

Tompkins County Youth Services Department

Quarter 4 Newsletter, November 2019



A Message from the Director

Greetings from the Youth Services Department!

During the holidays it seems that the world around us seems to speed up. You cannot walk into any store without being bombarded with decorations, your social media pages are slammed with advertisements, and your email inboxes overflow with sales of the century. I don't know about you, but sometimes under all this pressure, I find it hard to remember why we do all this in the first place.

I started thinking about what it would actually look like if we decided to focus less on the "stuff" and more on showing authentic gratitude. It turns out that the word gratitude comes from

the Latin word gratia, which means grace, graciousness, or gratefulness. This term can apply to both the tangible or intangible things that a person receives.

An online article from Harvard Health Publishing updated on June 5, 2019, said, "In multiple research studies those individuals who express gratitude feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships." That sounds great but are there really practical ways that you and your family can cultivate and practice gratitude in your daily routines? Good news! The Harvard Health article suggests that there are several:

- **Write a thank-you note.** You can make yourself happier and nurture your

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relationship with another person by writing a thank-you letter expressing your enjoyment and appreciation of that person's impact on your life. Send it, or better yet, deliver and read it in person if possible. Make a habit of sending at least one gratitude letter a month. Occasionally, write one to yourself.

- **Keep a gratitude journal.** Make it a habit to write down or share with a loved one thoughts about the gifts you've received each day.
- **Count your blessings.** Pick a time every week to sit down and write about your blessings — reflecting on what went right or what you are grateful for. Sometimes it helps to pick a number — such as three to five things — that you will identify each week. As you write, be specific and think about the sensations you felt when something good happened to you.

However you choose to express gratitude this holiday season, we want you to know we are so thankful for each of you! We have the best jobs in the world because we get to make a difference in the lives of the youth in Tompkins County!

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Tompkins County Youth Services Newsletter! Please don't hesitate to contact me with your questions or comments.

Sincerely,
Kate Shanks-Booth
Email: kshanks@tompkins-co.org

The Tompkins County Bullying Prevention Task Force

Since its launch in March 2019, members of the Tompkins County Bullying Prevention Taskforce have been busy increasing awareness and engaging in a community conversation around the issue of bullying through several community events and initiatives.

A few highlights:



Martha Robertson, Legislature chair; Kate Shanks-Booth, director of the Tompkins County Youth Services; Bridgette Nugent, Task Force co-coordinator and deputy director of TCYSD.

- **On October 1st, the Tompkins County Legislature presented Tompkins County's first Bullying Prevention Proclamation**, dedicating October 19th as the county's inaugural Bullying Prevention Day. October is National Bullying Prevention Month and October

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7th marked World Day of Bullying Prevention.

- **Tompkins County marks October 7th as Bullying Prevention Day** – Approximately 200 youth and adults attended a rally at GIAC to mark October 7th as Tompkins County Bullying Prevention Day. Attendees of the event witnessed a reading of the Proclamation, performances, and stories shared by the youth on the topic of bullying. School districts and after school programs across Tompkins County also marked this day by wearing blue and organizing anti-bullying campaigns and events in their respective communities throughout the month of October.



October 7th Bullying Prevention Day at GIAC

- **GIAC's Festival of Nations** – The Bullying Prevention Taskforce hosted a table at this community celebration,

encouraging attendees to answer questions related to the issue of bullying,

sign a pledge to stand up to Bullying and share their input on how best to address bullying in their schools and other spaces.

- **Sophie Fund Cupcake Contest** - The Bullying Prevention Taskforce hosted a table at this community event, sharing information on the work of the Taskforce and seeking input from community members on how best to address the issue of bullying.
- **November 19th Community Café on the topic at GIAC** - The first in a series of Community Cafés was held at GIAC. There were over 30 adults and several children who came out to discuss the topic of Bullying Prevention in Tompkins County.

Those in attendance heard a local youth share her powerful testimony around her personal struggles with bullying and her



November 19th Community Café at GIAC

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homework assignment for caring adults to step in and help youth who are in need. It was a powerful evening, and we look forward to repeating this even in other municipalities within Tompkins County within the next few months.

