A Focus on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

HARRY BROWN

Every year, one in five (20%) Americans suffers from some mental illness, enduring conditions such as anxiety and depression; drinking and drugs; and even bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. This statistic is based in genetics and ecological stressors that face youth and adults alike.

These mental health conditions do not sidestep Mercer Island – they absolutely affect our neighbors, classmates, longtime friends, and yes, even ourselves. Reducing barriers to mental health care is paramount to Mercer Island Youth & Family Services (MIYFS). This means destigmatizing or “normalizing” the very fact that seeing a mental health professional is just as important as getting a routine medical check-up. It also means providing affordable high quality mental health care for all members of our community and offering dedicated staff to support seniors. MIYFS does both.

Taking mental health seriously is even more important for our youth on Mercer Island whose brains are most vulnerable during the developmental years. Stress, anxiety, depression and even suicidal ideation can be real for them too. All mental health concerns are treatable and some of the most devastating outcomes, like suicide, are also preventable. MIYFS has an impressive infrastructure at all five public schools to help support every student needing help.

At Islander Middle School, MIYFS counselor Harry Brown is a leader with the Natural Helpers program which recently led a depression awareness campaign at the school. He also teaches seventh grade science classes about a Depression Toolkit and early warning signs of depression, including steps to getting help for our self or a friend.

MIYFS school-based counselor Cathy Gentino at MIHS has partnered with the school district and the Forefront team from the University of Washington to train all school staff on youth suicide prevention efforts. Trainings include recognizing signs and symptoms and how to intervene early and direct students to MIYFS staff or other professionals for help.

While it may be impossible to eliminate all mental health problems, MIYFS educates youth and families, increases easy access to treatment, and is helping change the social norms that otherwise stigmatize getting help. Although no mental health vaccine exists, MIYFS encourages all Islanders to improve their overall mental health by getting adequate sleep, exercise, nutrition (please consult your medical provider) and learning coping skills. Contact MIYFS at (206) 275-7611 for a free consultation or for a confidential discussion about your mental health needs anytime.

Staying S.A.F.E.

Not necessarily the name one would expect for a high school club focused on alcohol and drug prevention. However, members of the S.A.F.E. Club were intentional with their name. It reinforces the idea that teens can, and do, have fun and stay socially engaged without drugs and alcohol. Supported by the MIYFS Healthy Youth Initiative, S.A.F.E. is now one of the largest clubs on the Mercer Island High School campus and its members continue to work on projects to promote teen health on Mercer Island, and across the state.

“S.A.F.E. Club has provided me leadership opportunities that involve me in bettering my community and advocating for the youth voice—and introduced me to amazing friends you don't have to worry about hanging out with.” ~ Rory Murphy, MIHS Junior

S.A.F.E. Club received grants from the WA State Traffic Safety Commission to educate the community – both students and adults – on avoiding distracted driving. Another grant awarded to the S.A.F.E. Club came from the State Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery to survey Island businesses that sell alcohol and to conduct messaging about “drawing the line between youth and alcohol.” S.A.F.E. Club also filmed a television PSA about youth making healthy decisions that is featured on a leading state prevention website, www.starttalkingnow.org, along with a feature about the Club itself.

S.A.F.E. Club is always looking for new members and continues to be allied with the Healthy Youth Initiative which focuses on substance abuse prevention, mental health promotion and youth leadership. Contact Lisa Stewart, HYI Coordinator for information at (206) 275-7611 or lisa.stewart@mercergov.org.

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MIYFS.org
Director’s Corner
CYNTHIA GOODWIN

Healthy Youth Initiative
Action Teams Get Traction

Question: What will it take to launch every Mercer Island teen into adulthood – both free from the grip of alcohol and drugs – and mentally prepared to cope with the academic, social and emotional challenges of college?

Answer: It will take a holistic community mindset willing to “go upstream” to make an impact on how we collectively raise our kids, from much earlier in the child rearing process.

