Building A Stronger Community

The fabric of a healthy and thriving community is made up of strong relationships.

The foremost concern of YFS staff is the well-being of Islanders – young children, teens, adults, parents, seniors – regardless of where they come from or how long they’ve lived on the Island. We share this concern with many Islanders and community groups. Through all stages of development, it takes the proverbial village to ensure that Islanders have the supports necessary to grow, thrive and, later in life, to mature gracefully and comfortably.

Community partnerships and collaborations enable YFS staff to serve Islanders with creative and evidenced based services. For example, the school district partners with YFS on the best practice of having counselors placed in each school – reducing risk factors such as youth suicide and youth school-based violence, while increasing the social and emotional well-being of students and creating a safe learning environment. The State Office of Insurance Commissioner provides a SHIBA volunteer (State Health Insurance Benefits Advisors) at the Luther Burbank office to assist seniors in choosing supplemental insurance to Medicare. Safe Crossings, an organization dedicated to helping children grieve, provided guidance and consultation to an elementary school counselor as she helped a school community with the loss of a friend. Islander Middle School (IMS) PTSA provided funds to train staff at IMS to teach youth anxiety and distress tolerance and emotional regulation (see the article on page 3; Harry Brown at IMS). Extending further out beyond the Island boundaries, it’s YFS’s on-going regional partnerships with Hopelink, Salvation Army and Crisis Clinic of King County that help Island families get through unexpected financial crises.

These partnerships are the tip of the iceberg. Like so many individuals, community groups and local service groups also fund YFS endeavors. This generosity stems from a shared understanding that community health is built and maintained by healthy individuals, families and a myriad of civic, faith and social groups. Partnerships are about relationships, and relationships are the foundation of well-being for individuals and communities.

As you read the stories in the following pages you will see how community relationships and partnerships integrate with YFS programs. To all who individually or collectively engage with YFS to help build a foundation for healthy youth, seniors and family support services - a big heartfelt thank you for helping build this incredible community.

Director, Cynthia Goodwin at (206) 275-7611 or cynthia.goodwin@mercergov.org
Mercer Island Thrift Shop: Give, Shop and Volunteer

Mercer Island Thrift Shop's primary goal is to support Mercer Island Youth & Family Services. The Shop's mission includes providing convenient Island locations where residents can donate, recycle and purchase household goods as well as serve as a community hub for people to volunteer.

Donating Household Goods
According to the EPA, fashion is one of the largest polluting industries in the world with 85% of our used clothing being sent to our landfills. In 2017, by donating to the Mercer Island Thrift Shop (MITS), Islanders collectively diverted 610,000 pounds of textiles and household goods from landfills. Through store sales and local partnerships, MITS maximizes its ability to raise funds and keep this resource in the hands of local non-profits.

Who Shops at MITS?
If you haven't yet, join the other 70% of the world who shop for second hand clothing. MITS attracts shoppers who love the creativity of repurposing used goods while supporting a great cause. Many Islanders, and off-Islanders, also shop at MITS because of the affordable prices. Last year, MITS customers made 79,550 purchases, and bought 292,261 items.

The Secret to Feeling Accomplished Is Being Charitable
Did you know that if you give of your time, you’ll feel more relaxed and self-confident? In a Harvard Business Review, Cassie Mogilner of the Wharton School of Business writes about how, “Spending time on others increases one’s feeling of time affluence.” When giving time to someone else, Mogilner found that people feel more capable, confident and useful than those who do other activities such as leaving work early or doing personal errands. These findings were in contrast to her team’s initial theories on the gift of time.

If you would like to feel more accomplished, consider volunteering at MITS. In 2017, 140 volunteers gave 16,980 hours of time, an average of 10 hours per month. Volunteer opportunities include cashiering, customer service, and processing donated goods. Volunteers with specific talents can be assigned to projects associated with store development and administrative help. The store managers, Suzanne Philen and Logan Ens are ready to give you a tour and explore how you could be a great fit for the MITS volunteer team.
Harry Brown, MA, LMFT, is the YFS mental health counselor based at Islander Middle School (IMS). This May, Harry completed a 3-day training along with other MISD staff at the University of Washington on DBT Skills in Schools: Steps A. The training involves bringing the emotional problem solving and self-regulation skills taught in the evidence-based, best practice DBT (Dialectical Behavioral Therapy) curriculum to an entire school population. DBT Steps A was developed locally by Drs. James Mazza, Elizabeth Dexter-Mazza and their colleagues at the University of Washington.

