

# Better manchester



**PLAY, GROW, SHARE, THRIVE**  
**FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS**

Leisure, Family &  
**RECREATION**  
PROGRAM & EVENT CATALOG

**INSIDE PAGE 13**



**Better**  
manchester

Volume 6 Edition 2 Fall 2016

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## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

### LIFE ISN'T FAIR

I remember once hearing from an early age: “Life isn’t fair.”

Whether it was rushing to the couch to claim a prime tv viewing spot, claiming a shower before the hot water ran out, or finishing dinner quickly enough to get a second helping, life seemed like a giant competition. And, as the youngest of eight, I was just never big enough or fast enough to win.

Life never seemed fair.

At least at home.

It was a different story in the community: at school, on sports teams, and at recreation centers. There, I knew as long as I followed the rules and waited my turn, there would be enough opportunities and resources to go around. I believed that with hard work and good character, I would have the same chance as the other children to learn, to grow, and to succeed.

It is my strong wish that today all Manchester children and families, regardless of their background, will have the same confidence that I had that their hard work and good character will be rewarded. As our town continues to evolve, our community is committed to providing equitable opportunities for children, youth, and families to thrive.

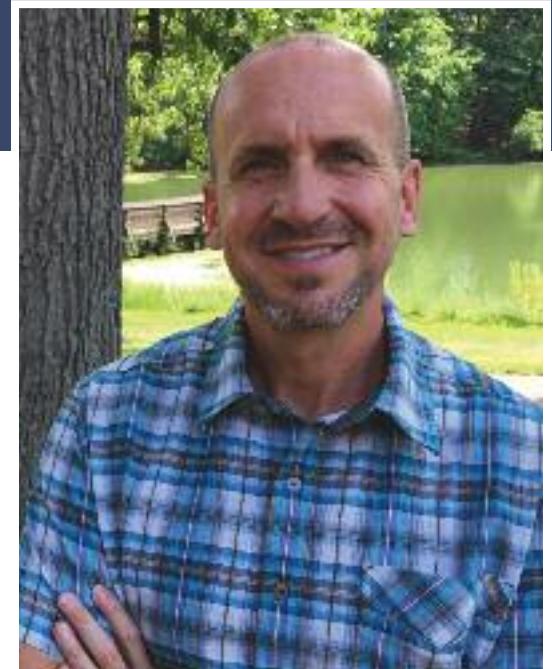
In this issue of *Better Manchester Magazine*, I invite you to learn more about some of the creative ways our community is strengthening our commitment to equity. The cover story “Play, Grow, Share: Manchester’s Vision for Every Child and Every Family” [page 4] explains how the three divisions of the Department of Leisure, Family, and Recreation are collaborating to provide equitable opportunities for play, personal growth, and contribution. “Youth and Police Join Together” [page 5] highlights how one of these collaborations is helping to make the Spruce Street Community Garden accessible to residents with mobility limitations. “Parks for All” [page 6] and “No Child Left Inside” [page 4] explain how state and local initiatives are improving access to parks and green spaces. This issue also touches on equity from the perspective of education with a story [see “Family Resource Centers Are a Community Investment,” page 9] on how Family Resource Centers provide a place for all Manchester families to access the support they need to help navigate their child through their educational journey.

As an adult, I am grateful for my childhood experiences. Sure, I would have loved to have had the best seat on the couch, a hot shower whenever I wanted one, and second helpings at every meal, but the fact that I didn’t motivated me to notice where the scales weren’t balanced and to commit to balancing them when I had the chance.

As citizens, we all have the right to access places and programs that contribute to our social, physical, psychological, and emotional well-being. As you read this issue of *Better Manchester Magazine*, I invite you to consider opportunities where you can contribute to making a better Manchester, where every child and family has the opportunity to thrive.

