Information Session and Auditions earlier this month and rehearsals have been taking place weekly since that time in preparation for the elementary school performances in mid-May.

Community Connections

Y&FS staff is participating in the following local groups, boards and committees this fiscal year:

- Community Chest
- Deerfield Site Council
- Human Services Function Group
- MMA Human Services Council
- Regional Internship Collaborative
- Westwood Cares
- WHS Legislative Council
- WPS Wellness Review Committee
- Community Crisis Intervention Team
- Early Childhood Council
- BIDMC-Needham Community Meeting
- Regional Youth Commission Meetings
- WHS Child Study Team
- WHS Site Council
- WPS Incident Management Team

We have partnered with **Early Childhood Council** and the **Westwood Library** to offer a Parent Café series this winter. These will run on Tuesdays January 10th, February 7th, March 7th and April 4 from 7-8:30 at the Westwood Library. This program is geared towards parents of young children who wish to discuss the joys and challenges of parenting. Youth & Family Services staff will be there to help facilitate table discussions. The first two sessions have gone well, participants seem engaged in the conversations.

IV. Old Business:

Recognize A Youth Award: Mary Ellen gave a brief overview of the Recognize A Youth Award Program and encouraged board members to spread the word and consider nominating a young person. An awards ceremony will be held the week of May 15th.

Staffing Update – ARPA funding: Katy spoke briefly about the two candidates that the staff has interviewed and what the onboarding orientation process will look like. Board members asked questions around the ongoing waitlist and benefits of having part-time staff that can see clients later in the day.

Open Discussion on Potential Community Needs: Katy asked board members to continue sharing ideas and thoughts on unmet community needs. She discussed the importance of board members being a resource that WY&FS can tap into on any issues they are seeing within the community. She stated that we can continue to keep this topic on the board's agenda as a placeholder for future discussions.

V. New Business:

Student Board Member Interviews for 24/25 School Year: Mary Ellen mentioned that letters will go out to the 10th grade class inviting them to apply to be a student board member over their junior and senior school years. She will need

at least 4 board members to serve on the interview committee. These interviews will take the place of the board's April meeting.

FY24 Budget Submission: Katy gave an update on the FY24 budget process and a recent meeting of Human Services Departments with the town's Finance/Warrant Commission. The meeting went smoothly.

Program Spotlight: "Tackling Our Troubles": Katy spoke about a new group affectionally known as TOT which was added in the Spring of 2022. The pilot group formed after the department noticed a number of 3rd and 4th grade students on the waitlist for counseling who were struggling with big emotions. The interactive group focused on identifying and expressing feelings in health ways, managing big emotions and building confidence through fun activities, games and movement. The program received positive feedback and is being offered this Spring. The program also allowed our graduate intern, Liz the opportunity to be involved in program development.

Community Liaisons:

Early Childhood Council: Katy mentioned that the department is continuing to partner with ECC on the parent cafes for parents/caregivers with children under 8 years old. The last one will be held in April.

Food Pantry: Trish mentioned that food stamps are going back to pre-pandemic funding levels and the pantry anticipates this will cause an uptick on residents needing services.

Police Department: Brad let board members know about recent air bag thefts in town. In the next few weeks he will start visiting 5th grade classrooms for the DARE Program.

Schools Update:

Westwood High School: John noted that the varsity basketball and hockey teams have made it to the playoffs. Ethan gave an update on the upcoming school musical, Twelfth Night, which will be held in Mid-March. Lucy spoke about upcoming course selections for next year's classes. Julia spoke about efforts by the Key Club to find additional ways they can assist the Westwood community.

Thurston Middle School: Christy talked about middle school dances for all grade levels.

Elementary Schools: Diana spoke about a naming contest for the new combined Deerfield/Hanlon Elementary school and mentioned upcoming MCAS testing.

VI. **Public Comment:** None

VII. **Adjournment** - The meeting was called to adjournment at 7:55p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose