HYSB Expands Services

The Housatonic Youth Service Bureau is pleased to welcome to its staff Geoffrey Gott, a licensed family and marriage therapist. Originally from the Northwest Corner, Gott had been living in California before relocating here to be closer to family. The Bureau serves the six towns of Region One and Geoff says it's clear that "we'll be bumping our heads with the big city problems here soon, if we're not there already".

Teen homelessness, substance abuse, custody and divorce issues and crisis intervention are areas in which HYSB offers support and counseling. Services are provided free of charge year round. In fact, there has been a threefold increase of referrals since Geoff assumed his post and the number continues to grow.

As of April 1, Geoff is working full time at HYSB, made possible largely by grants from the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and the Foundation for Community Health. In addition to working with youth and families, Gott also provides case management by dealing with police, lawyers, and state agencies as those situations arise.

Geoff has a bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology from the University of Houston and a graduate degree in marriage and family counseling from Phillips Graduate Institute in Encino, Calif. He has taught graduate and undergraduate psychology courses as an adjunct professor at both of those institutions. He had a private clinical practice in California and specialized in the treatment of adolescents and young adults as well as providing family counseling and supervision of graduate interns as co-director of Friends of Family, a nonprofit agency.

Executive director Nick Pohl reaffirmed the benefits of Geoff's joining HYSB: "To provide a free therapeutic counseling service by a credentialed professional is incredible. It's such a needed service."

Grusauskas Returns to Housy for Battle 2011

Housy grad Jonathan Grusauskas shows his young charge some percussion fundamentals.

Jonathan Grusauskas smiles when talking about emceeing this year's Battle of the Bands April 30. It was just a few years ago 2005 to be exact-when his band, Lespecial, participated in the first Battle and walked off with first prize.

"Music has been a passion of mine since fifth grade," said Jon, 23, a graduate of Lee H. Kellogg School in Falls Village and Housatonic Valley Regional High School, class of 2005. He has fond memories of his dad holding bluegrass rehearsals, so he was always surrounded by some type of music. Active in the music program at the high school, he toured with the group when it performed in England.

The Falls Village resident has been able to follow his dream, performing all around New England with Lespecial, along with fellow members Rory Dolan and Luke Bemand. The three recently opened The Music Cellar in Millerton where they teach and put bands together. Jon has also established The Millerton Knights for children 5 to 8 years old. The group members play percussion, bass, keyboard and dance at various gigs. The Knights will be the opening number at this year's Battle of the Bands.

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"Winning the Battle of the Bands was a motivator for us to continue, to go beyond our goal," said Jon. "The Youth Service Bureau provided that means for us. I hope we can do the same for the young groups coming up."

April 30, 2011 Battle of the Bands Sponsors
Fender Guitar, Harney & Sons, John Atchley Architectural & Fine Art Photography, Robert J, Bird DDS, Salisbury Bank & Trust & Sharon Hospital
A Word From Our Executive Director:

Finally, after a very trying winter, the first green shoots are pushing their way through the cold ground. It may sound cliché, but this is how I like to look at the work of HYSB. Our board and staff work hard to foster the growth of the young people and families in our community. At times though, I feel as if it’s our agency that is the small budding bulb growing up through the hard ground. Over the winter HYSB has seen a lot of growth. With growth comes change and we’ve had to work to adapt to this change.

The number of referrals that have come through our door has increased three-fold. We collaborated with two other agencies to launch a new parenting support group in Sharon. We hired a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist to provide free therapeutic counseling to individuals and families. We worked alongside Woman’s Support Services to bring enrichment programs to North Canaan and Lee Kellogg elementary schools. We’ve expanded our popular FYI program to offer two FYI workshops in each of our six towns this year. And, we launched our Lockbox Initiative to distribute 250 free prescription medication lockboxes to our community.

Day in and day out, we work to push our green-shoot-of-an-agency forward, striving to make positive differences in the lives of children, youth and families in our communities.

—Nicholas Pohl

HYSB Lockboxes keep drugs out of kids’ reach

HYSB’s executive director explains the dangers of medicine to small children during a distribution event at an area daycare center.

In homes where prescription medications are stored, children and teens are especially vulnerable. This year HYSB received funding from the Foundation for Community Health to address the problem with a Lockbox Initiative. So far we have distributed nearly two-thirds of the 250 aluminum lockboxes free to the families in our area.

The initiative comes out of alarming studies that indicate trends of prescription medication misuse and abuse are on the increase. Many prescription drug medications act as an antecedent to street drugs. Pharmaceuticals can be addictive from the opiates found in them. In turn, this opens the door to a much cheaper alternative: heroin.

Getting these boxes out to the parents—and in some cases, grandparents—has been aided in part by a strategic partnership with area daycare centers. These organizations have helped HYSB get many boxes into homes where they are most needed.

The initiative focuses on three key areas of prevention: building awareness by opening a dialog about the dangers of prescription medications; providing education by filling the boxes with useful information about prescription drug abuse and other illicit drugs; and most importantly, providing parents with a tool to control access to prescription medications within the home.

Fender Guitar Raffle

Win a Stratocaster Electric or a Highlander Bass

Tickets: $5
Drawing: April 30, Battle of the Bands@HVRHS
Available at the HYSB office & Board Members or Darren Winston Books & Prints, Sharon
George's Music Center, Torrington
Details: www.hysb.org

Proceeds Benefit the Housatonic Youth Service Bureau