



A Newsletter from Youth & Family Counseling  
Summer 2016

# Community Connection

## A WORD FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JANELLE MORAVEK

YFC has always been about improving access to mental healthcare. For over 50 years, our sliding fee scale has made counseling services affordable for low-income, underinsured members of our community.

Today, YFC takes a broader view of access to care. Recognizing that the mental health system is complex and difficult to navigate, we are taking a more active role in breaking down barriers to treatment and connecting people with the services they need.

YFC has ambitious plans to meet the emerging needs of our community. Our 2016-2020 Strategic Plan calls for expanding our services, bringing them to underserved parts of Lake County, and building our financial sustainability. We have already made great strides towards achieving these goals, and I am excited to share our progress with you in this issue of *Community Connection*.

With the state budget crisis effectively

dismantling parts of the human services system in Illinois, there is an urgent need to do more to help families in our community access mental healthcare and other vital services. We must work harder and smarter, and collaborate with other organizations to help address growing service gaps.



The work we do would not be possible without the generous support of donors like you. Thank you for partnering with us to address the unmet need for mental health services in Lake County.

**Each one of us can make a difference.  
Together we make change.**

— U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski

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## Upcoming Events

- *Boots & Bling* — Our 2017 Gala Saturday, October 22, 2016 Marriott Resort in Lincolnshire



Youth & Family  
Counseling

## OUR MISSION

*Opening doors to mental healthcare  
so people can cope, heal and thrive.*

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT LUNCHEON

Our May 5th luncheon celebrated Mental Health Awareness Month and raised more than \$35,000



Kelly O'Brien, Executive Director for the Kennedy Forum— Illinois, informed and inspired our guests as the keynote speaker at our May 5th *Food*

*for Thought* luncheon. An advocate for mental healthcare reform, Kelly shared her deeply personal story of struggling to find help for anxiety and substance abuse within a broken mental health system.

Kelly seems like the proverbial Golden Girl. She's a combination of the Energizer Bunny and the girl-next-door, with a warm, engaging smile and a resume that makes you sit up and take notice. In her spare time Kelly competes in Ironman triathlons and volunteers as a mentor for Chicago teens.

With her many accomplishments, Kelly's back story is not what you would expect. She grew up in a family where mental illness and addiction were all too common. She was exposed to tragedy and trauma first-hand as relatives suffered the debilitating and sometimes fatal consequences of unmanaged alcoholism, drug addiction, and serious mental illness.

While Kelly was introduced to the *general* healthcare system at an early age when she was diagnosed with epilepsy, *she was never screened for mental health or addiction risk*, despite her family's history. She never received counsel from a physician or other healthcare provider on ways to take care of herself to avoid or manage issues such as depression and anxiety.

Without fully understanding her inherited predisposition



Mental health advocate Kelly O'Brien shared her deeply personal story of navigating our fractured mental health system.

for substance abuse, Kelly turned to alcohol when she began to feel anxious and "different" in college. What started as a way to feel better quickly turned into addiction. Kelly became an alcoholic.

Kelly struggled for years with her disease, at times trying desperately to get help. Even after she admitted her illness to her primary care doctor, she received little guidance. In fact, her doctor refused to add a diagnosis of alcoholism to Kelly's medical record, fearing that she would be denied insurance coverage. Kelly learned first hand how difficult it can be to find treatment, and how our healthcare system often falls short in providing early risk assessments and interventions.

Kelly eventually found the treatment she needed to recover from her addiction. Through the Kennedy Forum, she now dedicates her time and talents to advocating for a stronger, more accessible mental health system, and for reducing the social stigma of mental health issues.

Thank you to all who supported our 2nd annual Food for Thought Luncheon. Together, we raised more than \$35,000 to provide counseling services for low-income, underinsured children, teens and adults in our community.