The Association of New York State Youth Bureaus announces the winner of 2019 Pauline (Polly) M. Sanders Award at their 49th Annual Youth Development Leadership Training Conference in Albany, NY.

Pauline (Polly) M. Sanders was the first Executive Director of the Chemung County Youth Bureau in 1977. In 1993, she was appointed as commissioner of Social Services for Chemung County and later in 2000 would be appointed Commissioner of Human Services. For over 20 years, Polly was known for demonstrating a very creative, unique, and collaborative approach in meeting the needs of youth and their families. She unexpectedly passed away on May 9, 2001. In honor of both her life and her legacy, the Association of NYS Youth Bureaus decided in 2002, to award the first every Pauline (Polly) M. Sanders Award.

We are proud to announce that the 2019 Pauline M. Sanders award was presented to our own Janice Johnson, Coordinator of Community Youth Services of Tompkins County for her work with the Municipal Youth

Services System (MYSS). Janice began her tenure with Tompkins County Youth Services in 1990 and was instrumental in the creation of a new grassroots partnership between the Municipalities of Tompkins County and the Tompkins County Legislature.



The MYSS would be based on an agreement between the Tompkins

County Legislature and each local municipality to jointly fund a newly created local youth commission. These local youth commissions would have utilized data from their community needs assessment to determine how those funds would be allocated to funds programs focused on addressing the specific needs of youth in their area.

While there have been changes and adaptations to the Municipal Youth Services System over the last thirty years, one thing has remained the same and that is the dedication and support that Janice provides to local youth and youth commissions in Tompkins County.

On behalf of the entire Youth Services Department, we want to say congratulations to you, Janice! We are so grateful for your leadership and work on the Municipal Youth Service System and cannot think of a person

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who deserves this recognition more than you do

Achieving Youth Results 2.0

The original AYR was launched back in 2015, giving life to the collective voices of the community members, youth, and families in Tompkins County. From this conversation emerged six areas of focus that were determined to be the building blocks for a strong foundation to support the youth of Tompkins County and their families.

On September 18, 2019, the Tompkins County Youth Services Department was joined by several of our local partners to launch the AYR 2.0 Initiative. Below are the updated areas of focus, along with each of their goals, specific indicators, and strategies associated with each of them in AYR 2.0.

1. Community

Goal: Our community will provide children, youth and families with healthy, safe and thriving environments.

Indicator(s): (1) Students who self-report they feel safe in their neighborhood. (2) Percentage of TC youth living below the poverty level

Strategies: (1) Increase the number of youth-friendly community centers (formal and informal). (2) Bring food and education to people where they are (mobile education/ food/ clothing).

2. Economic Security

Goal: Youth will be prepared for their eventual economic security

Indicator(s): (1) TC Youth (Ages 16-24) Unemployment Rate. (2) High School Drop Out Rate

Strategies: (1) Increase opportunities for soft skill development. (2) Work with schools and employers to develop a more robust school-to-career pipeline.

3. Education

Goal: Youth will leave school prepared to live, learn and work in their community

Indicator(s): (1) Tompkins Students High School Graduation Rates in Cohort Groups (5-year outcome). (2) Percentage of Tompkins County Public School 3rd Grade Students Score at 3-4 Levels on ELA.

Strategies: (1) Compile a list of top 10 things or skills children should have to be successful in kindergarten and work to ensure daycare providers are aware and have access to this list. (2) Support the development of parent advocates throughout the county/community. (3) Increase volunteerism and community connections of youth in each school district through a commitment from the school districts to help youth explore community and business opportunities.

4. Engagement

Goal: Children and youth will demonstrate a commitment to their community as contributing members of their families, schools, and neighborhood.

Indicator(s): (1) Percentage of Students (grade 7-12) who self-report that they have participated 10 or more times in clubs, organizations or activities in the school or the

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the community within the past year. (2) Students who report there are lots of adults in neighborhood to talk about something important

Strategies: (1) Coordinate existing programs so that they can utilize similar resources (space, publicity, location, transportation, timing, etc.). (2) Increase the number of intergenerational programs offered by service providers. (3) Support further mentoring programs for youth within rural communities and other specialized populations

5. Family

Goal: Families will provide children with safe, stable, and nurturing environments.

