The Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative (SYVPI) was launched in 2009 as a partnership between the City of Seattle and several community-based organizations designed to reduce youth violence in Seattle, keep young people out of trouble and get them back in school. SYVPI focuses on youth ages 12 – 17 who are at the highest risk of committing or being victimized by violence. These teenagers include repeat offenders, middle school truants or students at risk of suspension, youth arrested for crimes (such as shoplifting) that don’t automatically require jail time, and victims of violence including their friends and relatives.

SYVPI is broken into three neighborhood networks where indicators of future violent behaviors, including school discipline rates, absences, or dropout rates, are the highest. Since 2010, THS has overseen the Central area portion of the SYVPI. We provide intake and referral, intensive case management, outreach, family support, youth employment, and pre-apprenticeships, recreation, mentorship, and anger management training. Youth are referred to SYVPI services through juvenile court, police, community outreach workers, schools, Seattle Parks and Recreation Youth Centers, and the other neighborhood network agencies.

The goals of the Initiative are a fifty percent reduction in juvenile violent crime court referrals in the three network neighborhoods and a fifty percent reduction in the number of suspensions/expulsions due to violent incidents in five selected middle schools.

During the first 2 years, SYVPI has seen some success in reducing the levels of youth violence. In 2008, the SYVPI area had 362 youth arrested for violent offenses compared to 143 for non-SYVPI area youth. By the end of 2010, the number of youth arrested for violent crime decreased to 290 for SYVPI youth and 136 for non-SYVPI youth.

Between 2008 and 2010, middle schools targeted by SYVPI saw an 11% reduction in disciplinary actions, compared to a 3% increase for non-SYVPI schools.

“Today, I can say that I have come a long way. At THS I learned life lessons that will never leave me, tools for success that I will never forget, and principles and morals that I apply every day of my life.”

- Former THS client
Opiate Substitution Therapy and specifically methadone have been in the news lately. While most of the coverage has been about the use of methadone in pain relief, it has raised some questions about the safety of using methadone. In carefully monitored settings, like THS, using methadone to treat opiate addiction is safe and effective. Over 40 years of clinical application supports the use of methadone. With non-prescription and prescription opiate addiction up by over 200% in Washington State, there is clearly a treatment crisis. But medication is only the beginning—THS “wrap-around” our participants with individual and group counseling, case management and other programs and services supporting the process of recovery.

The expense to treat a low-income, high risk addicted person is a fraction of the cost the community would bear if these people went untreated. For every dollar spent, at least 10 are saved in less homelessness, reduced reliance on expensive emergency room visits, lowered crime rates and decreased unemployment.

While we are confident the state will not abandon people in need, our current budget crisis highlights how important support from people like you is to THS. While we are confident the state will not abandon people in need, our current budget crisis highlights how important support from people like you is to THS. Support can also take the form of letting your local and state government officials know how important it is to continue to fund care for at-risk adults and youth. Your support not only gives our participants hope, but a real chance at improving their lives.

We want your feedback! Please write to info@ths-wa.org with any questions, comments or suggestions.

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Therapeutic Health Services is designated by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization, EIN 91-0882971. All contributions are tax-deductible within the limit of the law.

Therapeutic Health Services is a nonprofit that provides outreach, basic services, emergency shelter, housing, counseling, education, and employment training for at-risk and homeless youth. Since 1979, THS has been dedicated to serving the adults and youth in our programs and services. It is a period of uncertainty. So many local non-profit organizations are waiting to hear how state budget cuts will affect their organizations. Therapeutic Health Services is committed to serving the adults and youth in our programs and will do whatever it takes to ensure our program participants continue to receive the care they need.

Karen Dixon grew up in Seattle and says that she “is a Northwest kind of girl.” She earned her BA in Marketing Communications from the University of Washington and has worked in marketing for a number of companies, at one point owning her own marketing firm. Currently, she is a Marketing Director at Microsoft.