### Many Thanks to our Food for Thought Luncheon Sponsors

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## AN OPEN DOOR: CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH CARE

*YFC's Client Services Coordinator helps people navigate the complex mental health system to find the care they need*

Where do you turn when you or someone in your family needs mental health services? Do you call a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a social worker, a psychotherapist, a counselor? Knowing where to turn for help can be challenging for any of us. The task is even more daunting for those with very limited financial resources.

Enter Catherine VanDamme, YFC's Client Services Coordinator. Catherine is the friendly, supportive voice you hear on the other end of the phone when you call YFC to make an appointment or ask for help

Knowing where to turn for help with a mental health issue can be challenging for any of us. The challenge is even greater for those with very limited financial resources.

with finding specialized services. Catherine embodies YFC's mission of opening doors to mental healthcare so people can cope, heal and thrive. Through Catherine, YFC helps people navigate the fractured web of mental health services to find appropriate treatment either at YFC or with another provider. Catherine sums up her work succinctly: "YFC might be the first call an individual or family makes, or it could be the last call. My goal is to listen and connect them with where they need to be."

Thanks to a 2015 start-up grant from Community Purse, a local charitable giving organization, we were able to hire Catherine last November. In just six months, word of our "open door" assistance traveled, and Catherine is now fielding approximately 100 new calls for services each month. Typically about 30% of those callers become clients at YFC, while Catherine helps the rest find services with another agency or private provider.

Part of Catherine's job is building relationships with other providers so she



Catherine VanDamme, YFC's Client Services Coordinator

knows who delivers specialty services, such as bilingual psychotherapy or eating disorders counseling, and which agencies and private practitioners have capacity to accept new clients or patients. She regularly attends mental healthcare networking group meetings to stay in touch with service availability. "The reality is that there is a much higher demand for [mental health] services in Lake County, than there is supply," says Catherine. "It is important to connect and collaborate with outside providers so that we can service our community."

## DID YOU SEE US AT THE LIBERTYVILLE DAYS PARADE?

YFC staff and board members, along with family, friends and Riley the therapy dog, marched down Milwaukee Avenue decked out in lime green for mental health awareness. We had a great time passing out candy and YFC pencils to the kids in the crowd.



## EMOTIONAL SKILLS COUNSELING FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

*YFC partners with Youth Conservation Corps to bring emotional skills training to at-risk teens and young adults in Waukegan*

Emotional skills are essential to success at school, at work, and at home. Yet for those who grow up surrounded by poverty, violence and emotional trauma, developing healthy coping skills can be difficult.

Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) in Waukegan serves at-risk youth. Their motto, "every young adult has a pathway to success regardless of life circumstances" sums up their mission beautifully. YCC provides programs to help disadvantaged teens and young adults develop the skills they need to finish their education and develop job and life skills.

In late 2015, Youth Conservation Corps asked YFC to provide therapist-led emotional skills workshops for two groups of 16-22 year olds enrolled in their GED test preparation classes. Program Director Ben Richards saw a need for emotional skills training to supplement the academic preparation offered at YCC, and we were pleased to have the opportunity to provide this vital program to their students.

With a strong background in facilitating groups and working with children and adolescents at Vista Health Center in

Waukegan, YFC therapist Katie Papierniak was well prepared to lead the emotional skills curriculum YCC's at-risk youth needed. Assisted by our masters-level clinical interns, Shale Marks and Colleen Kearny, Katie facilitated two groups of 10 students each through a 12-session workshop designed to help develop emotional intelligence and coping skills, and guide the students through processing their experiences and challenges.

The workshop was a rich experience for the participants. While absorbing the lessons and engaging in group discussion and activities, students strengthened their individual emotional intelligence and developed strong bonds with other members of their group. On the last day of the spring session, a student with tears in her eyes stopped Ben Richards and said "you have to bring



Emotional skills are essential to success at school, at work, and at home.

them back," motioning to Katie, Colleen and Shale.

Fortunately for the students, Katie will be back in the fall to offer a second 12-week session.



**Youth Conservation Corps**

Every young adult has a pathway to success regardless of life circumstances

YFC is proud to partner with Youth Conservation Corp in Waukegan to bring emotional skills workshops to disadvantaged teens and young adults.