**Christopher J. Silver**

Editor-In-Chief, *Better Manchester Magazine*  
Director, Department of Leisure, Family & Recreation  
Town of Manchester



# CONTENTS

## Play, Grow Share, Thrive

Manchester's Vision for Every  
Child and Every Family

## No Child Left Inside

State Park Day Passes Offered at Libraries

## Youth and Police Join Together

Young People and Police Working  
Together To Create Accessibility to  
Local Community Gardens

## Parks for All

Data Encourages Community Equitable  
Investment in Community Parks

## MHS MOBILE

Download the Official  
Manchester Public Schools App

## Family Resource Centers

Provide a Place for All Manchester  
Families to Access Support

## Manchester Government Academy

Become Informed, Engaged and Connected

## Leisure, Family, and Recreation Program and Event Guide

Manchester's Guide to Programs, Parks,  
Trails, Facilities and Senior Center Services

4

4

5

6

8

9

11

12

Friends of Center Springs Park

in Partnership with the Department of Leisure, Families and Recreation



Presents

# DAFFODILLY DAZE

## Plant the Park

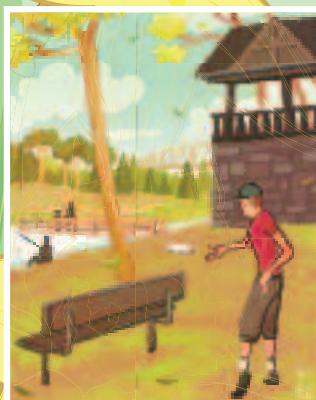
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## Our Parks

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# PLAY, GROW, SHARE, THRIVE

Manchester's Vision for Every Child and Every Family



## "FOOD." "BETTER SIGNS." "MORE TRASH CANS."

These were some of the suggestions for improvement shared in a post-event wrap by the teenagers participating in Capital Workforce Partners Summer Youth Employment Training Program. Seated around the table are over twenty fourteen and fifteen year olds, who a week before planned, prepared for, and executed their first Pop Up Friday Fun Day of the season.

Today, they are reflecting on what went well, what went wrong, and what they'd do better next time. Facilitating the discussion is Karen Gubbins, a Recreation Supervisor from the Town of Manchester. She writes down the reflections on a whiteboard under the headings: "What Went Well," "What Didn't Go Well," and "How to Improve."

Also at the table are the co-coordinators of the program Christopher Steele and Carla Anderson; Youth Services Coordinator Kelly Sheridan, who oversees the program from the town side; and me, who is there in my capacity as

Neighborhoods and Families Division Head. We're all there to talk about Pop Up Fridays which—from the perspective of Recreation, Youth Services and Neighborhoods and Families—is the sort of home run program that meets multiple targets at once. It's a "first job" service learning opportunity for high school youth, a drop-in recreational program for kids not attending camp, and an opportunity to engage and connect with East Side children and families.

It's the sort of collaborative program that, according to Christopher Silver, has been a whole lot easier in the past year thanks to an alignment of the three agencies under one umbrella: the Department of Leisure, Families, and Recreation. "All three divisions serve children, youth, and families, each with their own set of resources," says Silver, who was selected as Department head last fall. "By working more closely together, we can all ensure those resources get distributed in a way that is

more efficient and—more importantly—more equitable."

### The Universal Need for Growth: Equity in Youth Services

"A common thread I heard is that many of you were concerned with having better trash management at the event."

Gubbins looks around the table for signs of agreement. The teenagers slowly start to nod and some of them say "Yeah."

"OK," says Chris Steele, one of the two Summer Youth Employment Program Coordinators. "And what are some solutions to that problem?"

As the teenagers come forth with solutions—more trash cans; working harder during the event, so there is less to do at the end—Steele notes them down on his notebook. The teenagers may not realize it, but his question is designed to encourage one of the core skills that will help them to become successful in the work place: effective problem solving.

*Continued on page 5*

## No Child Left Inside: State Park Day Passes Offered at Libraries

By Samantha Bell



In the subtitle of his 2005 book *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv coined the term "nature deprivation disorder"—a social, not medical, diagnosis—to describe the results of what he saw as our ever-increasing alienation from the natural world.

Throughout the 2000s, Louv's work inspired a variety of state and federal initiatives aimed at increasing funding for parks access and environmental education under the banner "No Child Left Inside." Connecticut's No Child Left Inside® program has been offering a variety of free family and children's programs since 2006.

Currently, the program makes Connecticut State Park Day Passes available to library borrowers throughout the state. Manchester residents can use their library card to borrow Manchester Public Library's pass to obtain free parking at any state park and free admission to any museums located within a state park.

This program is made possible through the partnership of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Connecticut Library Consortium.

