

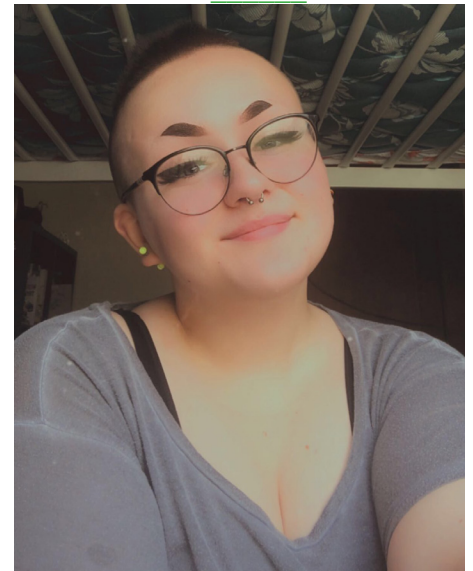


Coping Through Distance Learning

Summer 2020

Youth Story

Since COVID-19 struck, everything has changed dramatically and it has affected everyone in different ways. Changes ranging from packed drive thrus to cancelled concerts. Before COVID-19, Chelsea and students at Towerview ALC met up about every other week or weekly in a tucked away corner at Tower View, but now our meetups are all virtual. For example, Chelsea and I meet up whenever possible through messenger, phone calls or via text messaging and it has worked out perfectly fine. Personally, I do not think COVID-19 has necessarily ruined anything for the Youth Advisory Council (YAC), but instead we have found more alternatives and used this time to become more creative. This change could be a positive thing in case another outbreak happens we are already prepared. I am excited to see any more possible positive changes to our one-on-ones and our economy in the near future.



During distance learning this spring, Youth Outreach staff were really missing our kids in our programs. We knew the lack of social interaction would be hard on them so we decided to make up “thinking of you kits”. These kits consisted of little items and treats that all signaled how important they are and how much we missed them.

Youth Outreach also collaborated with Randii Waddell and Red Wing Arts to put together Bird Feeder Kits and

Art Kits. The Bird Feeder Kits were sent to over 40 kids and they were able to build them with their families. The Art Kits contained different items from colored pencils to harmonicas. We really wanted the youth to be able to channel their creativity while being home with their families. It was such a fun project to put together and the kids loved it!



Volunteer Spotlight

Michael Holmes is a wonderful volunteer with Youth Outreach. He has been a part of the mentoring program for 3 years. He signed up to be a mentor because he wanted to give back to the community and to inspire youth who think they won't make it!

Michael is always interacting with students and other mentors. He really brings a smile to everyone's faces. Connecting to kids and helping the community means everything to him.

Some fun facts about Michael: he is an amazing cook, he loves to garden, and loves experiencing life with his family. Michael graduated from the Red Wing School District and now is the owner of Rude Boi Catering. He is also an avid advocate for social justice and equity.

Michael is the most recent addition to the Red Wing Youth Outreach Board. We look forward to receiving his support and guidance as we continue to develop programs and support youth throughout Red Wing.

Mentoring through COVID-19

Relationships matter. When everything shut down this spring, the only thing that kept our programs running was committed relationships.

At first, it was easy for our staff to try to maintain a relationship online with our youth. We reached out in many ways: Facebook groups, Facebook messages, Zoom meetings, Google Classroom meetings, texting, and 1:1 FaceTime. We are very fortunate to live in a time of ample technology options, but something still was missing. Staff started to go back to "old fashion" ways of communication, like writing letters, phone calls, and drive-by visits! Our youth responded well to this and started to reach out more and more on their own to connect with staff. These methods ultimately lead to the success of our mentors being able to connect with the students as well. There is a new appreciation of getting something in the mail! We think our youth realized the effort that it takes and just how much their mentor and our staff care about them. Sending out a letter saying, "Just thinking about you and I care about you!" was so meaningful. Our relationships with our youth grew during this time due to the extra 1:1 care and attention we were able to give them.

When COVID-19 hit our mentors reached out right away about how they can help in a variety of ways. Many of our



Michael Holmes pictured with his daughter.

If you would like more information about becoming a mentor or know a High School or Middle School student who could use more caring adults in their lives, please contact Red Wing Youth Outreach.

mentors had already established such great relationships with their mentees that they already had contact information for them outside of school and had already reached out to them. For others, they immediately requested contact information and we quickly worked to gain parent permission for them to connect outside of school.

We had mentors go above-and-beyond to help any student during this time. Mentors offered to: drop lunches off for kids in our program, take on new mentees just to make sure that our kids had someone to talk to during distant learning, request parent info to check on their mentee and how the parents were doing, and even join our board so they can learn more about how to help youth city-wide.

What makes our program special is how flexible and creative we can be due to our relationships with local funders and the ability to meet immediate urgent needs without having to go through hoops.

Our program represents the community and sets the example of how important these relationships are during hard times. This was demonstrated by how our staff, volunteers, and families leaned on each other and were all surrounded by community support.

