



Meeting Minutes for Advisory Board Meeting – November 22, 2021

Attendance: Daniel Tryder, Maeve Hutton, Paul Marino, Jeremy Stern, Jan Midiri, Melissa DePina, Brian Cole, Julia Ritzenberg, Christy McKenney, Diana Martucci, Eli Wasserman, Mary-Carol Waters, Mary Ellen LaRose, Danielle Sutton, Katy Colthart

I. **Call to Order:** The meeting convened via Zoom Webinar and was called to order at 7:04 pm

II. **Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:** A motion was made by Diana Martucci and seconded by Brian Cole to accept the 9/27/21 minutes. All were in favor of approving the minutes.

III. Director's Report:

Clinical Services

*There are currently **38 counseling clients** on the WY&FS caseload, 30 individual clients; 2 family clients; 6 parent consultations. (*This total is compared to 46 in November of 2020; 41 in November of 2019 and 44 in November of 2018*).

*There were **7 new intakes** for counseling services so far in **November** (*compare to 5 intakes in November 2020; 8 in November 2019; 9 in November 2018*).

-There were **12 new intakes** for counseling services in **October** (*compare to 7 intakes in October 2020; 5 in October 2019; and 9 in October 2018*)

-There were **7 new intakes** for counseling services in **September** (*compare to 5 intakes in September 2020; 6 in September 2019; and 6 in September 2018*)

*There are currently **12 individuals or families on our "waitlist" for counseling services**, (*compared to 13 in November of 2020; zero in November 2019, 2018 and 2017*). 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 most immediate need are prioritized.

*In November we wrapped up our first round of in-person group programs that began in September. We had full **Calm & Cope anxiety coping skills groups** that ran for six weeks on Tuesdays (4th/5th grade) and Thursdays (2nd/3rd grade), with a maximum of 8 participants in each group for a **total of 16 participants**. On Wednesday afternoons we held a **K/1st Structured Play Group social skills group**, also with the maximum of **8 participants**. In the first week of December we will begin our second round of groups, all eight-week Structured Play Groups, in person at Wentworth Hall. All groups are full, with waitlists.

Program Updates

*Y&FS currently has one participant in the **2021-2022 Graduate Internship Program**, Julianne Weishaus of Simmons School of Social Work. Next week we are interviewing another potential Graduate Intern from Boston University's School of Social Work. Should we prove to be a match, this Graduate Intern will serve 16 hours per week between January to August 2022.

*The **Bullying Prevention Theater** program is running with weekly rehearsals, and **nine Mentors** (approximately 1/3 of the number of volunteers we've historically had in BPT). Our Youth Services Counselor, Emily, is running this program, along with our former Graduate Intern, Tina Wong.

*After many interviews of both high school students and 3rd, 4th and 5th grade residents, and many hours spent making the 1:1 matches and orienting the Mentors, the **Friends Network** program is taking place in-person on Thursday evenings at Wentworth Hall from November through April. Katy gave an update on the first night of the program.

***Teen Scene @ the Library** also started up this fall, with the Teen Librarian at the main library coordinating volunteer shifts for Mentors on early release Wednesday and on Friday afternoons.

*As previously discussed, **Westwood Writes**, the intergenerational pen pal program that we piloted last year with 20 student/senior pairs has grown to **45 students** this year! We have currently matched 16 high school volunteers and senior residents, and all Mentors were oriented to the program via Zoom last week (thanks to Emily and Katy!). While we continue to make matches on a rolling basis, we have also engaged the remaining high school volunteers to write the same monthly letters that will be delivered to the senior recipients of Meals-on-Wheels in Westwood, along with a flyer encouraging them to contact the Senior Center to be matched with a high school pen pal.

*The **Holiday Giving** program is in full swing, and Mary Ellen has already spent countless hours marketing the program in the community, accepting registrations, communicating with donors and recipients, and matching donors with more than **72 Westwood children** whose families are in need this holiday season.

Community Connections

*Y&FS was happy to provide funding for Westwood High School to bring **Eli Lebowitz** of the Yale Child Study Center to speak to Westwood parents on the topic of adolescent (and childhood) anxiety and parenting strategies. His talk on November 17th was well attended by parents with children of all ages, and, thanks to Westwood Media Center, is available in full on the WMC YouTube channel.