Mercer Island Youth and Family Services’ Healthy Youth Initiative (HYI) is doing just that by bringing together formal and informal leaders from across Mercer Island who are most involved in influencing the lives of our kids. We are in the forefront of the public health field, focusing on and embracing prevention -- “going upstream” of the problems to stop youth from falling into patterns of negative or unhealthy behaviors before they start.

Last year I updated you on the five broader community issues, or risk factors that the HYI task force identified as the root cause of these patterns. Again, they are Family Management, Help-Seeking Stigma, Definition of Success, “Work Hard/Play Hard” Attitude, and Youth Engagement & Support. I concluded by letting you know our next step was to create an action plan.

I am pleased to report our action plan is getting lots of traction. The HYI task force has formed five Action Teams to develop specific strategies to address the five broader community issues. These Action Teams are: 1) Early Childhood Social Emotional Learning, 2) Student Behavioral Social & Emotional Supports, 3) Mental Health, 4) Drugs & Alcohol, and 5) Safe School Environments & Violence Prevention.

Each of the Action Teams includes Island parents, youth and professionals committed to changing some of the unique problems facing Island youth. The Mental Health Action Team, for example, is focused on reducing the rates of students reporting (or experiencing) anxiety and depression. They have identified social marketing campaigns, adult education and a new MIYFS newsletter as immediate strategies to reduce the stigma surrounding talking about mental health issues and seeking professional help when needed. As a result, we hope students and their parents will more willingly reach out to their MIYFS school counselors, ready to talk about their problems before they develop into full blown mental health crises.

It is truly heartening to see leaders from Island institutions sitting side by side with parents and kids, together, discussing how to make positive changes in the community. Moving forward, MIYFS needs even more youth and parents to join the HYI movement and to help build on the values, norms and practices that make the Island a great place for kids.

To get involved with HYI, Contact HYI Project Director, Derek Franklin at (206)275-7745 or derek.franklin@mercergov.org.

Mercer Island can do this. Join us.

2015-16 MIYFS Staff

2015-16 Community Advisory Board

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Director, Cynthia Goodwin at (206) 275-7611 or cynthia.goodwin@mercergov.org

MISSION STATEMENT
Youth & Family Services provides, coordinates, and advocates for affordable, high quality human services for the community of Mercer Island
Healthy aging or aging-in-place is defined as, "the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level." By 2030, 20% of the American population will be 65 or older, and aging in their community is the preferred choice of older Americans. Healthy aging, in addition to senior services, has been a new focus for Mercer Island Youth and Family Services (MIYFS).

In response to this growing trend, a movement is spreading across the country in which citizens join forces with local organizations to form a Virtual Village within their community. The Village is not a building or a cluster of facilities for seniors, it is a centralized source to access direct services, information and referrals based on local needs. These Villages are low-cost ways to age in place, made up of predominately volunteers designed to have neighbors helping neighbors. To foster this Village development, MIYFS Director Cynthia Goodwin and Geriatric Specialist Betsy Zuber are facilitating discussions with interested community members. This coming year, the group will explore the feasibility of a Virtual Village on Mercer Island.

Another aspect to MIYFS’ focus on healthy aging has been our continued partnership with the University of Washington's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Osher offers classes for adults over 50, to come together in a lively learning environment to explore intellectual and cultural topics of interest, share their experience and talents and meet new people. Topics have included The Civil War in Washington Territory, Understanding Islam and Masters of the Renaissance to name a few. We further reinforced this relationship by adding Parks and Recreation Department to our partnership to host these classes predominantly at the Mercer Island Community & Event Center.

Find out upcoming Osher class listings at www.osher.uw.edu.

To become involved in the Mercer Island Virtual Village conversation email betsy.zuber@mercergov.org, or learn more about them in general at www.vtvnetwork.org.

Flash Family Inspirational Award

Each spring Mercer Island Youth and Family Services awards the Flash Family Inspirational Award (FFIA) to honor a Mercer Island senior adult (55 and older) who exemplifies the spirit of good sportsmanship and/or community leadership, and who possesses an optimistic attitude and friendly demeanor while acting as a role model to others.