Indicator(s): (1) The number of Tompkins County youth, 0-21, in foster care at year-end. (2) The number of Tompkins County children and youth in indicated reports of abuse/maltreatment

Strategies: (1) Implement and expand programs and resources to reduce chronic absenteeism rates in Tompkins County schools. (2) Utilize informal community spaces (fire departments, service organizations, churches, etc.) to provide resources for families such as fresh foods, gardens, classes, programming, etc. (3) Expand and improve access to formal parenting supports and classes.

6. Physical and Emotional Health

Goal: Children and youth will have optimal physical and emotional health.

Indicator(s): (1) The number of Youth Who Report They Are Sad or Depressed Most Days.

(2) Tompkins County Youth Reporting Current Marijuana Use

Strategies: (1) Increase access to mental health providers in rural communities and among the underserved population. (2) Develop an education campaign that helps the community understand the importance of social and emotional development for children and youth at all ages and stages and the impacts of mental health needs and substance use.

The Tompkins County Youth Services Department would like to thank those community partners who attended our AYR 2.0 launch. We encourage you to visit our webpage at <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/youth/AYR> to keep up-to-date on the exciting work that is being done and will continue to evolve around these areas over the next few months.

Tompkins County CSEC Summit Human Trafficking: A Medical Response

Tompkins County Youth Services, in partnership with the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County, welcomed over 60 medical professionals and advocates to Hotel Ithaca on September 25, 2019, to raise awareness of all forms of human trafficking, recognize the signs, and to develop protocols in their settings to respond using a trauma-informed lens.

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Conference participants heard from trafficking survivor and author, Jasmine Grace, who provided an honest and inspiring account of her experiences as a victim of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Tara Hughes, LCSW-R then led the group through two workshops: Human Trafficking 101 for Medical Professionals and Developing a Response Protocol Using Trauma-Informed Care. Audience members represented emergency rooms, schools, first responders, and private clinics across the region. All walked away with increased awareness of the issue of human trafficking, as well as practical tools to implement response protocols within their respective settings. This conference and all community training on the topic of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), which is a form of trafficking, are funded by New York State's Office of Children and Family Services Safe Harbour program.

For more information on the local response to the sexual exploitation of youth in Tompkins County visit: www.listenforthesigns.org
For local press coverage of this event visit: <https://www.weny.com/clip/14917276/human-trafficking>

Quarterly Spotlight: Sara Watrous joins the Tompkins County Youth Services Board

The work of the Tompkins County Youth Services Department is supported by a group of local volunteers that dedicate their time and talents to serve on of Youth Services Advisory Board. This month we reached out to Sara

Watrous, one of our newest board members, to ask her a few questions and see what she thinks about her time with us so far.

Q: Are you a Tompkins County native?

A: I'm originally from Cortland County. I moved to Tompkins County about 4 years ago when my partner and I bought our first house in the Town of Dryden. I am originally from Homer and other than for college have lived in the region almost my entire life.

Q: What made you want to join the Tompkins County Youth Services Board?

A: I have a 3-year-old and so much of the past 3+ years feels like a blur. A co-worker who is on the board asked if I was interested and it coincided with me wanting to get more involved in the community outside of work. I wanted to get more involved in supporting youth in Tompkins County and thought this would be a nice opportunity to do that.



Q: What professional experiences or knowledge do you bring to the Board?

A: I currently work as the Alcohol and Drug Prevention Coordinator at Tompkins Cortland Community College. Prior to that, I did drug prevention and youth development work in

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Cortland County. I've also worked as an AmeriCorps volunteer with an organization called Sustainable Cortland and have substitute taught and tutored in the Homer School District. I really enjoy working collaboratively with other people to work towards improving the lives of people. Ensuring the well-being of young people is integral to creating a better future. I've also lived abroad and am half French and so seeing how other cultures approach things, it has had a big influence on me, as well.

Q: What do you feel are some of the most significant challenges that youth in Tompkins County face?

