

BOWIE YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT, FISCAL YEAR 2009 (7/1/2008 to 6/30/2009)

Submitted: July 31, 2009

Director's Comments

Bowie Youth & Family Services (BYFS) continues to offer quality services to the residents of the City of Bowie and others residing within Prince George's County. Dedication and commitment to excellence are the hallmarks of the staff and of the services offered. Their superior training and active interest in new or creative ways of service make the difference between good therapy and excellent therapy. Youth & Family Services is invested in our community and works to insure that excellent therapy and superb programming are available to the citizens we serve. Following the Director's Comments please note a brief list of statements collected from clients, Mentors and students that demonstrates the range of appreciation for this work and this agency.

The favorable response from the community during this past year and the interest in the business of Youth & Family Services have only served to increase the dedication of staff to the mission of the agency which states:

"The Bowie Youth & Family Services Division's mission is to provide community-based mental health services for the families of the Bowie community, to improve understanding and communication between parents and youth, to prevent youth from entering the formal juvenile justice system, and to increase the safety of our community through drug and alcohol prevention activities. We are dedicated to providing excellent professional services and innovative programming in order to help and support those citizens who are experiencing emotional difficulties and family stress."

This year was one of financial crisis for many families within the City of Bowie and the County at large. Many of the families we served were directly impacted by this world-wide crisis. Home foreclosures and job loss were often reported by clients. The State of Maryland lowered the amount given to Youth Services Bureaus, of which Bowie Youth & Family Services is one, although not as much was taken from the Youth Services Bureaus' programming as was taken from other State funded programs. This reduction amounted to 4.8% of the State donation to BYFS, or \$5,442. Fortunately, the City of Bowie continues to recognize the importance of the work Youth & Family Services offers and thus maintains our budget with an amount that allows for services to be continued at a level that truly makes an impact on the population being served.

During the past year over 900 individuals were served for counseling services alone. That number includes 261 families, 83 individuals and a small number of groups. In addition to the counseling services, staff with Youth & Family Services impacted residents on other levels such as the Teen Job Bank, Lecture Series, "Night Out" activities, Teen Mentoring Program (TMP) and Drug and Alcohol Outreach programs at Elementary, Middle and High Schools within the Bowie community. Youth & Family Services maintains that since all of the generations of a family participate in the lives of children and youth, seniors are also integral to positive family life. A workshop for 35 seniors was given at the senior fair this past fall and ongoing workshops are planned for the coming fall. The Teen Mentoring Program alone drew approximately 100 volunteers for this popular and valuable community service, while other school-based prevention activities, such as Project SAVE, served hundreds of participants.

COMMENTS FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPANT EVALUATIONS:

Counseling:

"My counselinghas been tremendously helpful in my healing process. Thank you!"

"This was a service we really needed. Since a lot of our situation was financial, we could never have afforded help when we truly needed it! The fact that Bowie provided this was a blessing to us and I know others like us."

"The Bowie Youth Center was a Godsend.....May you continue to provide these programs to our citizens."

"Our lives have changed a great deal because we came here."

"Thanks for helping her become the teenager we thought she could be."

"I could never steal again, and my personal problems seem like nothing to me now. I'm happy."

"The support we got was outstanding. I appreciate the patience, insight and kindness."

"The staff at Bowie Youth & Family is exceptional."

"This is a wonderful program. You have touched our family and helped us through some very important redirection. Thank you! I am so grateful!"

"Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

"Communication between our family members improved."

"Your agency helped our family realize problems that occurred that as parents we couldn't identify."

“We have noticed a much needed improvement in our teenage son.”

“I am grateful tofor the care ...provided to [family] at a time when we really needed it. And we could not have done better anywhere, no matter the fee.”

Mentoring:

“It was a great experience and I had a lot of fun with my mentor. It also was a commitment to each other.” (student)

“I was able to see a more clear point of view from my mentor on how I could make decisions.” (student)

“I like that it was someone to talk to and keep you going on the right path.” (student)

“I felt that I did accomplish these goals because I constantly worked hard and my grades are looking better than I thought.” (student)

“I can’t find a reason not to like this program.” (Mentor)

“Great experience – very fulfilling and fun!” (Mentor)

“It’s tough being a mentor – but lots of fun too.” (Mentor)

“Only positive outcomes can occur with a program such as this. Young people need a lot of affirmation.” (Mentor)

1. Progress in Implementation of Program Goals

Counseling, community education, parenting, therapeutic group activities and school based programming continued this past year with increased community interest and participation. The number of families seeking counseling increased as did the number of community volunteers who applied for Mentor roles in the popular and successful Teen Mentoring Program. The following paragraphs address the highlights of the programming.

a. Community Education, Parenting, and Therapeutic Group Activities

ADHD Education – This includes two weekly groups which meet for eight weeks. The parent group helps the family with a child who has a diagnosis of ADHD/ADD focus on how to best navigate the ups and downs of this syndrome. The parents’ group runs simultaneously with the children’s group. Adults learn about ADHD, new ways to help their child, and how the disorder in a child affects the family. The children’s group focuses on the improvement of social skills.

