

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Meeting Date: January 10, 2023

7:00 pm

Meeting Place: Memorial Town Hall

Madison Youth and Family Services Minutes

David Buller, Chairperson, called the meeting of 1-10-2023 to order at 7:02 pm. Also in attendance were: A. Aron, R. Xeller, C. McGrady, R. McMillian, J. Rogers, K. Dess, C. Maisano, K. Rasimus and MYFS staff: S. Cochran, Melissa Balletto, J. Zeigler, P. Butler, A. deLucia-Ferri, and P. Marchese.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Welcome—David Buller, Chairperson.
 - D. Buller welcomed everyone.
3. Prior minutes from 12/13/2022 approved.
4. Public Comment – J. Yorke thanked the Board for the plant sent on behalf of the Board and staff of MYFS to his father-in-law’s funeral services
5. Correspondence - None
6. OLD BUSINESS – MYFS Community Events – Scott Cochran
 - S. Cochran encouraged Board members to check out the Director’s Report highlights for November as it focuses on MYFS reach, as well as who we are impacting within the community. Events like Civic Duty Day, as well as programs lead by our School Based Clinicians, like Taylor Scalia, who runs training that encourages students to access adults for concerns that may arise regarding the well-being and safety of fellow students.
7. Treasurer’s Report – Andrea Aron
 - No donations to report
 - MYFS Board and staff sent two bereavement gifts with funds from the Sunshine Funds.
8. Staff update – Positive Youth Development Presentation by Melissa Balletto and the staff of PYD, Justin Zeigler, Peggy Butler, and Amy deLucia-Ferri
 - M. Balletto began with a depiction of a typical meeting with student groups. Lighting a candle helps to create a warm, relaxing, open environment for the group as themes on the agenda (Trends, Names,

Breathing, Activity, Community Building and Questions) allow for guided discussion.

- P. Butler shared how many important issues are broached through this organic exchange allowing students to increase empathy and awareness for their fellow students and take that forward with them.
- Meetings always close with an activity like a compliment circle aimed at each student leaving the meeting feeling uplifted by what is shared.
- PYD's Mindfulness Instructor, A. de Lucia, covered the many benefits of the six-week sessions as she guides students at Jefferey and Ryerson schools through Mindfulness activities. A. deLucia-Ferri shared some of the positive comments students made after session. Comments like "breathing", "calm and digested", "amazing", "stillness", "never felt this before." The continued practice has resulted in positive effects felt by students, parents, and school staff. "Student ambassadors" are now leading one-minute sessions of Mindfulness and a number of teachers are continuing to employ Mindfulness to create a sense of calm in their classrooms. Mindfulness has empowered Madison students with tools to help regulate their feelings, and to find stillness and calm and overriding anxiousness and overstimulation. Additionally, students who acquire and practice Mindfulness techniques are applying and sharing them beyond their classroom.
- With growth of the Mindfulness Program and with daily practice, students can learn to use these tools to combat stress and anxiety.
- S. Cochran noted that, aimed at the middle school students and up, Mindfulness can serve as a tool in prevention.
- R. McMillian suggested that A. deLucia-Ferri ask teachers to share, via their weekly newsletters, when their classes have Mindfulness sessions so parents can inquire and learn about the sessions from their students.
- J. Zeigler spoke about PYD's Community Building and how MYFS reaches out to engage youth and community businesses to strengthen our connection within the Madison community and bring additional programming to fruition. This year the "Madison Youth Professional Coalition" was formed. The group sponsored programming like the "MadDash" and Civic Duty Day where youth engaged with the community allowing for teamwork and learning.
- Future events include a student-driven program called the "Urban to Suburban Exchange".
- P. Butler shared that Peer Helpers report observing an "uptick" in name calling among students.
- M. Balletto spoke about recent concerns as reported by youth at DHHS such as name calling, fighting among male students and harassment against female students.

- D. Buller and M. Balletto agreed with the opinion that as a result of the social isolation students experienced during the pandemic, students, as a whole, seem to be exhibiting more immature behaviors and need to work at regulating their feelings and emotions.
- J. Zeigler said one of PYD's goals will be to focus and address some these issues within PYD groups. He and P. Butler spoke about addressing the issues within a "safe space" where students can talk about their experiences, gain insight and work with their peers and adults.
- J. Zeigler along with MYFS School-based Clinician Taylor Pisano are helping students gain emotional tools to address directly with anti-bullying programs such as "Who's Got the Power" and Peer Helper youth-led "Speak Up" campaign.
- M. Balletto reported that referrals to the Juvenile Review Board (JRB) are up this year. M. Balletto described to the Board for how the JRB operates to serves to divert first-time youthful offenders from Juvenile Court.
- D. Buller and the Board applauded PYD for all that they do.

9. Student Update – T. Rizzo

- T. Rizzo reported good spirits for the new year at DHHS. Students are feeling a lot better, there is a return to "normalcy" with good energy.
- T. Rizzo reported DHHS continues to recruit for possible speakers for the for the TedX Conference. The student-run TedX program is titled "THAT MAKES TWO OF US", will be held on March 10, 2023. Applications for speakers are due next Friday. S. Cochran will share the link to apply.
- T. Rizzo reported observing some negative behavior on the part of students, noted more prevalent with underclassmen.
- T. Rizzo reported that he is interested in creating a group to develop a mentoring program at the middle school. He would recruit upperclassmen and the program would be intended to advise and inform middle-school students about the importance of responsible behavior when using the internet and social media.
- S. Cochran and P. Butler emphasized the importance of having programs in place to support and rebuild social skills. S. Cochran emphasized importance for MYFS to acknowledge resilience and promote healing and growth.

10. Director's Report – Scott Cochran, Director

- S. Cochran took a moment to reflect on the passing of Noreen Kokoruda and the relevance and impact Noreen had on the Town of Madison. She

was a huge supporter of MYFS since the 1990s. As a politician, Noreen served with passion and was a collaborator with the ability to view issues from different perspectives.

- S. Cochran shared the “Save the Date” of Thursday, March 16th with the Board as MYFS will be celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. MYFS will be inviting town leadership and former colleagues to help celebrate this special event.
- S. Cochran spoke about holiday assistance and MYFS ability to provide a sense of normalcy to parents by providing donated gift cards to them, allowing them to shop for gifts for their families.
- MYFS Social Services Coordinator, M. Fahey, for the first time partnered with two organizations who provided bikes to children and families for the holidays, Wishing Wheels, and Bikes for Kids.
- MYFS will present their budget needs at the Town budget workshop on Thursday, January 19th after 5:00 pm.
- MYFS and MPD collaboration to request funding for an “Outreach Social Worker” position will be presented at the January 23rd budget workshop.

11. Liaison Report – J. York, Madison Police Department

- Successful holiday year for MPD sponsored “Toys for Tots” program
 - Donations made for teenagers were noted
 - Successful toy and food drive
- Noted Cannabis dispensaries offering recreational marijuana products opening in Connecticut starting today

12. Chairperson’s Comment – David Buller, Board Chair

- D. Buller expressed thanks to all for their commitment to MYFS

13. Open Discussion

- S. Cochran announced that he will be conducting a focus group with student leadership, this Friday morning.

14. Adjournment —Meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm.

Next meeting: February 7, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula Marchese
Administrative Assistant,
Madison Youth and Family Services