



CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH COALITION OF WNY, INC.

A Chapter of Families Together in NYS, Inc.

Winter 2011

“Healthy Minds/Healthy Bodies”- A Success!

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH COALITION'S 15TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

FIRST OF ALL, THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS FOR MAKING THIS CONFERENCE POSSIBLE!

The Children's Mental Health Coalition of WNY, Inc. hosted its 15th Annual Conference entitled **“Healthy Minds/Healthy Bodies”** on October 15, 2011 at Assembly of God Church in Hamburg, NY. A special thanks goes out to Pastor Tom Baldwin and his wife, Sharon for allowing us to use their church and for assisting us in so many ways with conference set up. Although, the “weather outside was frightful” with rain and 60 mile an hour winds, the Conference was attended by 129 family members and youth from 19 counties in the Western New York. What a wonderful day it was!

Workshops such as “How to Work With Your Child's Service Provider”, “Coping With Thoughts of Suicide and Self Harm”, “Trauma Focused Support Group for Caregivers”, “The Special Education Process”, “The Nurtured Heart Approach”, and more were offered for conference attendees to choose from. Cadi

Morse from the YOUTH POWER ! program of Families Together in NYS gathered youth input on what workshops they would find helpful and assisted in acquiring presenters for those workshops. Dr. Michael Cummings donated his time to present two workshops including “Dialogue With Youth” in which youth were invited to share an open discussion with the opportunity to also ask questions about their medications, diagnosis, and any other issues impacting their lives. Thanks to Jenny Laney, the cost of providing respite for 25 children was covered through the Child and Family Support Program of the Mental Health Association of Erie County.

Throughout the day, Dianne Riordan, Mental Health Association of Erie County, Lisa Kinney, Hillside Family of Agencies, and Jenny Laney worked tirelessly in the kitchen preparing the items for families to “make their own salad” as part of their lunch in keeping with our theme of Healthy Minds/Healthy Bodies, and serving muffins, fruits and juices for breakfast and snacks. One family member commented that the salad bar was the best she had ever had!

Chris Hoff, family support provider for Connors Children's Center, Western Region PTA Special Education Chairperson and this year's conference

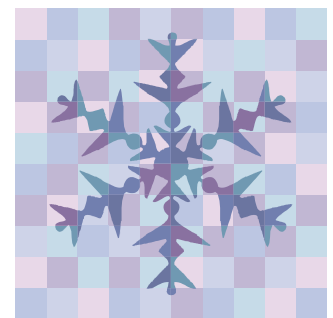
Chair, arranged for our venue and recruited her family to help with both setting up before the conference and clean up after! Chris was a wonderful conference Chair, acquiring speakers, sponsors, and pulling it all together in a way that made this one of our best conferences ever.

Vicki McCarthy, director of Families Child Advocacy Network, single handedly manned the registration table when our guests, who drive for miles from throughout Western New York began arriving earlier than expected, then dashed out in the nasty weather to pick up a delicious casserole donated by her program.

Finger Lakes Parent Network advocates, Lorretta Maldonado and Elva McBride were on hand to help where ever needed as were Chautauqua County family support providers Cindy Eimers, Lisa Spunagle, and Lisa Wiech. Lynette Torgalski, from the OAHIO program at Independent Living Center, went above and beyond providing her workshop on “Fun with Art” by assisting with all youth crafts, including “Make Your Own Trail Mix” and ensuring that everyone who wanted to make their own drum was able to, including the little ones.

Special points of interest:

- *CONFERENCE 2011 UPDATES*
- *A LOOK AT 2011*
- *PAST MEETINGS, SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES WE'VE BEEN INVOLVED WITH*



Conference Committee:

Chair, Christine Hoff
Patti Dinardo
Melissa Golpl
Lisa Kinney
Jenny Laney
Cassandra Morse
Sue Mustard
Cheryl Myers
Lynette Torgalski



Conference cont.

Thanks goes out also to Max Donatelli, Baker Victory Services, for agreeing to come during lunch to explain upcoming changes in the IEP Program to parents and youth in a very thorough and understandable way!

Parent Network of WNY provided scholarships for 25 family members and youth as well as agreeing to be a sponsor of the conference and offering much assistance in providing workshops and presenters.

