



AMPLIFY

Avon YSAB/ LPC / COC Meeting

June 1, 2021 6:30PM

GoTo meeting – Avon Youth Services

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

Suzi Alexe, Youth Service Coordinator

Christine Pescatore, Administrative Analyst, Social Services

Auradhya Kumar, Avon High School Student

Ryan Steremberg, Avon High School Student

Lauren Lee, Avon High School Student

Makena Logan – Avon High School Student

Officer John O'Neill, Avon Police Department, School Resource Officer

Marisa Hicking, Teen Librarian, Avon Free Public Library

Heather Toyen, Avon High School Counselor

Taylor Armstrong, College Student

Ariella Reynolds, Avon High School Student

Meeting called to order at 6:35pm

- I. **Welcome and Introductions - Communication from the audience (limited to five minutes)**

- II. **US Horse Welfare and Rescue Organization; opportunities for partnership -Avon Youth Services Working with Programs for Youth** – The Rescue’s website <https://ushorsewelfare.org/> has valuable information on the programs, please share with your contacts. Also if you know of families that would benefit from the program(s) and have a financial need please reach out to Suzi salexe@avonct.gov or Christine cpescatore@avonct.gov by email as we may be able to assist. They are still looking for more teen volunteers. We are looking to have future meetings and/or programs at the rescue.

- III. **Updates on Current Programs**
 - **Intergenerational Program – Students/Community Members make Spring cards for local Seniors and local Cancer Center (Marisa Hicking, Suzi Alexe)**

We are partnered with the library, the TAB members and members of the community in making Spring Cards that were distributed to local senior living facilities, rehab and cancer centers. The feedback we received was wonderful. We will keep this program going, making cards year round doing seasonal and holiday themes.

 - **Mental Health Awareness Club (AHS Students)**

In process of spreading awareness through a newsletter. Looking for ideas to reach more people.

Lauren would like to find more ways to destigmatize mental health.

Suzi is always available to talk or for any resources you need help with. Please feel free to contact her and offer her information to your friends.

 - **Recruit Youth for the Board and Community Projects/ Teen Paint Night, Wellness (Anti Vaping Trivia, Wellness Anti Vaping Campaigns spearheaded by Youth)**

We are always looking to add Youth members to our board and to help with community projects, please feel free to ask anyone you think is interested to attend a meeting and if they would like to be added to the board we can do so.

Avon Youth Services and the Avon Free Public Library partnered and held a virtual teen paint night on May 27th. There were approximately 20 teens that signed up to participate. We received positive feedback and will be looking to plan more events in the future. We will also look into planning a paint event for younger children as well.

- **Hidden in Plain Sight presentation on June 7th at 6:00pm- An interactive drug education presentation for parents, educators and other adults.**

Registration is being done on the Avon Free Public Library's website, click the link for more information and for registration.

<https://www.avonctlibrary.info/event/hidden-in-plain-sight/>

- **Substance Free Graduation**

Project Graduation is an Avon High School tradition - an all-night, substance-free party organized by parent volunteers and attended by more than 90% of the senior class.

This year's Project Graduation will be held the day and night of graduation on June 10th at Big Sky Fitness on Brickyard Rd. in Farmington and will be a graduation celebration hopping with all-night food & refreshments, entertainment, games, valuable prizes & dancing. It's a party not to be missed!

IV. Input from Student Leaders regarding topics that concern Youth

Ryan is graduating High School this year and has served on the board since middle school. We hope he will continue to serve while he attends college.

Ryan stated that he attended the virtual teen paint night and thought it was fun and relaxing. He hopes to see more paint night events. He also brought up that the end of the school year is a heightened stress time for the high school students with the end of year projects, so this is a great time for stress reducing programs.

A.K. mentioned that there are many programs for teens, but she would like to see more programs for elementary children and hopes we can provide some.

The Avon Free Public Library does offer some programs for younger children such as book buddies. They would be a place to explore for upcoming programs.

Heather let us know that Ariella was the keynote speaker at an event on Social Emotional Learning at the high school. She talked about simple breathing and easy yoga poses that can be done by any age group to help reduce stress.