To find out more about the No Child Left Inside® State Park Day Pass program, visit [ct.gov/ncli](http://ct.gov/ncli) or call Manchester Public Library at (860) 643-2471

Continued from page 4

The Summer Youth Employment Program is one of the many Youth Service Bureau (YSB) programs aimed at providing opportunities for growth and support to Manchester Youth ages 0 - 18. Manchester's YSB is one of 102 Youth Service Bureaus in the state of Connecticut, most of which were founded in the sixties and seventies to take a pro-active and preventive approach to problems in the youth community, including truancy and juvenile crime. According to the Connecticut state statutes, although YSBs have a special obligation to the most vulnerable populations, they are also responsible for offering opportunities for all youth to develop into participating members of society.

When the teens are done with their reflections, Steele and co-coordinator, Carla Anderson compiles their notes. Later in the week, the co-coordinators will help the teens turn their solutions into a structured event plan. Right now, Gubbins is continuing her discussion with the teens, giving them some pointers on what makes an event successful.

Youth Service Coordinator Kellie Sheridan who oversees the program explains to me that bringing in professionals like Gubbins to facilitate portions of the program helps the teens see how their service learning project connects to real career paths they might choose to pursue in the future. Later in the week, three staff members from Manchester's summer camps will answer the teenagers' questions about how better to connect with children—and, when necessary—set limits on their behavior.

For Sheridan, the Tier 2 Summer Youth Employment program along with the Youth

and Police Together Program [see below] are examples of how working under a single department is enhancing the work of the three divisions. She explains: "Although each division is a separate entity with a unique purpose, collaboration provides the opportunity for the divisions to share information and resources in order to offer innovative programs and services to Manchester residents."

In a previous interview, Sharon Kozey, Director of the Youth Service Bureau, pointed to collaboration: the Early Childhood Center at Northwest Park. The new center, which was converted from a fitness facility earlier this year, is expanding the youth services early childhood and family support program geographically to Manchester's North End.

**"We are all here to support one another."**

- Sharon Kozey, Director Youth Service Division

"The Youth Service Bureau has a single facility in the center of town," said Kozey.

"By working in concert with Recreation, Neighborhoods and Families, we're able to expand our scope geographically, offering programming at the EastSide Neighborhood Resource Center, the Nathan Hale Activity Center and now at a beautiful space at Northwest Park."

Kozey is also eager to tap into Neighborhoods and Families—through Better Manchester Magazine and community canvassing—to better spread the word about the variety of offerings available at Youth Services, as well as to use community surveys to shape future program offerings.

"It's a phone call," she said, illustrating the comfort she feels connecting with the other divisions to meet needs for space, to help spread the word about a new program, or to get advice about coordinating a community event.

"We are all here to support one another."

Continued on page 6



## Youth and Police Join Together to Make Community Garden Accessible

By James Costa and Rosaleen Torrey



Over the past three years, the Spruce Street Community Garden has grown from a tiny four-bed pilot project to a neighborhood focal point, sprawling across the entire south lawn of the EastSide Neighborhood Resource Center. This June, the final nail was hammered into the last of five new raised beds, bringing the bed total to 18 and marking the end of a nine-month long service learning project.

"It was an incredibly rewarding experience working with the students toward a common goal," said Officer Carbone of the Manchester Police Department. Carbone was one of four police officers who took part in the Youth Service Division's Youth and Police Together program. The program, which is funded by a grant from the

Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division of the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management, aims to strengthen relationships between youth and police by giving them the opportunity to learn and work side-by-side on a community service project. This year the project focused on making the Spruce Street Community Garden accessible to the elderly and those with limited mobility.

"At first most of the kids wouldn't even talk to us," says Sergeant Hughes, who also participated in the program. "But throughout the project, we began to establish relationships, and they all opened up."

From September to June, the youth and police participated in a variety of team-building and recreational activities as they worked together to design, draft, and—under the guidance of a local carpenter—

to construct five raised garden beds for gardeners with various restrictions on mobility. According to garden founder and coordinator, Bettylou Sandy, thanks to the project, the garden now offers three varieties of accessible raised beds:

- double high beds for those with difficulty bending,
- triple high beds for those with more severe restrictions on bending or who stand assisted with a cane or wheelchair,
- legged beds for those who use a wheelchair or mobility scooter.

Funding for lumber and construction materials came from a Community Development Block Grant.

According to Sandy, the accessible beds are a natural addition to the inclusive spirit of the garden. Sandy says, "In the commu-

nity garden world, we are always thinking in terms of 'access.'" We believe that all people—regardless of their income or zip code—deserve access to fresh local produce. We talk about community gardens as important for providing access to green space and access to opportunities for leisure, recreation, and community building. These new garden beds expand that access to those with physical differences. I couldn't be more pleased with them."