*Y&FS is pleased to welcome the **Westwood Early Childhood Office** to Wentworth Hall. Director, Janet Lucey, and her Assistant, Tarynne Steenkamp, have been moving into our shared office space within the Y&FS office space. We are so happy that Westwood families with young children will now be able to more easily access the Early Childhood Office and all of their fabulous resources!

*In early November, Katy and Danielle were able to attend a virtual webinar of the **Massachusetts Municipal Association's Women Leading Government** group.

*As a part of the role of Co-Chair of the **Westwood Human Rights Task Force (HRTF)**, Danielle is organizing and co-leading monthly meetings of the HRTF group appointed by Town Administrator, Chris Coleman, and attending bi-weekly meetings of a regional Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) group consisting of DEI officers and appointed municipal leaders. There are two other communities, Westborough and Newburyport, that have their Y&FS Directors or Staff leading Human Rights/DEI groups.

IV. Old Business

Recognize A Youth Award Ceremony: Mary Ellen talked about the event and thanked board members for attending. She let board members know that a nomination form for 2022 is posted to the website.

V. New Business

Wentworth Hall Update: Danielle shared that WY&FS is now moved into Wentworth Hall and welcoming residents for in person appointments. Staff is temporarily using folding tables and chairs as they await the arrival of permanent desks, chairs, etc. The staff is feeling thankful to be in space and have begun to

personalize their spaces. Recently, Westwood Early Childhood staff moved out of basement of Hanlon and into the shared office space. Danielle noted they are happy to be on street level, making them more visible and accessible to families and the community.

Birthday Giving and Holiday Giving Programs: Mary Ellen reported that all holiday giving recipients have been matched with donors. Donors have until December 13th to drop off gifts. Distribution of gifts will take place on December 17th and 18th.

Eli Lebowitz – Adolescent Anxiety: Parent Discussion Sponsorship: - WY&FS co-sponsored the parent talk on 11/17. Funds were used from the Gifts and Grants account. Lebowitz gave those that attended clear language and strategies to use around anxiety issues that their children may experience. Lebowitz 's talk was videotaped by Westwood Media Center and will be available on their You Tube channel for viewing.

Community Liaisons:

Community Chest – Danielle mentioned that the group is spreading the word about Temple Beth David's efforts to fundraise and assist with an Afgan family, who is resettling to this area.

Westwood Food Pantry Mary Ellen updated the group on the recent Town wide Food Drive and Sorting Day on 11/20.

Human Rights Taskforce – Danielle let the board know she and Melinda Garfield from Westwood Media Center were appointed by the Town Administrator to co-chair the town's Human Rights Taskforce. The taskforce is charged with the task of providing the community with education, recommendation and information around issues concerning human rights. Diana asked who else serves on the committee. Danielle reported that Amanda Phillips from the school committee along with the assistant superintendent, Alison Borchers, a member of disability commission, Eric Arnold, the director of Hale Education, Joan Courtney Murray, the town's HR director and Chris Coleman.

Community Liaisons:

Westwood High School – Julia and Jeremy spoke about the upcoming Pep Rally on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Members of the school's Robotics Team will perform and the Youth Climate Action Group will assist with cleanup after the event. Melissa provided an update on a project she is working on with LTARACE to reach the intersectionality of race, culture and ethnicity. She is assisting with the creation of a survey of METCO students. Eli reported that the Westwood Field Hockey team became state champs on Saturday.

Thurston Middle School : Diana spoke about a new format for Parent/Teacher Conferences this school year. The conferences are now student-led with parents and homeroom teacher attending via Zoom. Each student presents a slide show during their meeting where they share their reflections on their grades, their progress, and goals for the year.

Elementary Schools: Diana shared that Sheehan had a new twist on their annual Halloween Party. They held a Trunk or Treat event before in the Sheehan parking lot. Each class had a trunk of a car decorated in a particular theme and handed out candy to students dressed in their costumes. She also mentioned an upcoming PTA Friendsgiving event.

Community Updates: The board had a informal conversation around how students and parents are handling the readjustment to their lives this year particularly around the switch to in person learning, expectations from teachers and the toll on students' mental health. Danielle said we will keep the

conversations continuing around this and WY&FS will continue to find ways to be helpful and supportive to residents.

VII. **Public Comment:** None

VIII. **Adjournment** - The meeting was called to adjournment at 7:52 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Mary Ellen LaRose