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- Kelli Blakeley
- Nichelle Brown
- Alan Carter-Fambo
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- Paul Denning
- Veronica Golden
- Melissa Jones
- Jack Kavanaugh
- Charity Lulas
- Susan Lumadue
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Erie County Youth Bureau Chronicle

Summer 2020

A Summer and Year Like No Other

With so many events postponed or cancelled due to the economic and health effects of COVID-19, and with social unrest seemingly having reached a crescendo, this has truly proven to be a summer and a year like no other.

In light of not only COVID-19 but also the recent nationwide protests against racial injustice and police brutality, it is clear that perhaps there has never been a more important time to advocate for the next generation, especially young people of color, across WNY, our nation, and the world.

The Erie County Youth Bureau remains committed to its mission: "To serve youth and families through asset development and advocacy, prevention, and intervention programs that strengthen families and communities." Of course, our work doesn't end there. Both the Erie County Youth Bureau and Youth Board have been leading voices at the table of many county-wide and region-wide initiatives, including Raise the Age and juvenile justice reform. We have worked hard to build a diverse and inclusive Youth Board. And we stand for justice. Until each youth and person has an equal chance to achieve their goals and be valued by society the same as the most privileged among us, then there is work to be done. We hope that you'll agree and we look forward to fighting this fight alongside each of you as



A Note From the Director

In the face of these uncertain and troubling times I wanted to take a moment to thank each of you reading this for the work you have done to benefit our community over the course of your lives and careers and notably since mid-March of this extraordinary year. The community of positive youth development in WNY is special and unique. We care deeply for the children of our community, their families and all of our fellow citizens and neighbors. While our lives and the lives of the youth we serve have been so drastically disrupted and in the absence of school or traditional services the Youth Bureau has heard from so many providers throughout this time describing the creative and flexible ways they have continued to serve and the positive impact they have had on youth and families. Some of these examples are contained in the following pages. We all know the only way we can get through crises such as this is to band together around a common cause. In this case I would say our cause is doing all we can to provide our youth with the tools and resources they need to succeed in these less than ideal conditions. As Summer wanes and we approach fall our kids will continue to need us as they encounter a school year which will again be unlike any they have experienced before. The Youth Bureau will do our best to continue to be here as a resource and support to each of your agencies in whatever way we can. Thank you, please continue to be healthy, safe and remember to take care of yourselves while you care for others.

Ben Hilligas, Sr. Youth Bureau Director

Spotlight on Two of Erie County's Partner Agencies During COVID-19

Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition: "We are working with our community partners who want to reach out to youth and we are trying to make a virtual hangout for youth. Our program is still HOPE, but we have renamed it YK716 (Youth Konnect 716). We will be providing web presentations and workshops, restorative practices, web groups, and still the opportunity to learn about, through education, and be part of a youth coalition group and build virtual campaigns. It has been a change with ECRJC, but we are working to still engage youth especially because of the stress they are feeling and the lack of community connection they have lost from school."

Thank you to Brandy Loveland, Director of Community Engagement with ECRJC, for the update.

Town of West Seneca Youth & Recreation: "The Town of West Seneca Youth & Recreation Department, unfortunately, had to cancel spring and summer programs due to concerns over COVID-19. At the time of the closure, the department shifted its focus onto virtual activities to keep our youth moving until we are able to offer in-person programming again.

First, the department stated the WSREC@HOME series. Each weekday the department posts a different virtual activity or virtual field trip on our social media accounts as part of the series.

Second, the department created the Town of West Seneca Parks Tour & Activity Book. The purpose of the book is to promote outdoor recreation with social distancing in mind. The book includes details on each town park, with activities that each household can participate in while practicing social distancing from others. When the book is completed, there is a certificate parents/guardians can complete and give their children. The Town of West Seneca Parks Tour & Activity Book can be found here: http://www.westseneca.net/application/files/1915/9106/1381/2020_Town_of_West_Seneca_Parks_Tour_Activity_Book_.pdf

Third, the department is a partnership with Friends of the Burchfield Nature and Art Center began the "Discover West Seneca" Scavenger Hunt series. We are releasing 1-2 scavenger hunts each week. The first two hunts rolled out this week. They allow youth to get to know their neighborhood and town. Future hunts will include town parks and their amenities. As the weekly hunts are rolled out, they can be found here: <http://www.westseneca.net/departments-and-services/youth-recreation#gsc.tab=0>

Fourth, in collaboration with WNY Project Play, the Wilson Foundation and Victory Sports the department is able to offer the following during the summer of 2020:

On June 26, 2020 from 2:00 – 4:00 PM a drive thru event was hosted in which 200 play kits were distributed to youth in our community. The kits include various recreation equipment and games to keep them moving. Kits are free of charge.

