

Needham Youth Services

Annual Town Report - Fiscal Year 2010

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Purpose

The mission of Needham Youth Services (formerly known as the Needham Youth Commission) is to provide leadership and a community focus on youth and family issues and to promote community wellness by: Identifying and addressing youth and family needs; Advocating for youth and family interests; Partnering with other youth and family serving agencies; Developing and implementing quality programs and services; and Educating and communicating with the public regarding youth and family issues.

Needham Youth Services operates as a mental health resource offering a wide array of confidential clinical and programmatic services to children, adolescents, and families. While the department's services are reaching more people and having a greater impact, it is clear that the need for such services far outweighs the department's resources; thus, many in Needham are not receiving support. Youth Services has worked diligently to construct meaningful services designed to meet the increasing and ever-changing needs of the Needham community.

Fiscal Year 2010 Highlights

Surviving Suicide: A Father's Journey:

This new program featured Needhamites Rich Gatto (who lost his son Greg in 2004) and Rich Roberts (who lost his son Jason in 2009) as they shared in a very public fashion what they have experienced and learned as a result of their losses. Over 175 people attended this powerful, compelling, and rewarding event. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/surviving.

Challenging Conversations...About Preventing Suicide

This program was created as an offshoot of the program “Surviving Suicide: A Father’s Journey” and was designed for a limited number of parents. “Conversations” afforded parents an opportunity to get their personal questions answered and provided a forum in which parents could share their personal concerns about others. Those who attended discussed topics such as suicide prevention, depression, and specific strategies to employ with their children, family, and friends to keep them safe. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/challenging.

QPR Suicide Prevention Trainings (Question, Persuade, Refer): The QPR Suicide Prevention model is patterned after the success of the CPR (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation) medical intervention and is based upon the several concepts including: those who most need help in a suicidal crisis are the least likely to ask for it; and that the person most likely to prevent a person dying by suicide is someone they already know. Trainings are two hours in length and are available to any community group in Needham. In the past year over 80 people were trained. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/qpr.

Safe Surf: Internet Safety for Middle School Youth and their Parents: Initially funded by the Needham Education Foundation, this program provided students and parents with the knowledge to navigate the Internet with confidence. Through workshops and written materials, students and parents learned about appropriate ways to use the Internet. In FY 2010, 400 youth participated in this program, and 300 booklets were distributed to parents (booklets were funded by the Exchange Club of Needham). In addition over 75 parents attended an evening workshop on this topic. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/safesurf.

A Conversation...For Parents of Teens: Sponsored by the Needham Women’s Club, this program allowed a maximum of nine parents per session to focus on a specific youth-related topic such as alcohol/drugs, suicide/loss, stress, and depression. Fifty parents participated in this program, and it is slated to expand in the coming year. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/aconversation.

Website: It is estimated that over the past year thousands of “hits” were registered on the Youth Services website. Residents learned about services, registered for programs, read the Needham Youth Services Annual Report, viewed pictures of the staff, and much more. Special thanks to the Information Technology Department for their support in establishing this vibrant website. Please visit the Youth Services website at www.needhamma.gov/youth.

Individual/Family Counseling: The Masters level clinicians on staff are skilled at working with youth and families who are experiencing difficulties with issues such as family discord, loss, drugs, alcohol, stress, and other mental health concerns. Who used these counseling services? They were neighbors, cousins, children, and friends; they were people with no health insurance or expired health insurance; they were people grappling with either a short or long-term problem; but mostly, they were people who had the hope and determination that life can bring greater satisfaction and reward. Perhaps the most frightening area of concern is that young people were encountering more complex issues at a younger age. It was not unusual to work with an elementary age youth coping with a significant loss, a middle school student coping with parental alcohol use, or a high school student with a serious drug problem. In the past year 530 hours of counseling were provided to Needham youth and their families. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/counseling.