The 2015 Flash Family Inspirational Award was bestowed upon Karen Beck, a Mercer Island resident and Group Fitness Instructor at the Stroum Jewish Community Center. As a Group Fitness Instructor Karen teaches, inspires and helps seniors continue to live active lives. Her senior classes attract a variety of ages and levels of fitness and her extensive fitness knowledge and sense of humor keep participants engaged. Karen’s students feel welcome by her consistent encouragement for them to connect with one another. Her classes are physically, emotionally and socially stimulating. Karen is their instructor and mentor as well as their friend. Karen even hosts luncheons for students at her home, notices when participants miss classes and she follows up with notes and phone calls to make sure all is well. Karen is genuinely committed to her students’ functional and personal well-being.

Phil Flash passed away on April 4, 2015 at 96 years of age. His memory will surely serve as a model of active citizen participation to so many Islanders!
Saying “Thank You!” to Mercer Island Youth & Family Services Foundation Major Donors

On a beautiful evening last June (2015), the MIYFS Foundation Board of Directors hosted an evening featuring the Mercer Island High School Jazz Band trio along with delicacies from Island Treats chocolates, Robert Ramsey Cellars, and Beechers handmade cheeses. This was a way to thank our supporters and celebrate the MIYFS accomplishments made possible as a direct result of individual generosity and investment in our community.

Benson Wong, City Councilmember and MIYFS supporter, offered these informal remarks to our 70 guests:

“It is rare for a person to make it through life without ever needing a helping hand or a supportive word. MIYFS is important to me because its goal is to help our Island neighbors when they need help. Even if you don’t need help, MIYFS provides each one of us an opportunity to extend a helping hand and to build up our entire community.”

October 2015 MIYFS Open House: Inside the Brick Building

Luther Burbank Park was originally homesteaded by Charles C. Calkins in 1887. By 1901 a boarding school for boys and girls needing parental care moved onto park property. The large brick building was built and designed in 1929 by Floyd Naramore, noted architect of many Seattle Schools. Since 2003 the brick building has been home to the City of Mercer Island’s Parks & Recreation and Youth & Family Services departments, and serves as the center of activity for the Island community from all walks of life. In October of 2015, hundreds of Islanders stepped inside the Brick Building for the first open house – they were shown the Food Pantry, met our Director, Cynthia Goodwin and learned more about how we’re Here to Help!

United Way King County Day of Caring: “Thank You!” Microsoft Team!

For two consecutive years now, Mercer Island Thrift Shop has benefitted from a Microsoft employee team of 25 men and women who spend one full day preparing for the Anniversary Holiday Showcase Sale held in early November. The “North Pole Substation on Mercer Island” Day of Caring project involved sorting, pricing, organizing and staging over 10,000 items (mainly Christmas and Hanukah décor). United Way Day of Caring volunteers save MITS hundreds of hours of paid staff time which helps keep MITS revenue strong and allows MITS to remain the primary funding source of MIYFS programs and services.
Giving From The Heart 2016 Breakfast Highlights

MIYFS Foundation Board Member Sara Page and her devoted Giving from the Heart Breakfast Committee, planned the most successful Annual Breakfast to date - raising over $230,000 at the standing-room-only event when 575 Mercer Islanders came together on February 10, 2016.

Honorary Chairs Sandy and Ken Glass ignited the program with a heartfelt welcome to guests and a reminder that every healthy community needs to take care of its members who are less fortunate. This year’s Breakfast featured Fred Jarrett, Deputy King County Executive, who spoke on the power of prevention to raise healthy and contributing citizens and commended Mercer Island residents on raising so many healthy children and youth themselves.

Annual Philanthropy Awards were presented to the Island business Mercer Island Pediatrics and community member Barb Hovsepian (owner of Au Courant | The Den | POSH) for their on-going generosity to the MIYFS Foundation.

MIYFS Foundation values the deep partnerships we build with Breakfast Sponsors and Business Partners.

