

**YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES COMMISSION  
ANNUAL REPORT, 2003-2004**

Youth and Family Services continues to provide a broad range of services to meet the needs of many children, parents, families and senior citizens. Much of the success of the agency is attributable to its strong collaborative approach to solving problems, enhancing services and filling gaps in community resources. Working closely with other agencies, organizations and the schools, Youth and Family Services has become an effective community coordinator, identifying needs, developing partnerships, and finding creative and cost-effective solutions to helping our residents. While Youth and Family Services offers a wide array of direct services to assist residents individually, it has also embarked on a journey to promote programs and activities that build strengths and resiliency in children, thereby preventing problems in the long-term.

**Highlights For The Year**

- ◆ Youth and Family Services was awarded a second year grant for \$100,000 to continue its development of a collaborative approach to Drug and Alcohol Prevention.
- ◆ Mentoring Programs were greatly enhanced during the year. Counselors from Youth and Family Services worked closely with the Police to monitor adult and student matches at the schools. Additionally, several trainings were sponsored to strengthen the skills of all mentors working with young people.
- ◆ Under the guidance of Mario Gaboury a comprehensive evaluation of all programs and their outcomes was developed and is presently being tabulated for effectiveness.
- ◆ Youth and Family Services continued to provide technical assistance and support to the very successful Healthy Communities-Healthy Youth initiative. HCHY highlights included a fabulous, well-attended Family Day, sold-out Hidden Treasures Community Variety Show, and an elaborate display of student art throughout the community.
- ◆ Youth and Family Services awarded eight Mini-Grants to local organizations and clubs that developed new Asset-Building Programs to strengthen youth. Projects included: Women's Club – High School Greenhouse Project; Acton Library – Puppeteer Project; Maritime Education Network – Boat Building Project; Lutheran Church and Goodwin School – After School Initiatives; High School Music Department – UCONN Jazz Workshop; Parks and Recreation – Coaches Clinics.
- ◆ Our Social Services division handled an increase of 20% in requests for emergency financial aid due to the downturn of the economy and increase in unemployment.
- ◆ Our partnership with Old Saybrook schools remains extremely strong, including our collaborations in the following areas: Student Assistance Counselors, After School Programs, Peer Advocacy, Early Literacy, Mentoring, Special Needs Counseling.

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to our initiatives over the past year. Volunteers have become an integral component to a number of our programs and are an important reason for many of our successful endeavors. Volunteers have been active in our collaborations and committees, have reached out to mentor our youth, have led after-school clubs, and have provided support to families in need during the holiday season. We greatly appreciate their efforts and their commitment to the community.

Sam Barnes, Chairman  
Larry Freundlich, Executive Director

## **PROGRAM/SERVICE LISTING**

### **Individual and Family Counseling**

- ◆ Served 89 cases at the Agency.
- ◆ Served 122 students at the Middle and High Schools in the Student Assistance Programs.
- ◆ Provided 1,345 individual and family counseling sessions.
- ◆ Provided 89 group-counseling sessions.

### **Positive Youth Development**

Through these programs young people learn new life skills, take leadership roles and build self-esteem:

- ◆ Youth Summer Stock Theatre Program – engaged 27 youth in 3-week program presenting “*Once on This Island*” before a standing-room-only crowd in the Middle School auditorium.
- ◆ Youth Employment Service - provided 95 jobs for youth.
- ◆ Wilderness Programs – 11 students successfully completed our intensive challenge program.
- ◆ Babysitting Training – 29 youth graduated from the 6 week certificate program
- ◆ High School Peer Advocates - 40 students assisted fellow students by mentoring, tutoring and planning activities
- ◆ Middle School Peer Advocates – 10 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students were trained as mentors and met weekly with 10 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>-grade students.
- ◆ Community Service Program – 32 students volunteered several hundred hours to various community service projects
- ◆ Co-sponsored and coordinated Anti-Defamation League Program “*Names Can Really Hurt Us*” at High School.
- ◆ Violence Prevention Week – sponsored assembly programs, workshops, and after school activities for all high school students
- ◆ Teen Issues Month – sponsored panel discussions, guest speakers, and assemblies to educate students.
- ◆ Healthy Communities·Healthy Youth – sponsored “*Hidden Treasures: Community Variety Show*”, “*Main Street ‘Kids in Art’ Show*”, “*Asset Building Mini-Grants*” for Youth Serving Organizations, Teacher In-Service “*Asset Building in School Communities*” and *Community Conversation*.

### **Community Collaboration**

Youth and Family Services works closely with the schools, police, agencies and organizations to assess community needs, develop strategies and implement effective programs.

- ◆ Healthy Communities·Healthy Youth
- ◆ The Juvenile Diversion Board
- ◆ After School Child-Care Programs – Goodwin School and Middle School
- ◆ After School Clubs at Middle School and High School
- ◆ Early Childhood Education Program
- ◆ Early Literacy Program
- ◆ Local Drug and Alcohol Prevention Council

### **Parent Education and Support Programs**

A wide range of programs and activities were designed to support parents and families:

- ◆ Single Parent Group – met biweekly throughout the year; Moms and Babies Group met weekly
- ◆ Parent Education Programs – *Active Parenting, Getting Ready for Change, Hey Dad: What’s Important to You?*
- ◆ Family Activities – Concert on the Green
- ◆ Childhood Development Activities – *Making Music, Parents and Toddlers Play Groups, Let’s Dance*
- ◆ Saturday Morning Lectures – *Developing Responsibility, Positive Discipline*

### **Social Services**

Our Social Services Coordinator continues to assist many Old Saybrook residents in a variety of ways, including emergency food, prescriptions and medical care, help with transportation, energy assistance, budget counseling, help applying for state and/or federal programs, children’s clothing and footwear, etc.

This year we provided and coordinated the following to meet basic needs and emergency requests:

- ◆ Received 192 requests for assistance.
- ◆ Provided financial aid for 128 Old Saybrook household emergencies.
- ◆ Provided emergency food for 78 families.
- ◆ Processed Energy Assistance applications for 53 households.
- ◆ Coordinated Holiday Giving Program that served 153 children.
- ◆ Coordinated Warm the Children assistance to serve 69 children.

### **Municipal Agent for the Elderly**

Our Municipal Agent for the Elderly is an officially appointed Town representative responsible for providing the elderly and their families with information and assistance on programs, services and benefits. Senior citizens continue to face numerous challenges, especially as changes occur in their physical health, the economy, etc. Issues of particular concern this year included:

- ◆ Elderly Housing
- ◆ Energy Assistance
- ◆ Prescription Costs
- ◆ Transportation Issues
- ◆ Medicare and Supplemental Insurance
- ◆ In-Home Chores and Services