Active Parenting of Teens – A popular group for parents that focuses on learning practical skills to help develop cooperation and responsibility in their teen.

Girls Count! – A group for High School girls to explore their values and concerns and learn how to nurture their true selves, share ideas about everyday issues and learn about making important choices and decisions. The group focuses on themes such as self-image, assertiveness, decision-making, peer pressures, etc.

Social Skills for Elementary School Children – A small, interactive group for fourth and fifth graders, helping them navigate the sometimes complex skills required for developing positive relationships,

Trainings for Teen Mentors – Each year the Mentors are asked to attend trainings of best practices information on how to engage youth in a mentoring relationship and the parameters that this relationship requires.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren – In collaboration with an event at the Senior Center, staff from Youth & Family Services presented a lecture on "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren" at the Information Event & Fair on October 1, 2008.

Lecture Series – Lectures were offered on a variety of topics, which included:

Motivation, Inspiration, and Encouragement – Sometimes children don't try their best, even when they are "smart". Research shows that innate intelligence is not a benchmark for academic success. Parents learned what motivates children to develop the courage to attempt tasks that can be daunting. They learned how to give their child a voice and how children can learn and grow from mistakes.

Tools for the ADHD/ADD Parent – Parents learned tried and proven techniques that are useful with children who have ADHD & ADD. They obtained resources for ongoing support and strategies for both home and school.

b. Alternative Alcohol/Drug-free Activities & Community Leadership/Awareness

Bowie Youth & Family Services continues to place a high priority on the health and safety of young people and their families in the Bowie community. Through best practices in prevention, the work of the Prevention Coordinator includes community building and outreach, prevention education for youth & their parents, asset building, alternative activities, and youth development and engagement projects.

The BYFS Prevention Coordinator is able to bring the resources of other communities, the County and the State to benefit the families of Bowie through effective partnerships and interaction. (A list of partnering agencies follows this section). Through the **Bowie Prevention Network (BPN)** individuals and agencies working with youth meet to share information, to

program plan, and to build partnerships to best utilize resources and create effective strategies to benefit youth and their families. The primary prevention focus is positive youth development, school success, substance abuse, violence, and gang prevention.

In 2009 the BPN conducted three youth and adult focus groups and a youth survey. The results were both helpful and encouraging. Overall, Bowie teens are “normal”, as their needs closely correlate to those of other Maryland communities as reflected in data from the Maryland Adolescent Survey. Bowie teens demonstrated their need for meaningful connections with caring adults, positive parental involvement, safety in school and neighborhoods, accurate and adequate education in the areas of school success, community resources, consequences of risky behavior, and a sense of belonging and community attachment.

The local survey reflecting students’ perceptions of harm from a variety of risk factors was appropriately high for inhalants, crack/cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines; but frighteningly low for drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and the misuse of prescription drugs.

Also interesting to note is that one in three youth see themselves as marginalized and in need of help to succeed in school and the community. Factors identified by the youth included financial stress and priorities of parents, family problems, divorce, communication problems, peer pressure, single parent household, parental substance abuse, school difficulty, and lack of someone with whom to talk.

The encouraging results from those surveyed were a reported interest in community connections that is greater than the State-wide survey and a later age onset of first use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana.

This data supports the reports conveyed by educators, the Student Assistance Program (SAP) and youth service providers since the inception of the Bowie Prevention Network in 2001. This is helpful in knowing we are on the right path in prevention planning and the importance of ongoing work.

Partnering Agencies:

The Prevention Coordinator works in conjunction with the following partnering agencies, as well as others:

- Prince George’s County Prevention Office, Prince George’s County Health Department
- Prince George’s County Office of Safe and Drug-free Schools
- The Maryland Community Coalition Development Initiative
- The Safety Driven Organization
- The Greener Pastures Non-profit Corporation
- The Youth as Resources Partnership
- The Maryland Mentoring Partnership
- The Bowie Health Center
- The Bowie Chamber of Commerce

Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention
The Human Resources Coalition of Prince George's County
The Community Services Coalition
The Prince George's Community College Volunteer Resources Committee
The Maryland National-Capital Parks and Planning Commission
Washington Regional Alcohol Prevention team
The S.T.E.P. Network
Bowie State University, Office of Substance Abuse Prevention
University of Maryland, Department of Education
Local public and private Elementary, Middle and High Schools and their PTA/PTSA's

The Teen Mentoring Program, now in its seventh year, continues successfully at the Belair Annex and the Main Campus of Bowie High School (BHS). The transition services created by the TMP to assist students as they move from Middle School to High School continues, even though the County has cut the parent liaison positions from the Middle Schools. This reinforces the value to the students in the TMP and to others, as early identification of students who are at risk of dropping out or delinquency is a critical tool in insuring success in ninth grade and reducing the high number of year-end non-promotes. Students have self-referred to the Teen Mentoring Program at record numbers this year. Due to budgetary restrictions the program was capped at 35 active matches but could have risen to 50 if funding were available.