For more information on the Youth and Police Together Program, contact the Youth Service Bureau at (860) 647-5213. The Spruce Street Community Garden will begin accepting applications for the 2017 gardening season in the fall of 2016. For more information or to arrange a garden tour, contact Bettylou Sandy at (860) 647-3089 or bsandy@manchesterct.gov.

# PARKS FOR ALL

By Samantha Bell and Rosaleen Torrey



## Data Encourages Equitable Investment

When a park moves in, property values go up, obesity rates go down, and both adults and kids are more likely to get active. Children who live near parks are less stressed, more focused, and healthier. It's a sound financial investment, too, with returns of \$3 in medical cost savings for every \$1 spent on trails.

Unfortunately, the current distribution of resources for parks and green spaces is a disheartening example of social inequity.

Across the nation, 70% of African American and 81% of Hispanic neighborhoods lack access to recreational spaces, compared to just 38% of white neighborhoods. What's more: Ultimately, all parks are not created equal. Since most park funding happens at the local level, parks in low income neighborhoods tend to receive less funding—and therefore less maintenance—than those in more affluent areas.

A 2016 blog post from the Trust for Public Land followed its title question "Is Your Park System Fair?" with the answer: "Probably not."

Fortunately, a dawn of awareness of the issue on a national, state, and local level is prompting a new commitment to equity. In 2012, the National Parks and Recreation Association officially adopted "social equity" as one of its three pillars announcing: "Our nation's public parks and recreation services should be equally accessible and available to all people regardless of income level, ethnicity, gender, ability, or age." A 2016 analysis by UCLA of a \$5.4 billion environmental bond encouraged more equitable distribution of bond monies through the setting of clear, specific funding priorities and requiring data-driven reporting requirements. Last month, Minneapolis adopted a 20-Year Neighborhood Parks Plan, along with a new data-tool for evaluating neighborhood parks and setting funding priorities which would allow for a more equitable distribution of resources.

Here in Manchester, we are fortunate to live and work in a community with a strong tradition of mindful recreational investment. Historically, at every school, in every neighborhood, Manchester provided supervised playgrounds open to all during summer vacation and out-of-school hours. More recently, the town has renewed its commitment to our urban parks, devoting over \$1.5 million to improvements in Center Springs Park and over \$1 million to improvements in Charter Oak Park. We're enjoying what Director of Leisure, Families and Recreation Director Christopher Silver calls a "parks renaissance." It is his hope to continue to renew our parks for the next generation of Manchester families.



*Continued from page 6*

## The Right to Play: Equity in Recreation

"Recreation is not just a hook."

It's a phrase Karen Gubbins would repeat over the course of her presentation. Gubbins is a Recreation Supervisor with over 35 years of experience in the field, and this is a point she feels strongly about.

"Sometimes people see recreation as a way to draw people in so they can point them toward another goal; but the way I see it, the goal of recreation is recreation. End. Stop," says Gubbins who oversees the facilities at Northwest Park and oversees a summer day camp for adults with special needs. "Play, having fun, exercising talents and gifts is something every single person needs, and I feel privileged to be able to come to work every day and provide those opportunities."

When advocating for recreational programming and the value of play, recreational professionals have drawn on an exhaustive list of studies that show how recreational programming and facilities play a role in decreasing crime, increasing property values, and building the non-cognitive skills of empathy and self-control. Most recently, the field of education has found that

play, both in the early years and across the lifespan, is crucial to success in school.

But, as Gubbins would say, recreation is a basic human need in and of itself. It's not just a hook.

The United Nations agrees, listing the right to play up with free speech and freedom of association as a basic human right in its international treaty outlining the fundamental rights of a child. The National Recreation and Parks Association says: "It is a right, not just a privilege, for people nationwide to have safe, healthful access to parks and recreation."

In fact, the field was developed as a remedy to the toll taken on the lives of the poor during the industrial revolution. It saw, from the very beginning, the provision of opportunities for recreation as a matter of social justice seeking to remedy inhumane work environments, overcrowded living conditions, and child labor.

Christopher Silver, the director of the newly formed Department of Leisure, Families and Recreation, is confident that the merger of the Recreation Division with Youth Services and Neighborhoods and Families, will not dilute Recreation's capacity to advocate for the value of leisure as an end in itself.