### MEET YFC THERAPIST KATIE PAPIERNAK

Katie Papierniak, MEd, LCPC joined YFC in the fall of 2015. With over 25 years in practice, Katie brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her work with children, adolescents, adults, couples and families. Katie helps her clients cope with a wide range of issues, including ADHD, anxiety, depression, anger, grief and loss, low self-esteem, and relationship issues.

In addition to individual, couple and family counseling, Katie is experienced in facilitating group therapy sessions for adolescents, teens and adults.

Prior to joining YFC, Katie worked as an Outpatient Therapist at Rockland Professional Group, and as a Child & Adolescent Therapist at Vista Health Center in Waukegan. She holds a master's degree in Community Psychology from Loyola University, Chicago.

## BRINGING COUNSELING SERVICES TO WAUKEGAN

*YFC has partnered with Erie HealthReach to deliver counseling services to low-income residents of Waukegan and North Chicago*

There is an urgent need for affordable mental health services in Waukegan and North Chicago. These communities face the same kinds of social issues as low-income urban communities: an ethnically diverse population, high levels of poverty and unemployment, gang activity, illiteracy, homelessness, and untreated mental illness. Major depression, binge drinking, and use of illicit drugs are very prevalent. Many residents turn to hospital emergency departments for urgently needed mental health treatment; this is particularly true among young people, ages 15-24.

Despite the clear need for mental health

services in these communities, many Waukegan and North Chicago residents experience multiple barriers to accessing treatment, including inadequate health insurance, a shortage of providers in the area, and lack of transportation to travel to providers in other communities.

To help address the unmet need for mental healthcare in northern Lake County, YFC is partnering with Erie HealthReach Waukegan Health Center to bring counseling services to this underserved community. Erie is a Federally Qualified Health Center dedicated to serving medically underserved people in and around

Chicago. Our collaboration began in late 2015 when Erie HealthReach approached YFC, requesting that we bring our counseling services to their Waukegan location. Given our shared commitment to improving access to healthcare in underserved communities, a partnership between YFC and Erie made perfect sense.

We began a pilot program in May of this year, with YFC

Given our shared commitment to improving access to healthcare in underserved communities, a partnership between YFC and Erie HealthReach made perfect sense.

therapist Gina M. Tober, MA, LCPC delivering counseling services at Erie's Waukegan facility one day each week. Gina treats children, teens, adults, and families for a range of issues including depression, anxiety, grief and loss, trauma, and more. We plan to expand our services at Erie to five days a week as grant funding becomes available, hopefully by early in 2017.

We are proud to work with Erie HealthReach to serve the people of Waukegan and North Chicago.



## MEET YFC THERAPIST GINA TOBER

Gina M. Tober, MA, LCPC joined YFC in the fall of 2015. Gina is a warm and culturally sensitive counselor who has worked with a diverse population of clients for over 10 years. Her goal as a therapist is to help her clients address patterns of thinking and behavior that hold them back, and develop the strengths and skills they need to move forward. Gina works with children, adolescents, adults and families who are struggling with issues such as depression, anxiety, disruptive behaviors, and life transitions. She has a special interest in supporting those who are dealing with the impact of infertility.

Prior to joining YFC, Gina worked at Methodist Youth Services in Chicago as a Clinical Manager and Clinical Social Worker. Her work experience includes mentoring GLBT youth at the Center on Halsted, and delivering individual and group therapy at United Stand Family Counseling Center, both in Chicago. Gina holds a master's degree in Clinical Psychology from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology.