Never before have we had such an outpouring of assistance from sponsors and friends ensuring that family support is alive and thriving in Western New York.

To EVERYONE who helped make this conference such a success and added to this “jam packed” educational opportunity for families and youth from those who ensured family attendance to those who donated baskets - THANK YOU from the bottom of our hearts!

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS!

New York State Developmental Disability Planning Council

Mental Health Association of Monroe County/Better Days Ahead



Chautauqua County Department of Mental Hygiene

Families Together in New York State, Inc.

Hillside Family of Agencies

Mental Health Association of Erie County

NYS Office of Mental Health Western Region Field Office Kid’s Team

Parent Child Connection

Wegmans

Baker Victory Services

Families Child Advocacy Network

Finger Lakes Parent Network

Compeer Niagara for Kids/Mental Health Association in Niagara County, Inc.



Monroe County Office of Mental Health

Catholic Charities

Drs. Lawrence and Lucille Sherlick



A LOOK AT 2011

The Children's Mental Health Coalition of WNY continues to **host regional information sharing meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month.** These meetings are open to all those who are interested in the mental health and wellness of our children and families who live with emotional, social, behavioral, learning, and developmental disabilities including family support providers, educators, service providers, and family members. This year the meetings were held all around the region to ensure

that we were open and accessible to as many people as possible. Some our hosts were: Better Days Ahead in Monroe County, Hillside Family of Agencies, Aurora House in Niagara County, Chautauqua County Department of Mental Hygiene, Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center in Erie County, Parent Network of WNY in Erie County, and Crestwood Children's Center in Monroe County. Please check out our website at www.raisingminds.org for information on these monthly meetings.



What have we been up to?

As it is every year, **annual conference planning** was a major priority in 2011. With a dwindling budget the Coalition and its Conference Committee worked tirelessly in planning this year's event to provide the most that we could for our friends and families for the least amount of money. We canvassed the region for sponsors and were rewarded with the biggest response we have ever had. Our conference chair acquired our venue free of charge. Mini grants were applied for - a few with positive outcome. We decided to forgo "snail mailing" printed brochures thus saving on mail and printing costs. Our brochure was sent out repeatedly via email and our sup-

porters distributed them amongst the families and service providers in their locale. We bought, cooked and served breakfast, lunch, and snacks ourselves. Presenters were asked to consider a small stipend instead of a costly honorarium. It worked! The conference was a huge success and we were able to scholarship many families and youth.

Once again, the coalition assisted Families Together in NYS with providing youth and families in our region with a means of attending their annual Legislative Awareness Day.

Coordination for the Western Region is shared with Finger Lakes Parent Network and is a short term but time consuming effort. The Coalition also hosted Ruth Foster, Director of Public Policy at Families Together in NYS for a "Legislative Training" that helped family members and advocates learn the ins and outs of visiting Legislative members both locally and during Legislative Awareness Day in Albany. The Coalition also presented testimony on the value of family support at the Autism Standing Committee on Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and Assembly Subcommittee on Autism Retention Public Hearing on Thursday, February 10, 2011.

What we've been up to cont.

The coalition continues to co-supervise the family support provider at Conners Childrens Center in Buffalo NY. We have also been hosting a quarterly Support Group for family support providers who work with families and children in residential care. We also co-hosted presentations by Jessie Saperstein, a successful young man living with autism, and Morgan Fawcett, a young man growing up with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

The coalition has begun attending Transition Committee meetings in both Niagara-Orleans and Erie counties in an effort to acquire information to share with family mem-

bers and support providers. We also continue to co-host informational and supportive meetings for family support providers (formerly known as FANS) in Chautauqua and Niagara Counties. We are also a member of and attend meetings for the Western Region Technical Assistance Team (RTAT).

We are also trying to stay on top of the many changes coming in behavioral health care in New York State and, in particular the Western region. Informational meetings were attended on October 24, December 14, and December 16 and the information

passed on to family support providers and families.

The Coalition also received a scholarship for and attended the Annual NYS Coalition for Children's Mental Health Services conference in Saratoga, NY on November 29 and 30.



We hope this update confirms to you, our friends and supporters, that we continue to work hard for families and children in the 19 counties of Western New York during these trying fiscal times!

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