A: There are many opportunities for young people in our community, but also many challenges. I work with many young people who struggle with substance use and mental health issues, often tied to many other issues including lack of stability, opportunity, security, connection and so on. Youth also appear to struggle to find meaning in the world with climate change, gun violence, bullying and many issues that often feel overwhelming and helpless.

Q: Are there any specific issues that you would like to see the Tompkins County Youth Services Department tackle in the next year?

A: I am still new and learning about all that Youth Services does. So far, I have been impressed with the way the staff and board think about its work and how the department brings stakeholders from across the community together to address big issues and bring about measurable change.

From all of us at the Youth Services Staff and Advisory Board, we want to say we are thrilled that Sara has joined our ranks and we look forward to working with her to make a positive impact on the lives of youth in Tompkins County.

A blue rectangular box with white text that reads "So happy to have you on our team!"

2019 Worker Training Series



Through November 2019, we have offered 13 trainings/workshops, with 560+ people attending.

Be sure to check our [web page](#) soon for details about 2020 offerings!

2019 In Review: Month and Topic:

- **January:** STEM Workshop at Cornell University
- **March:** Growth Mindset with Christine Bainbridge
- **March:** Identifying & Supporting survivors of CSEC and Youth Trafficking
- **April:** SAFETalk: Suicide Alertness for Everyone; 2 sessions
- **April:** High – Ding Spots
- **May:** DSS Summer Camp Scholarships
- **May:** Screening of film **Angst** followed by a Q & A session
- **May:** Surrounded by Bullying: How to identify what is happening to kids and how to help.

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- **June:** Ben Cort: 21st Century Marijuana; 3 sessions
- **June:** Autism 101
- **September:** Jessica Janniere – Overcoming Adversity
- **October:** Michael Nerney – Why Adolescents Like Risk-Taking & Destressing the Teenage Brain
- **November:** Dr. Edward Mainzer – Talking Gay

Upcoming trainings/presentations:

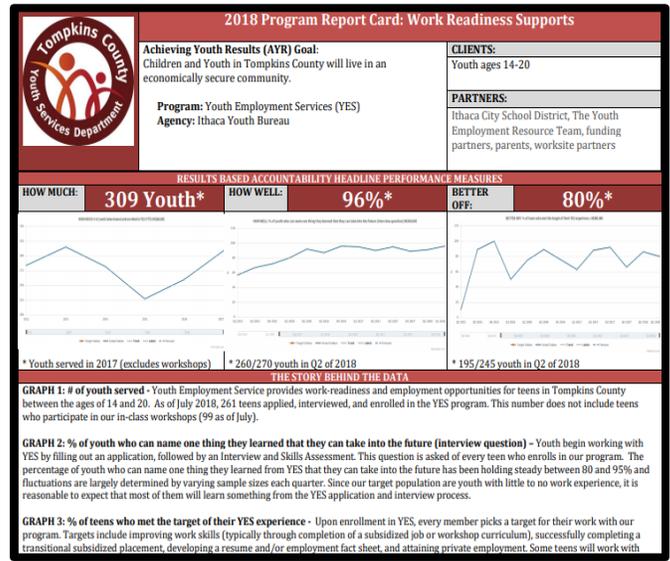
- **December 5:** Matthew Kaplan, *Intergenerational Programs*

Results-Based Accountability: Ithaca Youth Bureau's Youth Employment Services (YES)

Youth Employment Service (YES) is a free program of the Ithaca Youth Bureau. Their mission is to empower teens to grow into flourishing adults.

They meet teens where they are and connect them to opportunities to work, grow, and lead in their community.

The three core program elements are YES Connect, the YES Summer Jobs Program, and Ithaca Youth Council Ambassadors. The guiding principles of the YES program are: All teens can succeed; Teens need to be partners in their own success; Each teen is an individual; Forming positive partnerships with partners is vital to our success.



This program supports TCYSD's Achieving Youth Results Goal of **"Economic Security: Tompkins County youth will be prepared for their eventual economic self-sufficiency"**.

The measures indicating that they are reaching this goal are identified by the number of youth served, the percentage of youth who learn something they can take into the future, and the percentage of youth who meet identified target goals.