Adult volunteers from the community and civic groups continue to inquire about becoming Mentors. The program has been very successful with some 85% of the students and Mentors returning each year. This year, as in most previous years, those not returning have completed High School.

The Mentors and their students continued meeting on a weekly basis through mid-May, completing a most successful year. The Prevention Coordinator and the Teen Mentoring Coordinator conducted the year-end activities of the Teen Mentoring Program at Bowie High School and a year-end luncheon at the Bowie Library. The Mentors and students expressed their appreciation, received awards and completed a survey to assess the benefits of the program and the participants' intentions to return and continue the program in the coming year. We were excited to celebrate the graduation of five seniors from BHS, all of whom began with our program four years ago when their prospects for High School success were at risk.

The highlight of the many successes that have been experienced this year in the Teen Mentoring Program is the realization of the long time goal of creating a transition piece between the Middle Schools and the High School that serves to refer students at the earliest possible date to the Teen Mentoring Program. This component was piloted two years ago, fully implemented last year and now continues to support referrals to the Teen Mentoring Program. Our referrals far outnumber our current capacity to serve all of the requests. The outcome of a Federal Recovery Act grant application is pending. The award of this grant will provide the support needed to continue this valuable program at the level of 50 active matches.

The Prevention Coordinator served as a judge in the competition for scholarships sponsored by the Office of Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs at Bowie State University. Thirty-plus students applied for the five scholarships, each valued at \$1,000. Fifteen of the applicants were invited to present to the faculty and judges their research in a chosen area of substance abuse and prevention.

The Prevention Coordinator was a guest presenter at area Elementary Schools at the PTA meetings throughout the year. Topics varied based on the request of the PTA and included: Inhalant Abuse Awareness and Prevention, substance abuse prevention talks for parents and children, and Developing Capable Young People (substance abuse prevention strategies for preteens). She also participated in the Back-to-School Night programs at Bowie High School, Benjamin Tasker Middle School, Rockledge Elementary, Tulip Grove Elementary, and Yorktown Elementary Schools. Prevention education, Youth Services and Teen Mentoring literature was distributed to the hundreds of parents that attended these events. At the Elementary Schools, the Coordinator accompanied the guidance staff through the evening's schedule and was able to personally meet numerous parents and children. Information about the Community Prevention Network and Bowie Youth & Family Services Bureau was shared with parents and educators at all of the various meetings throughout the year, community health fairs, as well as events at public and private schools.

The Prevention Coordinator worked with four area Elementary Schools to conduct the substance abuse prevention-oriented reading program, **Project Save**. Eight second grade classes participated in the reading and writing program. Awards assemblies were conducted with parents in attendance. Fourth and fifth grade students assisted in conducting the program and organizing the awards assemblies. This proved to be advantageous to both the older and younger students in that the older students were asked to learn about substance abuse prevention and then convey it to their younger classmates. The featured book, Stone Soup, was the guiding focus for the art and writing projects completed by the second grade students. It also was incorporated in the performance given by storyteller, Bobby Webb. The children and the adults at the awards assemblies enjoyed the storyteller and music, as well as viewing the students work. Each program included a reception with light fare for all participating students and their parents.

The Prevention Coordinator met with the PTA Board members at each of the Bowie Elementary and Middle Schools this year to offer substance abuse prevention education, inform them of the services of Bowie Youth & Family Services and to gather their input regarding the needs of youth and their families within the City of Bowie.

The Prevention Coordinator met with guidance counselors and principals of Bowie Elementary Schools, Benjamin Tasker Middle School, and Bowie High School for back-to-school conferences and for planning **Red Ribbon Week and Substance Abuse Prevention activities**. Several Bowie private schools were also contacted, including Grace Christian, Belair Baptist, Trinity, and St Pius X.

c. New Program Initiatives Summary

The Prevention Coordinator met with a staff liaison from the University of Maryland, Department of Education to explore the start of a mentoring program at schools serving the Fort Meade military families and the students in the Bowie community. It is planned that early in the 2009-10 academic year a pilot project will begin to explore collaboration in the areas of teen mentoring, as well as early Elementary and Middle School substance abuse prevention education. It is hoped that in the coming year plans can be developed to work together in program planning and data collection.

