

Youth Service Providers Network

UPDATE



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF BOSTON

February 7, 2007

Dear YSPN Friends,

I am writing to share with you some of the ways that your support of the YSPN is helping families in need. Sadly, the past few months have seen a lot of community violence involving teenagers. Our staff has responded to these tragedies by providing an array of trauma services to the victims, their friends, families and communities. For example, when Boys & Girls Club member Hardy Celestin was murdered in October, YSPN social workers attended the wake and funeral to provide supports to the grieving family, youth and Club staff.

The holiday season is an especially difficult and stressful time for our young people and their families. Thanks to so many of you, YSPN social workers were able to ensure that families had presents and food along with the emotional and psychological supports they needed. We have included some examples in this update.

Additionally, we have been working to connect youth with jobs. We were pleased to be asked to serve as a resource and referral source to a newly created city winter job program. We referred eight youth, and our staff is already gearing up for summer jobs by helping teens register on job lists, ensuring they have necessary documentation, and talking about job skills and career goals. Last summer we assisted 126 teenagers in finding job placements; we hope to increase our successes this year.

Looking ahead, we have invited Edward Davis, the new Commissioner of the Boston Police Department, to a roundtable discussion at our new Mike Carson YSPN Office Suite, located at the Yawkey Club of Roxbury. Mike Carson, our Advisory Board Chair, along with Linda Whitlock, the YSPN social workers, and Boston Police Department area commanders will all be attending.

Our annual Unity Weekend event will be held on February 10 at the Ansin Youth Center at the Charlestown Club. Youth from all five Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston Clubs and four Community Learning Centers will compete in a basketball tournament to benefit YSPN. The games begin at 9:30 a.m. and last all day. We welcome anyone who is interested in coming to watch the games and support YSPN.

I would like to thank everyone who supported the See You in September event. Thanks to your generosity, we raised nearly \$90,000 that night, making it our most successful event yet.

Our mission to help the youth of Boston could not be accomplished without your ongoing and generous support, which truly speaks to the dedication you have to our program and to the young people of Boston. I look forward to sharing more news of our achievements with you in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Jeff Butts, LICSW, ACSW
Executive Director

Unity Weekend 2007

Unity Weekend will take place on February 9 – 10, 2007. Youth from all five Clubs of Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston and four Community Learning Centers will attend a Boston Celtics game on Friday evening as guests of the team. On Saturday, February 10, eight teams will compete in a basketball tournament to benefit YSPN.

Event sponsors are Channel 7 WHDH-TV, which provides promotional support, the Boston Celtics, Bank of America, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, and John Hancock. WHDH station owner Ed Ansin conceptualized Unity Weekend in 1998 as part of his long-term commitment to the program and as a way to provide annual operating funds for YSPN.



(L – R) Former Boston Celtics player JoJo White, Vice President and General Manager of WHDH-TV Mike Carson, Boston Celtics player Delonte West and YSPN Executive Director Jeff Butts showed their support for YSPN at Unity Weekend 2006.



A program of Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston in partnership with the Boston Police Department, YSPN extends BGCB's mission beyond the Club walls by placing licensed clinical social workers in police stations to provide prevention and intervention services to disadvantaged, at-risk urban youth and their families.



An affiliate of
United Way
of Massachusetts Bay

YSPN STAFF SPOTLIGHT: Denise Kasrawi

Denise Kasrawi joined YSPN six years ago as the Drug Control Unit social worker, a city-wide position, where she provided dedicated services to some of the most difficult cases involving substance abuse and addiction. Denise was promoted to a Lead Social Work position three years ago, and last year was promoted to Assistant Clinical Director.

She is a gifted clinician, supervisor and administrator who is deeply committed to the mission and clients of YSPN. She maintains her energy and passion for working with teens and their families, and shares that energy and passion with all the staff. She also supports and encourages them as they grapple with the complex demands and challenges of working with very high-risk youth and families.

Equally important and impressive is Denise's creativity, playfulness and ability to build strong relationships in all realms. Denise continues to seek out professional growth opportunities for herself and for the team. She recently completed the Boston University School of Social Work Advanced Certificate Program in Treatment of Psychological Trauma.

Denise received her undergraduate degree from Emmanuel College in 1996 with a specialization in Art Therapy. She received her Master of Social Work from Boston University School of Social Work where she specialized in substance abuse service treatment.

YSPN Social Workers Support Families in Need During the Holidays

YSPN provided gifts to 134 young people after raising more than \$4,000 in donations from PAL (Police Athletic League), Bain & Co. employees, Shaw's, T.J. Maxx, Marshall's, CVS, Foot Locker, J.P. Licks, Emack and Bolio's, Body by Brandy Fitness Center, the Clayroom and GAP.

Each of the families that I delivered gifts to were very grateful, although they each expressed this in different ways. The most moving moment for me was when a mother who is usually completely devoid of emotion and affect told me that the family really needed this and hugged me.

**– Rachael Kaplan, LCSW
District Based Clinical Social Worker
Area D4 – South End/ Lower Roxbury**

Our Impact

I met 16-year-old "Ramzi," a Somali native, after his arrest for possession of drugs and his subsequent suicide attempt while in police custody. During initial outreach, I learned that Ramzi was recently placed in the custody of the Department of Youth Services (DYS) and was undergoing an assessment to determine the appropriate program placement.

I became an advocate for Ramzi's family and collaborated with DYS in choosing appropriate placements. Ramzi was displaying many Post Traumatic Stress Symptoms, some of which were related to time spent in refugee camps in war-torn Somalia, a recent head injury, and numerous personal losses. Ramzi's mother worried that DYS would not understand her son, his treatment needs, and their cultural background. She asked for my assistance in gathering previous providers' clinical insights and evaluation results so this information could be shared with DYS.

Shortly after I met the family, Ramzi's older brother was murdered. I provided immediate crisis intervention services to Ramzi's mother, assisting her in funeral and ceremonial arrangements and supporting her after the tragedy. I helped her cope with the trauma and encouraged her to use her network of support, including culturally sensitive providers who spoke her native language. After Ramzi's loss, I advocated that DYS staff monitor him more closely given his mental health history and past suicide attempts. When agencies collaborate on behalf of youth, you can make a real difference.

**– Rachael Kaplan, LCSW
District Based Clinical Social Worker
Area D4 – South End/ Lower Roxbury**

I currently work with "Sam," a 16-year-old boy who lives with his aunt and five siblings and cousins. After reaching out to Sam's family, I quickly learned that there is a history of trauma, most recently, the death of Sam's mother. Sam's aunt has numerous concerns for the children but was hesitant to accept YSPN's help in connecting them to the appropriate support services.

Sam's aunt struggles financially to support the children in her home, so when I offered to refer them for holiday assistance, she was overjoyed to be able to provide the children with a happy Christmas. When I delivered the clothing, toys, and gift cards for all six children, Sam and his aunt were there to accept them. Sam's aunt was overwhelmed by the generosity and became very emotional during our visit.

It was after this experience that Sam's aunt began to open up and allow me to work more extensively with the family. I truly feel that the generosity of community agencies during holiday time can build trust with families, allowing them to open up to the idea of accepting help.

**– Sara Brown, LCSW
District Based Clinical Social Worker
Area A-1/A-15 – Downtown/Charlestown**