Community Crisis: Over the past six years, the Needham community has grappled with the sudden loss of several young people, and Youth Services responded by outreaching to youth, parents, and families in a variety of ways --- from individual meetings, to group sessions, to the distribution of informational materials. In addition the department was actively involved in the Needham Coalition for Suicide Prevention. A significant number of staff hours were devoted to creating materials and meeting with community leaders.

Counseling/Psycho-Education Groups: Group counseling/psycho-education was a practical and effective mode of both prevention and treatment and allowed the staff the opportunity to interact with greater numbers of people over the past year. Group intervention offered a unique opportunity for young people to learn about issues which affect their peers and to receive feedback from their peers regarding issues such as: divorce, stress, self-esteem, bullying, abuse, depression, social skills, loss, drugs/alcohol, and violence/anger. Of special note was the "Extreme Looks" program, a four-day mind/body/spirit group for girls. In FY 2010, 378 hours of group counseling/psycho-education services were provided.

Substance Abuse Awareness Program: Youth Services continued to offer a structured 15-hour Substance Abuse Awareness Program (SAAP) for drug/alcohol-involved youth. This service provided an assessment of current substance use, intervention, education for youth and their families, and counseling services to support healthy lifestyles. All participants and their parents attended an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting to assist in transmitting the message that drugs and alcohol can impact any person without regard to age, gender, or status. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/saap.

Loss Program: The Loss Program was designed in collaboration with the Needham Public Schools. The mission of this program was to assist youth in addressing the frequently upsetting, overwhelming, and confusing issue of "loss." This included, for example, the death of a parent or grandparent, suicide, the separation/divorce of parents, the loss of a cherished pet or possession, or the break-up with a boyfriend/girlfriend. Loss is a topic youth will be dealing with more and more as they get older, and it is critical to understand the impact loss can have upon a young person's academic, physical, social, and emotional well-being. The Loss Program engaged 350 youth in FY 2010. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/loss.

PEEPS (Positive Education for Experiencing Peer Stress): PEEPS was an interactive workshop for 6th grade students that explored the issues of friendship and bullying. The goals of the workshop were to identify qualities students would like in a friend, understand that friends and friendships change, and to share experiences and hear feedback regarding how students would like to treat others and be treated in their peer relationships. Over the past year 345 youth participated in this program. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/peeps.

Picture Perfect: Picture Perfect was a workshop for 8th graders that investigated the issue of how the media portrays gender roles and appearance, and explored how this can negatively impact how youth can feel about themselves. The goals of the workshop were to help students learn to identify gender role stereotypes, to understand how stereotypes are portrayed in the media, and to investigate how media messages impact them on a daily basis. In FY 2010, 280 youth participated in this program. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/pictureperfect.

RAY of Hope Program: RAY (**R**ecognize **A** **Y**outh) was established by Needham Youth Services in an effort to acknowledge the outstanding service and positive contributions that young people are making to the Needham community. Working in collaboration with the Needham Business Association, each month a young person was selected as the RAY of Hope recipient and was awarded a certificate from Youth Services and a check from a member of the Needham Business Association. The RAY of Hope program validated youth and recognized their role in making the Needham community a special place to live. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/rayofhope.

Teen Dating Violence Program: Youth Services provided seminars on Teen Dating Violence for all 9th graders at Needham High School. The seminars were designed to teach the unique aspects of Teen Dating Violence, how to recognize the warning signs, and ways to access community supports. Over the past year, 400 youth were involved in this program. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/tdv.

Patrick Forde Good Person Memorial Award:

In 2005, Needham resident and community activist Patrick Forde passed away unexpectedly at the age of 51. Patrick was a person who cared deeply about Needham and about youth and families, as well as being supportive of the work of Needham Youth Services. In an effort to honor Patrick, this award is given annually to a Needham resident who has helped make Needham a better place to live through his/her volunteer work and commitment. This award is recognition that through volunteerism and caring, each person in our community is able to enhance Needham. Last year's first recipient was Dr. Connie Barr, and this year's recipient was Mr. Bill Dermody. Over 100 people attended this year's award ceremony. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/fordeaward.