Welcome New Board Members:
Terms Begin July 1, 2016

Lisa Katsman My goal is to keep the Island wholesome, safe and a place that families come to visit and stay to live. I hope to continue the positive fundraising growth of MIYFS, as my leadership and board experience in the nonprofit fundraising sector can add a wealth of knowledge to an already very successful program.

The positive experience my daughter, Danielle, had on the MIYFS Community Advisory Board while a high school student at MIHS encouraged me to serve on the Foundation Board.

Jody Kris I am eager to extend my own reach into the Mercer Island community and to give back to the Island that warmly welcomed us as new residents five years ago. I aspire to raise MIYFS’s profile in order to ensure that all MI youth, seniors and families in need know about and have access to MIYFS’s resources and programs offered. MIYFS shares my goal to ensure that all members of our community feel included, supported and welcome.

Susan Wagner I feel fortunate to live on Mercer Island and am able to give back to the community with my time, energy and resources. I am so very impressed with the breadth and diversity of programs MIYFS offers our entire community. They offer a place to volunteer, get support, grow as a developing citizen, and age with grace. The latest effort – the Healthy Youth Initiative – is a remarkable holistic approach to community wellness. I am honored to be a part of this organization.

Sara Page My crowning moment was chairing the 2016 “Giving from the Heart” Breakfast – a record breaking year on so many levels! It has been gratifying to see more people in our community understand the essential and extraordinary work of YFS, and step up to support our kids, families and seniors on Mercer Island.

Salute Outgoing Board Members:
Their Dedication, Commitment, and Proudest Moments

James Murphy One of my proudest moments was listening to the heartfelt words of my daughter, Monica Airut Murphy, when she addressed the Giving from the Heart attendees in 2014 and offered her first-hand experiences with the services that YFS offers.

Sara Page My crowning moment was chairing the 2016 “Giving from the Heart” Breakfast – a record breaking year on so many levels! It has been gratifying to see more people in our community understand the essential and extraordinary work of YFS, and step up to support our kids, families and seniors on Mercer Island.

Catheryne Nguyen As a mother, I have been particularly grateful for the MIYFS mental health counselors in the schools. They have helped to teach my children & their friends’ mindfulness, compassion, and empathy as they navigate everything from friendship conflicts to divorce to managing the death of a loved one. With my oldest child now participating in SVP, I’m grateful that he has this opportunity to discover the joys of community service while also broadening his world view.

Additional Outgoing Board Members

Andrew Ackley and Maria Erlitz

Thank you to all of our generous individual donors and businesses for their gifts to the MIYFS Foundation between January 1 and December 31, 2015. Your donations provide major funding of MIYFS programs and services!

Visit our Donor Roll online www.miyfs.org.
2015-16 Community Impacts

Who We Provide Services To:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM CATEGORY</th>
<th>SERVICE</th>
<th>CLIENTS SERVED</th>
<th>SCOPE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASSISTANCE</td>
<td>Households Served by Emergency Assistance</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>39% more households served vs. 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food Pantry Visits</td>
<td>1,370</td>
<td>296% increase vs. 2008</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Utility Assistance</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14% increase vs. 2014</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rental Assistance</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>300% increase vs. 2014</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Holiday Meal Program</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Includes 10 seniors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thanksgiving Program</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Includes 6 seniors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Back to School Supplies</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26 unique households</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camp/Day Care Scholarships</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>19% increase vs. 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUPPORT</td>
<td>School-based Counselors</td>
<td>3,665</td>
<td>Individual contacts with students of all ages on social/ emotional development, family issues, crisis intervention and readiness to learn</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>367</td>
<td>Students attending classroom presentations on mental health, healthy relationships, family dynamics and senior issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,275</td>
<td>Parent/ teacher/ school administrator mental health and alcohol &amp; drugs consultation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School-based Drug and Alcohol Services</td>
<td>1,304</td>
<td>Middle and high school students reached by classroom presentations on substance abuse prevention and education</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Formal drug &amp; alcohol assessments for youth at risk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community-based Counselors</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>Counseling sessions with youth, families, couples, adults and seniors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community-based Senior Outreach</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Home visits to Island seniors with limited mobility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community-based Court Diversion</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>Individual Island seniors served by case management and aging support</td>
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<td>317</td>
<td>Phone consultations with seniors or their adult children for support</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>Youth Development (VOICE/SVP)</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>Island youth enrolled in summer VOICE/SVP program</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Communities That Care</td>
<td>All Island</td>
<td>Youth volunteer hours at local non-profits (24% increase vs. 2014)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Health Promotion (Healthy Youth Initiative)</td>
<td>All Youth</td>
<td>Community-wide drug and alcohol prevention, education, awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OSHER Life Long Learning Institute (seniors)</td>
<td>All Seniors</td>
<td>Community-wide youth health collaboration</td>
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<td>UW professors offer continuing education for seniors</td>
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Where Your Dollars Are Going:

2015 EXPENSES
- YFS Administration and Program Development/Support $637,330
- Thrift Shop $536,120
- School-based Counselor Program $509,085
- Community-based Counselor Program $231,572
- Communities That Care (CTC) Prevention Program $199,471
- Emergency/Family/Employment Assistance Programs $145,368
- Senior Outreach Program $93,886
- Youth Development (VOICE) Program $68,256
- Arrested Youth Early Intervention (Diversion) Program $3,100

TOTAL: $2,424,188

2015 REVENUE
- Thrift Shop Proceeds $1,340,560
- Combined City General Fund/ YFS Fund $485,980
- MIYFS Foundation Contribution $155,000
- Federal Drug Free Community Grant $128,108
- Youth Development (VOICE) Participation Fees $86,347
- Donations for Emergency Assistance, Preschools, Senior Outreach, VOICE $72,930
- MISD Share (>12%) of School-based Counselor Program $60,000
- King County Youth & Family Services Association Grant $51,642
- Community-based Counseling Services (Sliding Scale Fees) $43,621

TOTAL: $2,424,188
An exciting and business savvy collaboration is underway for the Mercer Island Thrift Shop (MITS). MITS Business Coordinator, Suzanne Philen, has developed a partnership with Seattle Goodwill for MITS to garner greater value for its unused items. The Goodwill has a much broader reach to make use of excess inventory, and now MITS will use this capacity to sell some donated items it does not have the space or capacity to sell directly. Seeing this as mutually beneficial to the missions for both organizations, a partnership was born.

Goodwill offered another plus to this budding partnership. MITS will have a separate consignment relationship where higher value items can be sold through the Goodwill’s online marketing department. This online forum of sales and auctions will help unique and valuable items bring a higher value than if sold directly in either shop. MITS receives profits from sales and in turn shares a very reasonable percentage of the transaction in exchange for Goodwill’s expertise and operational costs.

Why the partnership? In 2015, MITS recycled 428,000 lbs. of household goods that they could not shelve and sell – for a myriad of reasons. These “pass-on” goods were sold in bulk, but the new relationship with Goodwill allows better return on excess donated items. These and all regular profits from MITS directly support MIYFS, while remaining as eco-friendly as possible.

Positive outcomes:
- MITS realizes increased revenues from the bulk sale of pass-on goods.
- MITS’ transportation footprint on the environment is decreased keeping donated goods in the local market.
- A significant reduction in plastic packaging by switching to reusable containers for transporting bulk goods.
- Maximizing contributions to MIYFS without the investment to operate an online business.
- Revenues from Islanders’ donated goods will realize a larger impact.

To learn more visit www.mercerislandthrift.org
ENCLOSED: YOUR GIFTS BECOME OUR TRANSPORTATION

MIYFS staff regularly transport youth to volunteer projects, leadership retreats and social skills workshops. Your donation in the enclosed envelope will be designated toward our van replacement fund. Please help keep our kids safely on the move with your gift today.

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