Currently, many of the students Harry counsels deal with anxiety. They have difficulty managing the tasks and stressors of middle school responsibilities while becoming teenagers. While in distress, youth can act-out in class or feel overwhelmed, not knowing how to manage their emotional response. For two years, Harry has been co-teaching in the IMS Compass program, to teach students distress tolerance skills. The bulk of this work involves identifying emotional triggers and consequences to youth who are vulnerable to certain feelings. Outlining the emotional process enables youth to see that it is possible for them to have an impact on making a positive choice when confronted with a strong feeling.

In April Harry received a grant from the IMS PTSA to attend the U.W. training to apply the DBT skills to the IMS Compass Program and to integrate distress tolerance and emotional regulation curriculum into the health classes for the full IMS population. The three-day training, including nine months of follow-up consultation, will provide a 30-lesson outline and guide the implementation of the program at IMS. Harry will train IMS teachers for their role in supporting the emotional regulation of all IMS students.

DBT Steps A is the appropriate program for IMS students because of its specific focus on distress tolerance and it complements the school’s existing Sources of Strength program that promotes connections between peers and the school staff. DBT Steps A will benefit the whole community of IMS as students increase their focus, stay on-task and become better able to take advantage of the educational environment.

Liana Montague, MA, LMFT is the YFS school-based counselor at Island Park Elementary. Students know Ms. Liana for her leadership in the Mindfulness curriculum, her contagious positivity, and an endless supply of sewn cloth hearts given to any child or staff having a bad day. However, this year, Liana also reached out to Island Park parents to host an interactive discussion, “Growing Resilient Children” with Principal David Hoffman and Superintendent Donna Colosky.

The City (MIYFS) and school district have a very strong partnership and collaborate on many activities. However, this event was different in that it brought school administrators and YFS counselors into the same discussion and gave parents a unique opportunity to hear about issues from different perspectives.

Parents attending the event were given a suggested reading of Dr. Suniya Luthar’s study on raising youth in affluent communities and asked to pay special attention to issues of stress/anxiety and depression.

“The event provided a relaxed environment for parents to talk and ask questions about what it means to raise a child in a high-pressure community like Mercer Island, including a purposeful focus on the strengths of the community,” says Liana. Twenty parents talked about coping strategies for youth anxiety, emotional self-care and how parents can avoid adding to the problem (i.e. avoid asking kindergarteners what college they want to attend).

The conversation included challenging some of the Island norms about how to be successful. Liana discussed the concept of failure being a necessary learning experience for children to develop resiliency. Attendees overwhelmingly asked for further discussion and voiced support for the idea that parents can be part of the solution to stressed-out kids on Mercer Island.
Thank you, Mercer Island, for making our 2018 Annual Breakfast another historically successful event!

Thank You to all the wonderful Table Captains and the hundreds of supporters, making history at our MIYFS Foundation Annual Breakfast celebrating and supporting 16 years of giving from the heart!

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Get Involved with MIYFS Foundation!

The MIYFS Foundation would love for you to get involved in one or more committees. Contact Sari Weiss at 206-275-7756 to learn more.

Community Outreach
Develop and implement ways to engage the Mercer Island community to educate Islanders on the essential services provided by MIYFS and the need for funding. Help plan “soft touches” events such as Food Collections at Recycle Events, PTA Back-to-School Coffees, Summer Celebration, Open House, etc.

Strategic Marketing
Help with fundraising, awareness and branding; drive Social Media Marketing efforts (Website, Facebook, Twitter); and create print media.

YFS Foundation Annual Breakfast
Participate in the breadth and depth of planning the YFS Annual Fundraising Breakfast, held in February. Volunteer work includes Table Captain recruitment, Sponsorship procurement, Business Partner Program relationship management, Raffle, Program concept development, Marketing via social media and print channels, and Logistical coordination of set-up/tear-down.

Christmas Tree Lot
Help coordinate business components, develop promotional materials and recruit volunteers for annual “Lions Club” Christmas Tree Lot Sales.

Call Sari Weiss at 206-275-7756 to learn more!