The YES program consistently meets and/or exceeds their targeted expectations. Due to this program's rigorous internal evaluation practices to promote continuous improvement and the staffs' innovative efforts to further engage youth and enhance their programs, the YES program is definitely "one to watch". Keep up the good work, YES program!

To learn more about TCYSD's Achieving Youth Results and to see other funded program's report cards, please visit our website at <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/youth/AYR>

Summer Youth Employment Recap 2019

As memories of summer begin to fade and the snowy cold weather takes over, we'd like to take a moment to give a "Shout Out!" to the local Summer Youth Employment program providers. Due to your combined efforts, well over 300 Tompkins County youth were served in supported first-time employment opportunities in 2019. The following programs worked collectively to engage, educate and support youth in experiencing a valuable learning opportunity, have the chance to earn money and gain necessary skills for future employment success.

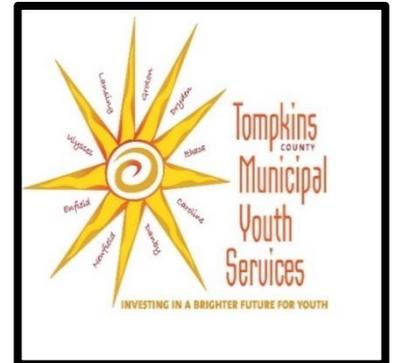


- Tompkins County Workforce New York's Summer Youth Employment Program
- Ithaca Youth Bureau's YES Summer Jobs program
- Challenge Workforce Solutions, and
- CCE's Rural Youth Services Youth Employment programs in Lansing, Trumansburg and Groton.

Thanks for all your hard work this summer!

Municipal Youth Serves System: Annual Fundraising to support our youth:

Did you know that many of our municipal youth programs hold annual fundraising events? These events are not only vital to their budgets but also provide a great experience for the young people that work at the events. Below are some highlights from these events:



- **Lansing** Youth Services held its 33rd annual Spaghetti Supper, with their youth making the decorations, waiting on tables, and helping with some of the food preparation. This event is a rite of passage for many 7th and 8th grade in the Lansing Middle School youth.
- **Enfield** held its 45th annual Harvest Festival. This event is truly a major undertaking and a huge community collaboration. The Enfield youth help with the children's games and many other activities throughout the day.
- **Trumansburg** had its 2nd annual Pasta Party in November, and it again proved to be a huge success. The kids made the placemats, decorated, served food, and even helped with the cleanup.

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- **Trumansburg's** Big Friend Little Friend program also has an annual chicken BBQ with help from the Rotary to fund their program. **Make sure to look for the kid dressed up as a chicken! It is a real event highlight!**

Not only do these events make money for a worthy cause but they teach young people how to volunteer and donate their time. Research tells us that youth who learn to volunteer at a young age are more likely to volunteer as adults. It also gives them a sense of responsibility and pride. So, the next time you see a sign for a local event try to participate, your involvement will go a long way for youth in your community and you'll even get a great meal at a great price.

Articles of Interest



Cornell Cooperative Extension's Urban 4-H Teen program coordinated efforts to bring refugee mural to life at the corner of Seneca and Geneva Streets. The Ithaca teens worked with local mural artist Dan Burgevin to depict the story of the Karen people as they escaped genocide in Burma (Myanmar). One teen participant said, "I like this mural because it represents my people and my people's history." Read more and see pictures at the link above!
A definite must-see in person too!

<https://ithacavoice.com/2019/10/new-mural-downtown-celebrates-karen-burmese-refugees-in-ithaca/>

Vaping use among teens and adolescents is at an all-time high, with sometimes fatal consequences due to severe pulmonary distress. Join us in our effort to share information to those most at risk: please review and share widely the information posted above.

https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html

WRFI podcast brings local youth voice to the airwaves! "Youth Voices" gives youth the opportunity to choose what topics matter to them here in Tompkins County and participate in open discourse with their peers about those issues. Issues they have debated so far include gun control, abortion, and mental health stigma.

<https://ithacavoice.com/2019/10/youth-voices-ithaca-students-break-down-sports-and-performing-arts-stigmas/>

To listen to archived podcasts or find when the next Youth Radio Project will air, go to <https://www.wrfi.org/category/series/>.