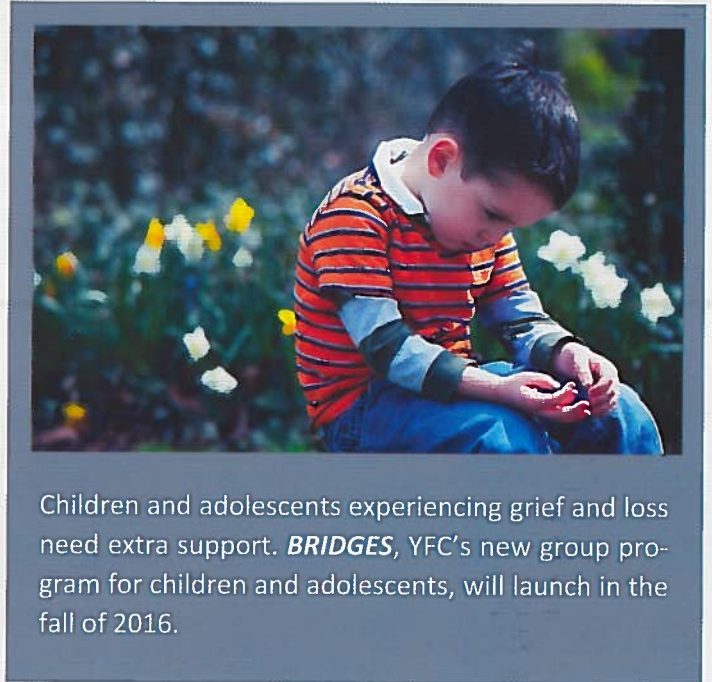
## BRIDGES: YFC'S NEW PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN EXPERIENCING GRIEF AND LOSS

When a child experiences loss within his family, his world is turned upside down. Changes in family structure because of death, divorce, or the extended absence of a parent due to military deployment or incarceration can cause a child to feel scared, angry and even guilty. Because of their young age, children have no roadmap for dealing with emotional trauma. Without love and wise guidance from caring adults, they may lash out or simply shut down.

To help kids work through the trauma of loss, YFC is proud to introduce **BRIDGES**, our new group program for children and adolescents. This unique program was developed by our staff of licensed therapists, incorporating their training and expertise in working with emotionally vulnerable children.

"Children must often deal with situations over which they have little control," said senior therapist Cassie D'Addeo, LMFT. "YFC's **BRIDGES** program is designed to give a voice to children who have little to say in their painful life transitions. **BRIDGES** will be a place for kids to express themselves and learn to cope with their circumstances in a safe and supportive environment."

**BRIDGES** will replace *Rainbows*, the international children's program that YFC offered for three years. *Rainbows* is a very good curriculum, which is designed to be



delivered by volunteers and lay people. The **BRIDGES** curriculum, by contrast, is written and delivered by YFC's professional therapists. Children participating in **BRIDGES** will benefit from the clinical training and professional experience of the program facilitators.

More information about the **BRIDGES** program will be available soon on our website. If you have any questions about the program, please contact our Client Services Coordinator, Catherine VanDamme, at 847-367-5991 ext. 13.

## THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS

*Many thanks to the organizations which supported our mission through grant funding, event sponsorships, and employee matching gifts during the January 1, 2016 through May 31, 2016 time period. We could not provide our services without their generous financial support.*

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## THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS INDIVIDUAL DONORS

*Many thanks to all who made monetary contributions between January 1, 2016 and May 31, 2016. Our donors truly make a difference in the lives of the adults, children, adolescents, couples and families we serve.*

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*If we have somehow failed to acknowledge your gift or donation, please contact us so we may thank you properly. 847-367-5991 x30*



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### Inside this issue of *Community Connection:*

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## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR 2016 GALA!

*Dust off your boots, add a few rhinestones, and come on down to the Marriott Lincolnshire Resort for **Boots & Bling**, YFC's 2016 gala! (Watch for your invitation to arrive in the mail by early September.)*

**Who:** You and Your Posse

**What:** Cocktails & Dinner  
Silent & Live Auctions  
Live Music & Lots of Fun

**Where:** Marriott Resort in Lincolnshire

**When:** Saturday, October 22, 2016 at  
6:30 pm

**Why:** To support counseling services  
for low income children and  
teens

**Info:** [counselingforall.org/annual-gala](http://counselingforall.org/annual-gala)

