

Southington Youth Services

196 North Main Street

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ANNUAL REPORT

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The Youth Services Department has just completed its 40th year of operation. Responding to the needs of the community, we offer an ever changing variety of services to youth and their families. Most of our programs become filled up shortly after being announced and we often have waiting lists. This is a testament to the quality of our staff and programming, and our visibility within the community.

Southington Youth Services is now located at the Municipal Center, 196 North Main Street. This office space is new, bright and houses not only Youth Services, but also Southington's Town wide Effort to Promote Success (STEPS) our community prevention coalition which Youth Services administers. The department is in the same building as the Southington Board of Education and this has proved to be very advantageous to us.

For the 21st consecutive year, the state legislature realized the importance of community based youth service bureaus and fully funded the line item that brings Southington \$26,918 in grant money through the State Department of Education. In addition, the Enhancement Grant funding, \$7,455, intended for Youth Service Bureau direct service projects 3 years ago, was saved too. Our staffing includes a Director, 2 Counselors, a part time Youth Prevention Coordinator and a Secretary. Thanks to Year 5 of the federal Drug Free Communities Grant of \$125,000 awarded to Southington in September 2009, our part time Youth Prevention Coordinator was again funded full time to work on the Southington Town wide Effort to Promote Success initiative. For Youth Services, it was another very good year.

Youth Services Programs

Therapeutic Individual Counseling, Family Intervention, Group Counseling.

Diversion Juvenile Review Board, Alternative to Suspension.

Education Student Workshops, Parent Information Series.

Community Programs Youth Employment Service, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group, Kristen's Kloset, STEPS.

Positive Youth Development While I'm in Charge, Babysitting, CPR and STEPS Youth Committees.

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 our Municipal Center offices.

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 75 youth in individual counseling and served over 28 families. After school, our times for meeting with students were full most of this year and we often had to refer residents to other services.

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, we provided **in school group counseling** services to 101 students on topics including high school adjustment, young women's issues, grief, anger management, stress, and alcohol and drug issues.

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 11 cases were reviewed and the students were diverted from the Juvenile Court to the Juvenile Review Board. The juveniles' accountability consisted of letters of apology, an on-line education program, positive youth development activities and research essays. A total of 48 hours of community service was also completed by these students. Southington is one of 5 towns participating in a pilot program through the Court Support Services Division of the Juvenile Court. The pilot has the Southington Review Board handling cases that may have been sent directly to the Juvenile Court, but the Court deems them appropriate for Review Board action, so they are returned. Previously the Juvenile Review Board could only handle cases of juveniles who were referred directly by the police department. The Board knows what is available in our community to assist the young offender. We feel that this pilot will show a decrease in recidivism when juveniles are handled in their own communities. This program of diverting youth from the court system is valuable because it 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. Our staff facilitated 6 sessions throughout the school year and reached 16 students in this program.

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 educated 536 8th grade students at both DePaolo and Kennedy Middle Schools.

Our **Parent Information Series** consisted of 5 parenting programs this year. Sessions discussed: “Blended Families”, “My Baby’s headed to Middle School”, “Talk More Fight Less”, and “What your Child Needs to Succeed.” Thirty-seven parents attended these workshops.

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 10 jobs were filled and 31 new youth were interviewed and were accepted into the program in the spring. They will be filling jobs that will be called in to us over the 2014 summer and beyond, 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 doing. Good reports entitle these workers to special rewards compliments of the Youth Services staff!

The **Southington Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group** is supported by Southington Youth Services. Southington’s group is managed by the members who take leadership positions and plan the monthly programs. They held 10 meetings throughout the year. Last year they had 8-10 grandparents or relative caregivers attending regularly and 5-7 children were in attendance, too. A light dinner was offered as was child care and activities for the children. Meetings offered speakers on behavioral issues, childhood development, and legal issues for grandparents. For the 6th time, Southington Youth Services co-sponsored a regional Grandparents Conference again entitled “The Not-So Empty Nest: A special conference for grandparents who are raising grandchildren” with Plainville and Farmington grandparent groups. 5 grandparents from Southington were able to attend.

This was our 8th year of **Kristen’s Kloset Prom Project**. Named after a local teen tragically killed in a car accident, the program has become one of our most successful and community supported projects! It provides prom clothing and accessories to students having financial difficulties. Working with donations from local businesses, agencies and residents, the program assisted 81 Southington students with tickets, gowns, tuxes, shoes, jewelry, flowers and manicures and pedicures at no cost to them. It also included a shop in the town’s Gura Building at 93 Main Street, open during prom season where girls could obtain prom items for a small donation and 216 others took advantage of this opportunity generating funds which are turned back into the program to help other Southington students in future years. We received positive feedback again this year from students and parents who were grateful that they could find beautiful, gently used prom attire that was affordable. Also, gowns that girls brought in to swap for other gowns were extremely high quality and sometimes left the shop as soon as they were brought in! The program was run almost entirely by 27 wonderful, committed volunteers who staffed the shop, did scheduling, record keeping, up keep and even alterations. They put in over 595 hours of service to our students, families and our Town. It was a wonderful prom season!