Youth Outreach News

Independent Living Skills & Youth Advisory Council

What a crazy second quarter of the year this has all been! Mid-March all programming went online and within a week or two we had found our new normal. Our in-person Independent Living Skills group that had started the first week of March turned into a virtual program where we focused on individual needs. This meant that whatever each youth needed to learn our staff would find a way to teach it. This process include everything from TicTok video, cooking videos, challenges, daily encouragement, and a lot of phone calls, text messages and face timing. Our first priority has been making sure that our youth feel they are connected to us.

Our Youth Advisory Council (YAC) has had 4 meetings now with 7 youth who are committed to making a difference in their community! One of the reasons this council was created was to give our youth a voice and teach the leadership skills needed to make positive changes. We have worked with these youth for a few years individually and we so excited to see them come together as a group and use their strengths for positive change! This will be a group you will want to keep your eye on as they will be making some great changes!

Youth Stories

Youth, like myself, have joined the youth advisory council (YAC) to launch a new program that allows us to help make changes in our community. This program focuses on providing youth with leadership skills and making contributions in our community. The recent Covid-19 has affected the lives of individuals and changed our stride in how we planned to successfully build the program this year. We have been able to conduct meetings in a safe manner by having meetings online, instead of in person. The staff at Youth Outreach is eager to see where the program can lead us and how we can work as a team to pursue our goals and accomplish these goals.

One reason I joined YAC is because of our one-on-ones with the staff. Today, our in person one-on-ones look different, as it has turned into face timing and messaging back and. This has given me a way to stay connected in these unknown times. Prior to COVID-19, we were able to be together and plan activities more simply. The staff at Youth Outreach are still able to communicate via video chat, but it is not the same. I know I am patiently waiting for the day we can have face-to-face conversations with our YAC members, staff, and be active within our community again.

As it has been said time and time again, 'We are in this together'.



As a part of Red Wing Youth Outreach Advisory Council, I am excited for all the things we are working on and all the things we will do in the future. As an eighteen year old who has benefited from Youth Outreach for 4 years, I know that the youth in this town need an outlet, a safe place, someone to go to and trust besides their parents. The kids in this town need somewhere to go to socialize and have fun but still be safe. I have been having one on one meetings with Chelsea for about 2 years (even during COVID-19 over text, although I cannot wait to see her in person again). Youth Outreach has helped me with my mental health, maturity, self-care, self-worth, true happiness, friendship, responsibility, respect, kindness, priorities and so much more. I just want to help someone who is in the same place

in life as I was (or worse) and help them become the best version of themselves. I know I needed help and still do with things happening in life. Everyone needs a mentor, somewhere they know is safe, and somewhere to go when they need help or just want to have fun with friends, and that is exactly what we are trying to create. We want to help the youth in this town (as older members of Youth Outreach) in the way that we needed when we were younger. We know what youth in this town need, we know how to help them, and we know how to make it happen.... so that is what we are going to do! That is what YAC is all about, we just want to help Red Wing youth and make a difference in our community.

We need your support

Financial Update

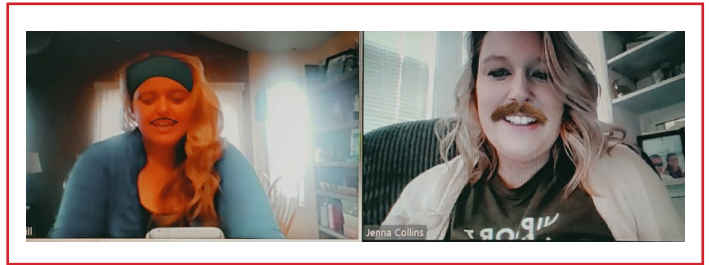
In order to be able to continue to support the youth in Red Wing, we need your help. We were unfortunately unable to host our Dueling Pianos fundraiser at the end of March. We had planned to use donations from this fundraiser to help with our programming. Our other big fundraiser, the Duck Race, which was scheduled to be over River City Days was also cancelled. Without these fundraising events, we plan to fall short of our goals for the year. If you are able to make a financial donation at this time, we have several options available:

- **Venmo App:** @RedWingYouthOutreach
- **Thrivent Choice Dollars:** If you are a Thrivent Financial member, designate Red Wing Youth Outreach as your preferred agency to receive your Thrivent Choice Dollars.
- **Mail your donation:** Use the enclosed envelope to mail a donation to our office.

We thank you for your continued support of our programs. Stay safe and healthy!

We're going digital

This newsletter will be available soon as an email. You will continue to receive program updates and photos of our youth and staff (like the great one below) in this new digital format. To sign up, please send your email address in the donation slip below or email to: mandylarden@gmail.com



Resources

If you know a child or young adult in the Red Wing community who may be in need of professional assistance, please contact Red Wing Youth Outreach at **651-388-3371**.

YES! I want to donate to Youth Outreach.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Please use the included envelope to mail your donation.



Red Wing Youth Outreach
410 Guernsey Lane • Red Wing MN 55066
651-388-3371
redwingyouthoutreach.org