Heather suggested that the teens on the board brainstorm and come up with some ideas for elementary school fun, stress relief activities and we can work on bringing some programs to life.

Suzi said that Camp Simon who facilitated the teen paint night, did mention that they also can do paint programs for younger students. We will look into having more paint programs for all age groups.

Suzi also mentioned two great books that are good for the younger students that focus on mental health. Gizmo's Guide to Mental Health which was developed to respond to a critical youth suicide prevention and mental health promotion education and service gap evidenced by the [CT data](#), and to support youth mental health literacy and social emotional learning. The Guide's message is child-friendly and is presented by Gizmo, a 3.5 Miki dog who lives in Manchester, CT. He is a K-9 First Responder and Therapy Dog who is the mascot for the Connecticut Suicide Prevention Campaign: 1 Word, 1 Voice, 1 Life...Be the One to Start the Conversation.

The other book, Karina Kitten's Life Rewritten, a battle with PTSD was written and illustrated by Carissa Church from CT. Carissa was born with Apraxia of Speech and went through years of speech therapy. When she was 8, her dad had a stroke and was diagnosed with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) from when he was in the United States Army. This event was traumatic for her also and still affects her occasionally. Six years later, he was also diagnosed with epilepsy, and her cat of 11 years passed away. These events compounded the stress she was feeling, giving rise to Carissa's own PTSD symptoms. It is difficult for Carissa to discuss her anxiety and PTSD, which is the driving force behind the message she wants to relay to all: No one should be afraid to express what they are feeling. There will always be someone who will listen and understand what you are going through.

Taylor gave us some insight on attending college during Covid and dorm life. Her college has been in person for the last 2 semesters. They have 3600 student and had only 20 cases last fall. The school will be requiring that all students are vaccinated by this fall. Dorm life was strict, you had to wear your mask and limit your exposure to large groups. They were Covid tested weekly and could not travel more than 30 miles from campus unless they were going home. She felt safe with all of the protocols in place.

V. Avon Police Department Update and JRB

- **Partners in Prevention / Truancy / School Refusal Behaviors**

There are no JRBs at this time. There was a slight uptick truancy cases (not being in school or virtually) the situations have been remedied and do not require further action.

VI. Community of Concern/ Local Prevention Council – Updates

- **Angst Presentation/Program Date TBD**
- **Seeing Through the Vapors- Virtual Workshop presented by Robert Hackenson, Jr. of Dynamic Influence.**

Suzi is looking into bringing his virtual workshop to Avon possibly this summer. Currently the Town of West Hartford is running it, she will be touching base with them as to how the program has been received.

VII. Open conversations

Lauren mentioned that the curriculum in the high school is changing and she would like to see then integrate some mental health programs. With the internet's ability to spread a vast amount of misinformation, adding to people's mental health issues, it would be great for the schools, which are the foundation of learning to help educate and break the mental health stigma.

Marisa said the library is willing to partner on more programs as well. She also mentioned that Ryan had participated in a training for being a supportive friend.

Ryan said it was QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training conducted by Justine Ginsberg, BSN, RN from the Farmington Valley Health District. He also mentioned that he has found that there are summer camps that are working into their curriculums, helping kids re-acclimate to pre-covid times and lessen their isolation.

Suzi followed up on these points with mentioning that the Jordan Porco Foundation has a program, Fresh Check Day, which is an engaging and uplifting mental health promotion event for colleges that features interactive booths, a festive social atmosphere, and exciting prizes and giveaways. She also let us know about a summer program through Farmington Valley Continuing Education for grades 2-9. Her son has gone in the past and will be going this year as well. It is a Visual & Performing Arts STEAM academy. For more information, here is the link. <https://fpsct.ce.eleyo.com/course/1339/summer-2021%E2%80%94943/visual-performing-arts-steam-academy-gr-2-9>

Marisa discussed a program that Avon Free Public Library, Bloomfield Public Library and Soroptimist are partnering on. It is called Dream It Be It, a 3 day virtual conference for girls entering grades 8-12. For more information and to register here is the

link. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdxNQbd5gfE_QuvQMebqn-2B0tWLYPACNQvyyp4yxIFYsevvw/viewform

VIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:32pm

Next meeting: Fall 2021 Date TBD