

Mansfield YSB Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 9, 2006
12 Noon @ Natchaug
Residential Treatment Center
189 Storrs Road
Mansfield Center, CT 06250

In attendance were: Ethel Mantzaris, Resident/Chairperson; Janit Romayko, YSB Coordinator; Jen D'Andrea, RTC/Natchaug Clinical Director; Kevin Grunwald, Director, Department of Social Services Dept; Pat Michalak, YSB Counselor; Shawnee Mason, Grade 8, Mansfield Middle School; Jake Hovanic, Grade 7, homeschooled; Brittany Cushman, Grade 7, Mansfield Middle School; Elaine Frey, Director, Residential Treatment Center @ Natchaug Hospital

Regrets: Frank Perrotti, Eileen Griffin, Chris Marphy, Jerry Marchon, Rachel Leclerc, Candace Morrell, Michael Collins, Tom Miller, Valerie Thompson

Agenda items included:

1. Update:

a). Staff attended the "End-of-Life Care" workshop sponsored by Hospice Association of America. In particular we were interested in the life care decision for families who have cancer and the effects upon children.

b). Connecticut Youth Services Association Day at the Capitol was held. In particular CYSA had requested \$750,000 for upgraded equipment but the request was subsequently denied in the budget.

c).. Juniper Hill was held on the 1st Wednesday of the month. We had a Talent Night for the seniors with several 4th graders performing. The show was quite a hit.

d). Appreciation Dinner: A ceremony and dinner was held for 15 UConn Community Service students put on by the parents and students of the Homework Group. Parents cooked a pasta dinner and the students presented their tutors with hand made awards and certificates. The UConn students will be hosting a Saturday game fest for the Homework Group students this summer.

e). Children's Trust Fund Reception: This event showcased the past and present recipients of CTF grants. CTF will be the fiduciary for the Grandparents Kinship Care Fund and small grants will be available after July 1 for grandparents through the Probate Courts.

f). NECASA Awards Dinner: The 11th Annual North East Communities Against Substance Abuse Volunteer Recognition Awards Dinner was held in Pomfret. Our YSB

Advisory Board student member, Shawnee Mason was our choice for her time spent promoting and volunteering at PAWS, Rectory and YSB Programs. Shawnee's older siblings were two of the original members of our anti-smoking group, Connecticut Youth Against Tobacco and Smoking (CYATS) funded by NECASA. One of the siblings was able to attend the event and saw Shawnee receive her medal.

2. Natchaug Hospital: Residential Treatment Center Presentation: Elaine Frey, Director . Elaine gave a historical overview of the RTC as it is the response system (for girls up to age 18) following the closing of DCF's Long Lane School in Middletown, Connecticut. The facility housed both boys and girls in an institutional setting and after several runaways and deaths, Long Lane was closed. Alternative facilities were bonded throughout the state and Natchaug Hospital received a bid for one of the RTC's. The other programs in the state are: "Slippery Stones" and "Touch Stones" both in Western Connecticut.

3. The Natchaug program now houses 9 girls and is licensed for 12. Elaine would like to increase the capacity to 14 with 1 respite bed. The facility opened in July of 2004 with a legislative mandate providing a continuum of care for girls.

A typical case is a 14 year old girl in the care of DCF who had a family no longer able to care for her. Adults behaviors were neglectful and she came to the attention of her teachers when she continually was involved in nasty behaviors and fighting in the classroom.

At the beginning of the program, it was thought that the maximum stay would be 6 to 9 months but for several it has been longer and so far, no one has been released without a suitable placement. Most of the girls are ages 13-18.

A typical day starts with breakfast at 8am and then school until 2:30pm Lunch is in the hospital cafeteria where the food choice is plentiful. After school, there are several groups including recreation, arts and crafts, coping skills and family therapy. The girls cook dinner together 3 nights a week and there are outings on the weekends. On the third Thursday of each month, the group chooses a mall to visit. Each girl has her own room and she can paint it upon arrival. There are 6 bedrooms on one side of the second floor and 6 on the other side joined by a common room and recreation area including a TV and play station. There is a separate study area and quiet place.

There is an emphasis on managing ones behaviors, manners, appropriate dress, social skills, hygiene and healthy relationships. On Friday nights, the girls are able to travel to "Ron-A-Roll" in Vernon for roller skating. Natchaug provides opportunities for the girls and wants them to believe that they do have future. Most of them have had no childhood and/or such a horrific childhood so the RTC attempts to emphasize the positives for them. The school uses a point system and tries not to punish or restrict as most of the girls have had enough negatives in their lives.

In the summer and school vacations, the girls go on day trips including, Rocky Neck, Magic Wings, Yankee Candle and Greenfield. Their schedule this summer will include 10am sessions: Current Events, Book Club, Lunch, Skills Training, Recreation and Arts and Crafts. An expressive therapist will be on board this summer to start some drama activities, music and poetry

DCF pays all of the non-school expenses and each town board of education is billed for the educational costs. The girls receive their medical and dental care at Generations in Willimantic and a psychiatrist is available 10 hours a week for consultation to the program. The girls will have a tag sale soon and have been helping at Juniper Hill Bingo with the YSB since February 2006 Valentines Day.

Elaine then gave the group a tour of the living areas, the school, the gymnasium, arts and crafts, the time out room and the recreation rooms.

Meeting adjourned 1:10pm

Respectfully submitted,

Janit Romayko
Secretary

JR/klt