Karen’s first exposure to THS was through her friendship with Ken Schiegel, the Director of Development & Marketing. Karen is very enthusiastic about our mission in part because her older brother suffered from chemical dependency and she saw the effect that it had on his life. Since then, she’s had an interest in helping people get clean and go forward in life. She says that she has “a real passion for what THS does in terms of helping the whole family.” She is particularly excited about the work that THS does with youth, since at-risk kids have always been an interest of hers.

One of Karen’s passions is giving back to the community. She has served on nonprofit boards in the past, including as Board President at Temple De Hirsch Sinai. She also volunteers regularly at homeless shelters and food banks.

In her capacity as a THS board member, Karen hopes “to marry my business and marketing acumen with connecting with people and helping them.”

During her downtime, Karen enjoys hiking, biking, tennis, running, photography, and home renovation. She’s traveled broadly in the US and internationally.

Karen Dixon
Board member since: October, 2011

CurDesia Hudson, a bright and charismatic high school senior with a ready smile, is a high achiever who recently published her first book and was accepted to Coastal Carolina University. Given her successes, it’s hard to believe that just two years ago she was struggling.

When she was 15, she was referred to THS’ Wraparound Program because of family dysfunction and communication issues, and eventually wound up homeless. She suffered from depression and self harm. She also was involved with the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative, a multi-agency collaboration designed to reduce youth violence and help young people get back on track. CurDesia says that before she came to THS, she felt she didn’t have a voice and was afraid to ask for help. She says, “I like my therapist- she’s really awesome. She’s a mentor.”

Esther, CurDesia’s counselor at THS and Frankie Roe, her mentor at the Young Urban Authors’ program, both encouraged her to write. She has been writing since she was in 3rd grade and says that “writing has been a huge refuge from everything that’s gone on in my life. It’s been an amazing journey for me. Writing has always been the one thing that I’ve turned to. It’s helped be able to find my voice.”

CurDesia’s first book of poetry, called Wrote this because of you, was recently published through the Young Urban Authors’ program. “I wrote the book because I wanted somebody who was struggling like I was to know that they’re not alone. There were a lot of times in my life when I felt that no one understood me, but my writing always understands everything I put into it.”

Since beginning counseling at THS, CurDesia found housing at YouthCare, a local nonprofit that provides outreach, basic services, emergency shelter, housing, counseling, education, and employment training for at-risk and homeless youth. She’s earned college credits through Running Start, and plans to study marine biology in college. CurDesia developed an interest in science when she studied for a month at UC Santa Cruz as part of Upward Bound Math & Science, a nationwide program designed to strengthen the math and science skills of participating students. She enjoyed this experience and says it strengthened her desire to become a marine biologist.

In addition to writing, CurDesia likes to travel, sing, dance, take photos, read, go camping and hiking, and hang out with her sisters (ages 4 and 6). She loves going to church.

She says that “now I own the fact that I am who I am. I love and respect myself. I’ve grown so much over the last couple of years.”

CurDesia’s book Wrote this because of you is available through amazon.com. For more information on the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative, please see the article on the back page of this newsletter.

Below is an excerpt from CurDesia’s favorite poem, “Missing”. You can find the full poem in her book, Wrote this because of you, available on amazon.com.

Missing
How long has it been since you have last seen her?
About 48 hours ma’am.
What was she wearing?
Well I was wearing my heart on
her sleeve and held my soul in her hands.
She stole my peace, my dignity and my pride when she left.
Is there anything else?
No nothing at all.
That’s the report they took when I lost myself.
The day the real me went missing.
She put up posters everywhere and told people
that she was looking for her daughter.
Little did she know I was looking for her too.
I need to find her more than anything.
I put out a missing persons report except
I wasn’t really missing.
So I put out a missing persons report except
that she was looking for her daughter.
I need to find her more than anything.

If you see her let me know I need her so.