Needham Unplugged: Electronics are a wonderful part of life --- people learn, communicate, and access information from electric powered devices and watch TV or surf the Internet as a way to relax and to relieve the stress of daily life. Unfortunately being so "plugged in" can isolate people. Instead of interacting with family and friends, people all too often become passive voyeurs. Needham Unplugged was an awareness campaign to remind families and residents to "unplug their electronics" and "plug into" each other. "Unplugged" was a reminder that there is more to life than what is on the other side of a plug. A calendar for the month of March outlined activities that did NOT require electricity and emphasized person-to-person interaction and health. The centerpiece of this year's "unplugged" occurred on March 12th; it was the no-homework, no sports, and no meeting night for the Needham Public Schools, and there were no town meetings and virtually no civic, religious, or community meetings took place in Needham. Many area communities such as Newton, Belmont, and Holliston were impressed enough to replicate this program in their communities. Special thanks to partners at the Park and Recreation Department and the Charles River YMCA, Needham Board of Selectmen, and to the Needham Public Schools for their support. Learn more about Needham Unplugged at www.needhamma.gov/youth/needhamunplugged.

Employment and Volunteer Programs: The Employment Program consisted of two primary services: 1) Youth were linked with residents and provided around-the-home support in the form of babysitting, yard-work, and snow removal; and 2) Youth investigated employment opportunities in local businesses such as offices and restaurants. Additionally, the Volunteer Resource Listing was created to inform youth of area volunteer opportunities. In FY 2010 these programs fielded 303 inquiries. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/employment.

Peer Tutor Program: The Youth Services' Peer Tutor Program represented a progressive youth-to-youth collaboration. This program matched high school students with middle and elementary school students in need of academic or organizational/study skills assistance. Needham Youth Services' role consisted of outreach to potential participants, training of high school volunteers, monitoring weekly tutoring sessions, providing support if problems occurred, and facilitating communication between volunteers and participant families. Over the past year, Peer Tutor Program volunteers provided 1,590 hours of support to younger students. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/peertutor.

Make A Statement Day: This program was implemented at Needham High School for students and staff. Aimed at promoting diversity, tolerance, and understanding by creating an opportunity for students and staff to communicate about issues of importance to them, students and staff created and wore t-shirts with quotes, statistics, and/or statements about meaningful issues in order to raise awareness and have a voice. In the fifth year of operation, over 900 participated in this event this past year. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/masd.

Books and Bridges - The Parent/Child Book Club: Using literature as a bridge between generations, this program consisted of an interactive two-session program for mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, parent and sons, and parent and daughters to explore issues of mutual interest and concern. Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/booksandbridges.

Take Back the Night: Take Back the Night was a community-wide event organized and led by Needham High School students to promote awareness about domestic and dating abuse. The focus of the evening was prevention through education and it was sponsored by the Needham Domestic Violence Action Committee (of which Youth Services is an active member). The event featured live music, a candle light vigil, guest speakers, and resources/information; over 150 participated in the 2010 event.

Parents Please Talk With Your Mouth Full: "Parents" was a unique collaboration between Needham Youth Services and Sweet Basil Restaurant. During these one evening workshops parents enjoyed a terrific meal and had the opportunity to share, learn, laugh, and talk about the joys and challenges of parenting (prior to the workshop parents are assigned articles to read about parenting). The workshops were offered to parents of middle and high school age youth.

Project VAN (Volunteers Around Needham): VAN offered youth ages 13 to 17 the opportunity to work as part of a team providing valuable community service to non-profit organizations in Needham. Sites included Charles River ARC, Needham Park and Recreation Department, Needham Community Council, Needham Public Library, Needham Council on Aging, and Wingate at Needham. Project VAN is generously supported by the Needham Community Council. VAN participants provided more than 400 person hours of free volunteer services over the past summer. Learn more online at www.needhamma.gov/youth/projectvan.

