

Southington Youth Services

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ANNUAL REPORT 2006

The Youth Services Department of the Town of Southington has completed its thirty-second year of operation. It continues to offer a variety of services to youth and families including confidential counseling, education, diversion and positive youth development programs. Over 2,000 Southington residents took advantage of these many services throughout the year. With the assistance of a grant in the amount of \$26,569 from the State Department of Education, we are able to continue at our present staffing level of Director, 2 Counselors and a Secretary.

This year has been an exciting one for our department. We have had great participation in some of our long-standing programs while involving ourselves in school and community endeavors which aim to open up new opportunities for children and youth in Southington.

Our Thursday evening hours continue to be popular with our clients. The late closing allows us to schedule groups and family meetings when more people are available to attend. This year we met with 27 people during this evening time and held our Parent Information Series on Thursday evenings when we were already open. This works out wonderfully for the staff as well as the community.

YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAMS

Therapeutic Programs

Individual Counseling
Family Intervention
Group Counseling

Community Programs

Youth Employment Service
Meet the Workers Job Fair
Drug Task Force

Diversionary Programs

Juvenile Review Board
Restitution Program
Alternative to Suspension

Education/Prevention Programs

Student Workshops
Girl Power!
Teacher Inservice Training
Parent Information Series



THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS

Referrals to our individual counseling and family intervention programs come from the school system, the police department, parents and youth themselves. As a matter of convenience and for community outreach reasons, we held many of our counseling sessions at the schools. The remainder of our clients met with us in the Town Hall Annex next door to the Southington Town Hall.

Some of the problems we help youth and families with are: family dysfunction, self-esteem, child abuse and neglect, truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, grief, depression, educational issues and stress. This year we met with 112 youth in individual counseling and served over 69 families.

Our group counseling program has given us the opportunity to make contact with many more students than we could meet with individually. Working with the social work staff at Southington High School and DePaolo Middle School, we provided in school group counseling services to 99 students on topics including high school adjustment, young women's issues, anger management, stress and family changes.

DIVERSIONARY PROGRAMS

The Juvenile Review Board confidentially reviews all cases of juvenile arrests and after weighing all available information, makes appropriate recommendations to the Police Chief. This year 4 cases were reviewed and all were diverted from the juvenile court and had their cases handled by the Review Board. Their accountability consisted of letters of apology, self-assessment essays, educational programs and probation. In addition, some of these juveniles participated in our Restitution Program donating 35 hours of community service to non-profit agencies such as the Southington Public Library, the YMCA, Bread for Life and the United Way. This program of diverting youth from the court system greatly benefits both the youth and our community.

Youth Services Staff continued working with Southington High School's Alternative to Suspension Program. This groundbreaking program allowed our staff to offer prevention and early intervention services to students in after-school groups, instead of these students being suspended from school. This year continued a successful collaboration between us and the school system. We reached 195 students in this program.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

The Youth Services continues to Sponsor the Youth Employment Service (Y.E.S.), which matches able and willing youth aged 14-16, with town residents needing help with odd jobs. Last year 24 jobs were filled and this year 49 new youth were interviewed and were accepted into the program. They will be filling jobs that will be called into us over

the next year, such as babysitting, yard work, shoveling snow, leaf raking and house cleaning. Evaluation forms filled out by the employers help us to keep tabs on the work our young workers are going. Good reports entitle these workers to special rewards compliments of the Youth Services staff!

At the beginning of the summer, we held our first “Meet the Workers Job Fair”. Community members who thought they might be interested in hiring our youth workers were invited to meet them face-to-face at an informal breakfast held at the Southington Public Library. Only 5 potential employers attended to meet the 12 youth workers who were there, but we liked the idea and intend to make it bigger and better next year.

The Southington Drug Task Force is administered by Youth Services. Thanks to the Town’s contribution of \$3,000 and a grant of \$4500 from the Substance Abuse Action Council of Central Connecticut, Inc. we were able to continue our prevention efforts here in Southington. The annual “Red Ribbon Week Rally” was held on the Green and drug prevention poster contest winners from all the elementary and middle schools were honored. The Rally was well attended by approximately 200 students and parents showing our community’s commitment to a drug-free lifestyle.

In March, the Drug Task Force handled the issue of Internet Safety providing programs for both parents and students. About 100 parents attended the presentation by Southington Police Sgt. Lowell DePalma and they were treated to a visit by Attorney General Richard Blumenthal who has been very outspoken on his views regarding protecting kids from internet predators. Eighty-five students participated in an interactive workshop led by YMCA Teen Director Christina Rodriguez, Youth Services Director, Sue Saucier and DePaolo Peer Advocates Advisor, Donna Shea.

Some of the other grant money was used to support youth development programs, specifically Peer Advocates at the two middle school and Peer Advocates and Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) at Southington High. These students work within their schools to promote healthy decision-making in regards to tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. They also participate in statewide conferences and trainings. We have been working hard over the last several years to increase youth involvement in the Drug Task Force. Their ideas and enthusiasm are important and valuable to our community.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Youth Services offered workshops to students in Health classes on a variety of topics including dating violence, and suicide and depression. We reached over 491 8th grade students. We also were the primary trainers for 48 new middle school Peer Advocates and worked with them on projects throughout the school year.

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Youth Services staff was called on this year to assist the Guidance Department counselors at Kennedy Middle School to design and introduce presentations for all three grades on the serious issue of Internet Safety. In addition, our staff joined Southington High School Guidance Counselors in presenting Suicide Prevention and Stress Management workshops to all juniors, seniors and freshmen after our community experienced several tragedies over the past two years. This is just another example of the close relationship Youth Services has fostered over the years with the Southington School System.

One of the after school groups that we began as part of the “Girl Power” initiative is still meeting at Kennedy Middle School. Thanks to teacher, Patricia Petit, a Scrapbooking Club met throughout the year involving about 15 girls. Youth Services was glad to contribute financially to keep this club going. It offers girls a fun and productive after-school activity.

The Youth Services staff continues to be called upon to provide inservice training to Southington teachers on child abuse, suicide and depression and substance abuse issues. From August through May we visited 7 schools and updated over 260 teachers on these topics.

Our Parent Resource Information Series consisted of 5 parenting programs this year. Speakers at these sessions discussed Autism, AD/HD, Homework Strategies, Raising a Responsible Child and Teens and Driving and 89 parents attended.

We are proud of the work we are doing here at Southington Youth Services. We are able to offer a wide variety of programs and services that impact our community in a positive way. We work hard to collaborate with other youth serving organizations in Southington too because working together makes us stronger.

Respectfully submitted,

SUSAN M. SAUCIER