We will offer a "Ball Bin" at the Veterans Park Playground. Youth will be able to choose a piece of recreation equipment from the bin and keep it (at no charge). The bin will be on a walk up basis, first come, first serve and will be re-stocked weekly!

West Seneca Youth & Recreation has had an increase in our social media reach count, and we are hoping this means that our efforts are working to keep our youth and community active during this time."



Thank you to Lauren Masset, Recreation Supervisor with TWS, for the update and the photos.

Community Gardening in the Time of Coronavirus

Grassroots Gardens WNY has once again donated vegetable plants to the Erie County Secure Detention Facility. This is the sixth consecutive summer that GGWNY has graciously provided the facility with materials. Since 2015, the not-for-profit partner has provided Erie County Youth Services with hundreds of plants, loads of soil, and plenty of supplies for building flower beds and growing vegetables, among other things. This year, for the first time, through a partnership with the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo and a generous donor, hundreds of perennials have been planted in front of the detention facility at 810 East Ferry Street in Buffalo. A therapeutic garden, of which this is one, according to everyone's favorite source Wikipedia, "is an outdoor garden space that has been specifically designed to meet the physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs of the people using the garden as well as their caregivers, family members and friends." In this case, family, friends, and caregivers to the youth spending time in the detention center stand to benefit from the garden. All are welcome.

We are grateful to be able to partner with such a generous organization doing such important work for our community, especially during a pandemic when food scarcity, particularly access to fresh fruits and vegetables in low-income neighborhoods, is heightened. A huge thank you to the following individuals: Jeanette Koncikowski, GGWNY Executive Director; Emere Nieves, GGWNY Community Garden Trainer; Nicole Capozziello, GGWNY Therapeutic Gardening Initiative Coordinator through UB School of Social Work Field Placement; and John Santomieri, consultant with Hotel Henry Urban Resort Conference Center.



Groundwork Buffalo is happy to announce that it will be continuing its mission of working with neighborhoods, schools, the City of Buffalo, community-based organizations and businesses to make positive and meaningful change in its neighborhoods – for the physical environment and for the individuals living there. GB will be hosting its Mayor's Summer Youth workers in a variety of programming throughout the summer whereas the organization will teach gardening, COVID-19 safe community outreach and help to combat food deserts on the East Side of Buffalo. GB's biggest goal this summer is to work with the University at Buffalo's Center for Urban Studies by completely revamping their garden beds and to donate all produce to the Fruit Belt.



Erie County Youth Services

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[www2.erie.gov/
socialservices](http://www2.erie.gov/socialservices) or Google
"Erie County Youth Bureau"

ECYB Mission: "To serve youth and families through support of positive youth development programs and juvenile delinquency prevention and intervention programs that strengthen families and communities."



UPCOMING DEADLINES/COMMUNITY EVENTS:

From The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS):

- **It's OK to be Not OK** – Families Together in New York State is hosting this webinar on **August 5** to offers an opportunity to stress and destress, explore the impacts on us as we work, and consider resources to sustain our empathy and well-being. Click [here](#) to register.
- **The Contagiousness of Vicarious Trauma: Impacts, Considerations, and Responses** – this webinar will take place **August 13**. Click [here](#) for more information or to register.
- **A New Paradigm: Healing Centered Engagement** – this keynote talk and panel discussion is scheduled to take place **August 19**, and will introduce the topic of Healing Centered Engagement. For those interested in committing to implementing Healing Centered Engagement, there will be two additional sessions available to participants based on interest and level of commitment. See attached for additional information, and click [here](#) to register.
- **Creating a Healthy, Nurturing, Trauma Responsive Environment** – this webinar will take place **August 19**. Click [here](#) for more information or to register.
- **Less is More** – this training, which will take place **August 25**, shows the integral role a Mandated Reporter has in the child abuse investigation process. Click [here](#) for more information or to register.
- **Training of Trainers: Overcoming Barriers to Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse** – this 6-hour virtual training of trainers will take place over the course of 3 days, from **August 25 – 27**. Click [here](#) for more information or to register. **Prevent Child Abuse Vermont** is also holding a series of other upcoming trainings, which can be accessed [here](#).
- **Going Virtual: New York State Children's Alliance Annual Leadership Conference** – this event will take place **October 5**. Click [here](#) for more information or to register.
- **Trauma & Recovery Conference** – this virtual conference will take place from **October 19 – 21**. Click [here](#) for more information or to register.
- **Community Schools Technical Assistance Centers** – as always, there are several upcoming webinars and events! Click [here](#) for more information or to register.

We welcome submissions of community events/recaps at any time, so please consider sending us notices of upcoming events and/or photos/videos that you believe might be of interest to your colleagues. Thank you!