The Maryland Student Assistance Program (MSAP) had been active at both Samuel Ogle and Benjamin Tasker Middle Schools for the past few years. This past fall Bowie High School joined in the effort to evaluate teens that were potentially at risk for substance abuse. This County-wide program is designed to help students who may be at risk of or currently using drugs or alcohol and helps by intervening before a crisis occurs. This past year school based MSAP teams requested 11 assessments of students.

d. Job Bank Summary

The total number of teens signed up with the Teen Job Bank is 152, including 83 boys and 69 girls. The teens are available to be hired by the City of Bowie residents for the following jobs: lawn and yard work, babysitting, pet sitting, housework, shopping, minor construction, typing/computer work and shoveling snow. Residents were contacted after completion of the work and most were very satisfied, remarked they would again use this service and they would highly recommend it to others.

2. Staffing

All of the staff within Bowie Youth & Family Services is dedicated to insuring that families and youth within the City of Bowie are given the best, professional help and care that is necessary to attain positive outcomes for their family concerns. Very few of the programs or activities of Bowie Youth & Family Services takes place in isolation. Counseling staff and the Prevention Coordinator willingly involve themselves in numerous roles during any given year, such as helping facilitate the Teen Mentoring Program; assisting with groups; facilitating groups in other City venues, such as the Senior Center; volunteering for Police sponsored events; organizing functions for local entities at Allen Pond; and others. The Teen Mentoring activities include trainings for volunteers, interviewing for teen Mentors and participating in ceremonies and other Mentor/student activities. While parenting or children's groups and family counseling remain the mainstay of a counselor's job, time is always found to help with these additional activities. The Prevention Coordinator often helps with networking in the schools and community to ascertain community needs for particular services. Much of the preparation, planning and setup required for all Youth & Family Services activities is done collaboratively.

The Director sits on the Board of the Maryland Association of Youth Services Bureaus (MAYSB) and acts as Treasurer. The Prevention Coordinator chairs the Bowie Prevention

Network, which is composed of members from schools, community groups and agencies in Bowie and the surrounding areas. Additionally, the Prevention Coordinator supervises the Volunteer Coordinator. This individual has been valuable in insuring that the Teen Mentoring Program is running smoothly and that new and returning volunteers are attended to appropriately. One Family Counselor serves as an assessor and team member for the Maryland Student Assistance Program at Benjamin Tasker and Samuel Ogle Middle Schools and Bowie High School.

Staff Changes

This year saw no changes in the staffing for Youth & Family Services.

Interns

Two graduate interns, both from Argosy University, completed their academic year with BYFS. One intern is continuing with a doctorate program and the other will work toward licensure with her completed master's degree.

3. Staff Training Summary

Training is an important part of the ongoing skill-building necessary for all helping professionals. Not only is training required by the licensing departments for the particular discipline, it is also very important for the growth and professional integrity of these individuals. Various staff attended trainings during this fiscal year at conferences or workshops and shared relevant information with the other staff. Trainings for all staff included a seminar on Bowen Theory and Applied Therapy, and consultations on EMDR and Sandtray therapy.

4. Review of Budgetary Issues

Bowie Youth & Family Services recognizes the community support from families, businesses and schools and is honored to serve the City of Bowie. The Council of the City of Bowie, Prince George's County officials, State legislators and department administrators throughout the State of Maryland recognize the services offered by Youth Services Bureaus and the valuable resource they play within their own local communities. Youth Services Bureaus are noted for their valuable contribution to the lives and well-being of the communities within which they operate.

Late this year Youth & Family Services was informed that, due to the budgetary constraints in the State of Maryland, there would be a required 4.8% reduction in the annual grant award from the State. This reduction will begin in FY 2010 and totals \$5,442. Bowie Youth & Family Services was glad to note that this reduction was less than other programming deductions throughout the County and the State. This year MAYSB (Maryland Association of Youth Services Bureaus) was successful in getting a source of potential funding through the Federal Budget Bill that will be voted on later this year. If awarded this would allow for an additional \$50,000 per year for up to three years. Additionally, this year an application was made for \$500,000 in stimulus money that would help in funding the popular and successful Teen

Mentoring Program for the next four years. A decision is expected on this grant within the next few weeks. Fees and contributions for Youth & Family Services totaled \$6,767 in FY 2009.

During these hard fiscal times it is crucial that these types of services continue. Many families are in a constant state of stress due to financial pressures. This stress adds to the burden each family already faces and sometimes this stress leads to dire problems. Maryland alone has had many reports of extreme violence due to families suffering from economic pressures. The recognition that emotional health is crucial and important to their families speaks highly of a community. The City of Bowie should rightfully be proud of their support of these services for their most vulnerable residents.