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MIYFS Foundation Board Members greatly appreciate every single donor and donation – from the Annual Breakfast, Year-End or School Counselor appeals, to food drives, recycle events, and those making restricted gifts for special projects, or helping meet the greatest needs.

Together, you demonstrate that Mercer Islanders take care of one another – Thank You!

Please see our full list of 2017 donors at www.miyfs.org.
### 2017 Revenue and Expenditures

#### 2017 EXPENSES
- Thrift Shop Staffing & Operations: $680,055
- YFS Administration and Program Support & Development: $630,097
- Mental Health Counselors in Six MI Public Schools: $607,507
- Community-based Counseling Programs: $179,966
- Communities That Care (CTC) Prevention Program: $169,394
- Emergency & Family Assistance Programs: $163,811
- HYI and Community Well-Being (VOICE/SVP): $110,878
- Senior Services Programs: $98,753
- Arrested Youth Intervention Program (Diversion): $15,000

**TOTAL:** $2,655,462

#### 2017 REVENUE
- Thrift Shop Proceeds: $1,607,692
- Combined City General Fund/ YFS Fund: $399,650
- MIYFS Foundation Contribution: $202,000
- Federal Drug Free Community Grant: $130,292
- HYI/Youth Development (VOICE) Participation Fees: $87,775
- Targeted YFS Donations: $66,241
- MISD Shared Cost of Mental Health Counselors in Six MI Public Schools: $60,000
- Grants, including WA State and King County Funds: $53,113
- Counseling Fees at Luther Burbank (Sliding Scale): $48,698

**TOTAL:** $2,655,462
Reducing the Risks of School-Based Violence

Bringing the Sandy Hook Promise to Northwood Elementary

After the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, the YFS Mental Health school-based counselor at Northwood Elementary, Laura Falsgraf, MA, LMHC, noticed a change in the media. There was more focus on the root causes of social isolation and marginalization among perpetrators of school-based violence. She felt compelled to teach the Northwood school community skills to identify lonely or isolated students and to reach out and include others.

Northwood principal, Aimee Batliner-Gillette and Laura created a series of social engagement activities adopted from the “Start with Hello” Sandy Hook Promise curriculum on youth violence prevention to coincide with the school’s Spirit Week. Principal Batliner-Gillette engaged teachers and school administrators to collaborate on presenting activities for each grade level to increase inclusion across the school community.

During the week of March 19, Laura, teachers and administrators led students at every grade level through a host of activities. The week began with a presentation on identifying loneliness and social isolation among their school peers. From there, the work continued with breakout groups that taught students how to reach out and connect with others. Students were taught how to use ice breakers, such as asking, “What’s your favorite color, musician, or game?” The groups brainstormed ideas on how to approach a peer who sat out on a bench like the character Charlie Brown.

The school’s focus on inclusion will remain part of its commitment to a healthy and safe learning environment. Laura will continue with classroom presentations on inclusion throughout the year, teachers have committed to keeping an eye out for students who might be feeling left out or marginalized, and Spirit/Just Say Hello Week will become an annual Northwood event.

IMAGE AT TOP: New Friends Day – Students were paired up (an older with a younger one) and provided with an activity to get to know each other. The activity increased student to student interaction and culminated in participants making a paper flower about their new friend and adding it to the school’s Kindness Tree – a reminder to everyone that Northwood is a place where everyone is included.
ENCLOSED: YOUR GIFTS BECOME OUR TRANSPORTATION

MIYFS staff regularly transport youth to VOICE/SVP 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.

Youth & Family Services Upcoming Events

11th Annual Pumpkin Glass Art Launch
Sales begin Monday, October 1st, 2018
Check out miyfs.org for all 12 local businesses selling glass pumpkins

Christmas Tree Sales at LIONS Club Lot
Tree Sales begin Saturday, November 24th, 2018
Log on to miyfs.org for dates and location

Youth & Family Services Foundation Breakfast
17 years of giving from the heart!
Wednesday, February 13th, 2019 • 7:30-8:30am
Mercer Island Community & Event Center – Annual Fundraising and Community Building Event!

Take part in the Mercer Island Magic that is Youth & Family Services!
Call or email Sari Weiss at (206) 275-7756 or sari.weiss@mercergov.org