



The YCAN Bulletin

Summer 2016

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Lunch Crunch. Launched in 2015, Yarmouth Community Services' Lunch Crunch program provides recreational and social opportunities paired with free meals for children ages 2-18. The program, which was organized mainly to help address the food insecurity that Yarmouth children can face during the school-free summer months, served over 730 meals last year, but this summer the program expects to serve over 1,000 meals, reports YCS Director Karyn Garofoli. Lunch Crunch, which is conducted at the Yarmouth Pointe Apartments, is offered free of charge and is scheduled to run from June 20 to Sept. 2.

In addition to making available more nutritious and varied food this year, the program has added a free breakfast, allocated more time for arts & crafts and socializing, and included a weekly trip to explore Yarmouth's open spaces. "Very importantly," Karyn says, "the program affords young people the opportunity to experience the benefits of healthy relationships - something which stems directly from the mentoring our volunteers provide." With the program's expansion, more volunteers are now needed, says Lynn Hynes, Lunch Crunch Volunteer Coordinator and YCAN board member. Lynn notes that "although we have regular early-morning shifts preparing food on-site, there are opportunities to help transport food, or serve meals, among other key functions." For more info, contact YCS at 846-2406.

Aging in Place. Leigh Kirchner, Program Coordinator, delivered a detailed "state of the project" report to Town Council on May 12 summarizing work completed to date and findings of a recently conducted community-wide survey on aging-in-place issues. Leigh reported that "more than 850 survey questionnaires were returned, representing over 25 percent of Yarmouth households and 50 percent of senior households." Leigh told the Council that the summer will be devoted to "the solutions and funding aspects" of the project, adding, "we'll be devising strategies to address the various needs identified through the 22 in-person interviews with community leaders, 14 focus groups, and the community-wide survey." For a copy of Leigh's report, contact Leigh at leighmk2050@gmail.com or 712-7244.

Community Center. The Yarmouth Community Center (YCC) Steering Committee devoted April, May, and the first half of June to ongoing outreach to community groups and individuals in order to gather perspectives on the proposed Center. Beth Costello, YCAN's Vice President and the YCC Steering Committee member facilitating the outreach effort, reports that to date, 20 organizations including the Lions Club, the Village Improvement Society, school organizations, seniors groups, the Freeport Community Center, and Casco Bay YMCA have been consulted. Beth added that the Steering Committee is also beginning to review ideas for site selection and fundraising. "It's been exciting to hear all the various ideas. Clearly, Yarmouth is enthusiastic about the prospect of finally having a community center." For additional info, contact Beth at 838-2261.

The Rides Program had a "very busy" spring, says program coordinator Jean Rafford. "In May alone we had 60 requests for round-trip rides, 30 of which were medical-related. In the prior month of April, we handled 41 rides, 14 of which were medically-related," Jean said.

'Community Conversations.' Leslie Hyde, YCAN President, attended a Lift360 workshop in Portland on June 2 called "Deepening Community for a Collective Impact." Led by Paul Born, whose book *Community Conversations* provided the framework, the workshop identified tools and techniques used by various towns and cities across the country to engage their residents on key issues. "Attending this conference was time well spent," Leslie said, adding: "It reaffirmed that, while we can always improve, Yarmouth is well-versed in the leadership principles of engagement, innovation, and collaboration. This is a primary reason I feel our town consistently puts our collective well-being above individual concerns."

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YCAN Spotlight

Summer 2016

Yarmouth Community Food Pantry

The Yarmouth Community Food Pantry was initially scattered among several churches in town, but moved into the basement of the First Parish Congregational Church in 2009. Two years later, without changing location it merged with other pantries in town to become a community-wide pantry operating under the auspices of YCAN. Sue Rowe has played a central role in the Pantry's operations for years. YCAN caught up with her in May.

YCAN: About how many families in Yarmouth use the Food Pantry each week?

SR: We serve about 40-45 families each week, or over 70-75 families per month. Our clients range from newborns to senior citizens, from high school students to young families to older adults.

YCAN: What has been the trend in usage over, say, the last three years?

SR: When I first started, we were serving 15 families per month, providing canned goods and dry goods only. Today, with 40-45 families each week, we also offer milk, eggs, frozen meat, fresh produce, bread, sweets, paper goods and personal care items.

YCAN: Do you anticipate “food insecurity” will be a longstanding challenge here in Yarmouth?

SR: In 2013 we served an average of 51 families per month, but today we're averaging over 70. Given Maine's economic issues, there's no question in my mind that the Pantry will continue to be essential for the working poor -- for families on the edge.

YCAN: Is your volunteer force adequate to meet your current and anticipated future needs?

SR: The anticipated needs are difficult to project. Currently, we have 50 volunteers who serve in various capacities. They put in over 4,000 hours last year alone.

YCAN: How often is the Food Pantry open each week, and for how long each day?

SR: The Pantry is open Monday and Friday mornings from 10 to noon, and Wednesday evenings from 5 to 7. Clients may come as often as once a week.

YCAN: What are the biggest challenges you are facing?

SR: I'd say it's having enough food on hand for our growing clientele, especially in the summer months, and, given our growth, having adequate storage space and parking.

YCAN: How do you envision the Pantry evolving over the next few years?

SR: Currently, our “shopping” area is so small that we can allow only one customer to shop at a time. Also, we need to set up and take down tables to display the produce, bread, etc., every time the pantry is opened, as we have shared space with other groups. Our storage space is scattered in several areas. In the future I envision a space that gives us much more flexibility in the shopping area, more consolidated, efficient storage space, and perhaps expanded hours. I'd also like to provide more nutrition education for our Pantry families. Clearly, though, space is a big problem. We simply need a larger home.