Youth Services is a founding member of the prevention initiative entitled “Southington’s Town wide Effort to Promote Success” or **STEPS**, and the Youth Services staff manage the Drug Free Communities Grant that STEPS was awarded in 2009. Kelly Leppard, our Youth Services Prevention Coordinator heads up STEPS and does the day to day work that is required to keep the initiative at the high level of operation it has attained. The STEPS goal is to reduce risk taking behaviors among our children and youth by engaging the entire community in partnerships.

STEPS just completed year 4 of the Drug Free Communities Federal Grant and is currently in year 5. This year, STEPS has gained tremendous support throughout the community from each sector and continues to make strides in building coalition awareness and reducing youth substance use through projects, campaigns and other environmental strategies.

STEPS continued to focus on our four targeted substances which are alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and prescription drugs. Furthermore, efforts to build developmental assets remained constant in all 13 sectors of Southington. Our efforts are changing the environment in our community and the STEPS website, monthly newsletter and Facebook page provide the community with constant access to our work, information and resources.

In November, STEPS partnered with the Southington School system to administer the 3rd Search Institute Attitudes and Behaviors student survey. It was given to 7, 9 and 11th graders and measured developmental assets as well as rates of underage drinking, marijuana use, tobacco use and prescription drug abuse. The results of the survey were released to the public at a Community Forum in February and they showed decreases in usage in all age groups in all substances. Although this was great news, the STEPS coalition work continues to make environmental changes to keep this downward trending

The STEPS Youth Council proposed two ordinances to the Town Council. One ordinance had to do with retail outlets placing any drug paraphernalia behind the sales counter. The second had to do with bars and restaurants advertising happy hours or drink specials including language stating “over 21” or “positive ID required”. Both ordinances were unanimously passed by the Town Council.

With the help of a college intern, STEPS launched an intensive safe prom campaign in the spring. Billboards were purchased on both ends of Town, one targeting parents and one targeting high school students. Letters were sent home to junior and senior parents asking them to sign a pledge card to not host an underage drinking party at their home. They could then request a lawn sign and or to have their name in an ad in the newspaper advertising their pledge. For the first year, this project was very successful. 106 parents signed pledge cards, 66 posted lawn signs, 71 wanted to be included in the ad. Students were also asked to sign a pledge to stay sober on prom night. 275 students signed and their names were entered into a drawing for free prom tickets, prom flowers and prom photos. Class advisors reported to us that there were no underage drinking incidents at either prom. This is good news to us.

STEPS again hosted a TIPS Training (Training for Intervention Procedures) for bar and restaurant employees to ensure identification is properly checked when serving alcohol,

and a town-wide media campaign regarding the Social Host Law and dangers of underage drinking was done by the STEPS Parent Committee.

STEPS continues to be embedded in the Southington School System through the Asset Building Classrooms initiative, and the 5th Grade Asset Transition Program was held for the 3rd year in a row.

STEPS had another very successful year and continues to be a locally and nationally recognized coalition.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

“When I’m in Charge”, a Red Cross certified program was offered 6 times this year. Geared towards children aged 10-13, the 2 hour training teaches how to stay safe if you are left home alone. This popular program has been filled every time we have offered it. 72 students participated this year.

We also offer the Red Cross Certified **Babysitting** Course because it is in such demand. We were able to hold 5 sessions this year and 66 girls and boys became certified by taking the class and passing their tests. We will continue to hold this class as long as the demand is there. We also added a CPR and First Aid Certification class this year and offered it 2 times. We were able to certify 13 students. Summer is a good time for students to take advantage of these classes, which are offered at a reasonable fee. Another new addition to Southington Youth Services is the ability for residents to pay by credit card for the classes their children take. They can do this on-line, by phone or in person. This convenience is long overdue and is very much appreciated by our townspeople.

This has been a busy, exciting year full of great changes at Southington Youth Services. We have consistently reached all segments of the community with our programs and services and plan to continue to collaborate with town groups and organizations on other projects.

In summary, we have been able to live within our budget, increase our services and bring in grants and donations of \$39,670. We feel fortunate to have had such a productive and successful year.

Respectfully submitted,

SUSAN M. SAUCIER
Director