Graduate/Undergraduate Internship Program: In FY 2010, Needham Youth Services welcomed a clinical intern from Boston College Graduate School of Counseling to provide individual, family, and group counseling services as well as extensive work on the Peer Tutor Program. Over the course of the academic year, interns provided over 800 hours of free service to the Needham community.

Diversion/Restitution Program: In conjunction with the Needham Police Department and the Dedham District Court, Needham Youth Services continued to offer youth who have committed minor violations of the law the opportunity to participate in community service work in lieu of further court action and/or fines. The department's role was to work with offenders and their families to identify the motivations for their behavior, to provide support as required, and to oversee the placement and completion of community service. In the past year, participating youth completed assignments at the Needham Public Library. In FY 2010 Needham Youth Services supervised over 86 hours of community service to the Town of Needham. Learn more online at www.needhamma.gov/youth/diversion.

Seminars/Workshops /Presentations: Needham Youth Services designed and facilitated numerous trainings in the past year including a training for new Needham Public School Staff, Babysitter Training Seminars, presentations at the schools and in the community and many others. In FY 2010 the Needham Youth Services worked with a total of 3,866 youth, parents, and professionals in seminars and/or workshops.

E-Mail Sign Up: In an effort to inform youth and families of the services of Needham Youth Services, e-mail addresses from residents were accepted and information was sent regarding programs (to date our list-serve is many hundred and growing daily). To date over 1,800 residents have registered for this service. Residents can register for this free service at www.needhamma.gov/youth/email.

Partnerships: Needham Youth Services received grants and/or donations from the following organizations: Needham Community Council, Tolman Trust Fund, Rotary Club of Needham, Domestic Violence Action Committee, Needham Women's Club, Exchange Club of Needham, Middlesex Savings Bank, and many more local businesses, and private citizens.

Needham Youth Services devoted considerable time working with the larger community and over the past year collaborated with groups such as:

- Needham Domestic Violence Action Committee (DVAC)
- YMCA --- Charles River Branch
- Needham Business Association
- Needham Clergy Association
- Needham Public Library
- Needham Council on Aging
- Needham Park and Recreation
- Riverside Community Care
- Regional Center for Healthy Communities
- Needham Community Council
- Needham Coalition for Suicide Prevention
- Needham Public Schools
- School Health Advisory Council
- Healthy Needham 2011
- Avery Crossing
- Wingate at Needham
- Marks Moving Service
- Charles River Center
- Needham Housing Authority

Publications: Needham Youth Services created and/or distributed the following original publications in FY 2010 Learn more at www.needhamma.gov/youth/publications.

- Needham Youth Card
- KIDS Survival Guide
- Parent Guide to Teen Parties
- Ask the Youth Commission
- Information on Suicide
- Parenting Literature
- Making the Middle School Years Work
- Networks Book
- Safe Surf: Internet Safety for Middle School Youth and their Parents

FISCAL YEAR 2010 Statistics

Needham Youth Services programs have grown in scope --- over a decade ago there was virtually no support for parents, and today there exists a range of parenting programs such as “Safe Surf: Internet Safety Parent Program” and “A Conversation...For Parents of Teens.” In addition, Needham Youth Services is servicing more of the community with no increase in staff. Over the past five years, program usage by the community has skyrocketed; as an illustration of the growth of the department, below is a brief statistical comparison of two Youth Services programs over the past 3 years.

	Workshops/Training/Seminar Participants	Peer Tutor Program Hours
FY 2010	3866	1590
FY 2005	2633	1335
Percent Increase 2005 - 2010	46%	19%

Statistics are kept for all programs as well as at the conclusion of all programs, participants complete evaluations in an effort to assist the staff in understanding the impact and value of each program/service. Comprehensive statistical summaries for the past five years are available online at: www.needhamma.gov/youth/reports, and individual program evaluations may be obtained by contacting the Youth Services office.