



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
OF SOUHEGAN VALLEY

Children's Resiliency Retreat PREVENTION PROGRAMMING



In almost every part of the world, the Dragonfly symbolizes change, transformation, adaptability, and self-realization. The change that is often referred to has its source in mental and emotional maturity.

This program is made possible thanks to the generous support of the Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley and the Community Action for Safe Teens Committee, Arthur Getz Trust, Amato Family Fund of NH Charitable Foundation, Bishop's Charitable Fund, Souhegan Valley United Prayer Group, Milford Hospital Association, Bridge Community Church and other supporters.



WHAT

The Children's Resiliency Retreat will consist of one-day retreats each month for school age children who are affected by a loved ones' drug or alcohol use. The project will utilize The Children's Program Kit, which has been developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and National Association of Children of Alcoholics (NACOA).

Each monthly session will encompass a holistic approach including educational and therapeutic knowledge, tools, and coping skills designed to interfere with the intergenerational cycle of substance use disorders. Participants will participate in healing circles and build skills they need to develop strength from their own resiliency. This program will provide a unique opportunity to structure learning experiences in a safe environment in which young people can explore their feelings, learn they are not alone, and recognize that the stressful things that might happen in their families are not their fault. The program will help participants improve skills that will create healthy visions for their future. Through the program, children will create connections to community and learn how to find emotional help and community resources when they need them.

Sessions will also include fun, educational activities that include the arts (music, arts & crafts, dance, thespianism, etc.) mindfulness activities, nature and adventure based learning, which will help them learn how to openly communicate and rebuild trust.

Family activities will be held in conjunction with the program to support the strengthening of relationships within the family system. Family engagement will be supported through collaborative efforts with the Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley (BGCSV) and Community Action for Safe Teens Coalition, a committee of the BGCSV.

The therapeutic sessions will be facilitated by licensed social workers; all other activities will be conducted by trained staff and trained volunteers.

WHY

Recovery means children too! One in four children is related to a family member that has an alcohol or other drug addiction. In 2016, over 475 people lost their lives to drug and/or alcohol related disease. Children in these families are experiencing traumatic stress and often feel like they are to blame, suffering from shame and guilt. There is a strong link between emotional trauma and substance use, specifically alcoholism.

To break the intergenerational cycle of addiction, children need to learn about the disease in an age appropriate way. They need to understand their loved ones' illness is not their fault, and they are not to blame. Children need safe ways to explore and express their feelings. They need to know there are peers and adults that care about them and their future. Children also need to know positive ways they can cope with problems at home, such as domestic violence, emotional abuse, broken promises, blackouts and neglect.

WHO & WHERE

The Children's Resiliency Retreat will serve children in grades 1 – 8 and their families, who have loved ones that suffer from the disease of addiction, otherwise known as substance use disorders. The retreats will be held at the Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley, 56 Mont Vernon Street, Milford, New Hampshire. This facility is the largest youth-serving facility in the area specifically designed for the safety and needs of young people. The building offers a wide array of activities ranging from a computer lab, music room, dance room, game room, learning kitchen, rock climbing wall, and has recently been expanded to include a new gymnasium and teen center. The building is also home of the Amato Center for Performing Arts, providing a unique opportunity for creative programming. Connected to the property by a walking bridge, the Souhegan River and close proximity to Keyes Memorial Park, the Club enhances opportunities in nature and adventure based activities for the children that participate in the retreats. Youth will be referred by Nashua and Manchester Drug Courts, DCYF, CASA, Nashua Children's Home, school guidance counselors, therapists, and other youth serving agencies.

WHEN

The Children's Resiliency Retreats will be one-day sessions, held on the second Saturday of each month during the school year. The first cycle of the program will be held from January through June 2018. After the initial cycle, the project will run for each school year, September through June, providing funding is secured.

OUTCOMES/RESULTS

- Children learn appropriate communication skills to express their feelings and needs to trusted adults
- Children will know how to identify trusted adults and how to ask for help when it is needed
- Children will develop courage and strength to help with problem solving skills
- Children will develop resiliency skills and learn how to engage in healthy outlets to relieve stress
- Children will learn how to keep themselves safe in challenging or difficult situations
- Children will develop healthy visions for their future
- Families will be strengthened as positive methods of communication and conflict resolution skills are developed within the family system

The Case for CAST's Resiliency Initiative and The Children's Resiliency Retreat:

One particularly difficult feature of family alcoholism and addiction is that many children hide their suffering quite well. They have picked up habits of denial and social withdrawal that their parents have modeled for them. Too often, we do not approach them and or offer them the information and support they need. By ignoring their situations, we send the message that their feelings and concerns are not real or important. The curriculum for the Children's Resiliency Retreat, the *Children's Program Kit* helps treatment providers ensure that:

- Children hear messages they need to hear—messages that they are not alone; and that they are not to blame for their parents' addictions.
- Children learn skills that they need—skills such as problem solving, finding safety, and seeking supportive services.
- Children are put on a path to build their existing strengths and develop resilience.
- Parents learn to understand their children's needs and are empowered to connect their children to supportive services.
- Families are helped along the path toward breaking the intergenerational cycle of addiction.

—*Sis Wenger, Executive Director, National Association for Children of Alcoholics*

Alcoholism and drug addiction are serious conditions that affect the individual as well as his or her family and children. Almost 7.3 million children lived with a parent who was dependent on or abused alcohol. This demonstrates the growing need to reach out to these children.

--*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Report from 2002 to 2007, CADCA, 2009.*

"Teaching coping strategies is ... effective and empowering for the children while their parent is undergoing or still in need of treatment."

--*National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), 2004/2005.*

"Individuals who coped effectively with the trauma of growing up in a [substance abusing family] and who became competent adults relied on a significantly larger number of sources of support in their childhood."

--*Emily E. Werner and Jeanette L. Johnson, "The Role of Caring Adults in the Lives of Children of Alcoholics," Substance Use & Misuse Vol. 39, Iss. 5.2004*

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