*Continued on page 7*

**"Play, having fun, exercising talents and gifts is something every single person needs, and I feel privileged to be able to come to work every day and provide those opportunities."**

- Karen Gubbins, Recreation Supervisor



*Continued from page 7.*

“Manchester has always had a very robust and well-regarded recreation division,” says Silver who served as the Assistant Director of Recreation for several years before going on to head the Office of Neighborhoods and Families and now the Department of Leisure, Families and Recreation. “Now, as part of the new department, Recreation will have access to information sharing tools such as Better Manchester Magazine [a publication of the Neighborhoods and Families division] and information gathering tools, through surveys and community forums, to better both communicate our offerings to Manchester families and tailor those offerings to best serve the needs of our community.”

He also expresses enthusiasm for the expertise in areas such as cultural competency and social-emotional health that Youth Services can bring to Recreation through shared professional development. “I am confident this merger will help us expand the capacity of Recreation to make its Recreational programs and facilities accessible to each and every family in Manchester.”

### **Stronger By Sharing: Equity in Neighborhoods and Families**

Back at the planning meeting, I’m handing the Summer Youth Employment kids a stack of literature to distribute. In addition to handing out literature promoting their Pop Up Friday Fun series, there are flyers about

the Spruce Street Community Garden, the EastSide Neighborhood Flea Market, and the Sundays at Four Art Series.

All of these programs take place at the EastSide Neighborhood Resource Center, the home of the Neighborhoods and Families Division which has, as part of its mission, developed a slate of neighborhood based engagement programming over the past seven years. One of the key goals of the division is to create opportunities for neighbors and families to connect with the community and with each other.

In the conference room, the kids sit quietly. Gubbins is done with her presentation and they are waiting for me to speak. As the teens prepare for another round of door-to-door canvassing, I want them to know how valuable the work they are doing is.

“Some of the families who live here,” I start, “don’t know that the EastSide Neighborhood Resource Center is here. They may be new to the community or for a variety of reasons not feel connected to it. We want them to know that this a place that they can come to garden, see an art show, or, through your pop up series, have fun as a family: a place where they can build connections with their neighborhood and with each other.”

Like all of the work at Neighborhoods and Families, the work is guided by the goals of the Children Youth and Family Master Plan, which draws children and families together with the goal of pro-

viding every child and every family with the opportunity to thrive.

In the first week, the teens distributed over 300 flyers across the neighborhood. This week, one of the hottest of the summer, they are distributing hundreds more, increasing the capacity of the Neighborhoods and Families Division to get the word out about upcoming community events.

Like so much of the work we do at the Neighborhoods and Families Division, it would not be possible without collaboration. In fact, the idea of collaboration is part of the mission of the Office of Neighborhoods and Families, which was founded with the goal of fostering relationships with community groups and organizations in the service of youth, families, and neighbors.

In addition to fostering community partnerships, Neighborhoods and Families is dedicated to sharing information and resources that promote healthy neighborhoods and healthy families. We do this through publications such as Better Manchester Magazine; OOST,

our web-based directory of youth programming; and our Neighborhood-Works! educational workshops. We feel that gathering information is just as important as sharing it, and we also solicit feedback from the community through surveys and community forums.

As a division of the Department of Leisure, Families and Recreation, we are eager to continue our collaboration with the Youth Service Division and the Recreation Division.

### **All Children, All Families: The Department of Leisure, Families and Recreation**

Each of the divisions, in their own way, has its roots in a commitment to equity: of opportunities for leisure, for personal growth, and for engagement. This sentiment is a page from the Town’s Children, Youth, and Family Master Plan, which calls for organizations to work together in the service of a common goal: that all Manchester children and all Manchester families be given the opportunity to thrive. ■



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Blackboard

# Manchester Public Schools App

# FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS are a community investment

As director of the school district's Family Resource Centers, Latasha Easterling-Turnquest was busy last year.

This year, she'll be even busier.

Four more FRC coordinators were hired this summer, meaning 11 schools will have a full-time coordinator responsible for supporting families in a variety of ways with the overriding objective of improving student achievement.

"It's a testament to the effectiveness of the program," said Easterling-Turnquest, who in addition to having district oversight is also the FRC coordinator at Bowers Elementary.

Superintendent Matt Geary said that investing in Family Resource Centers is an important part of the district's commitment to ensuring that all students will leave the school system prepared to be lifelong learners and contributing members of society.

"There must be an active, healthy partnership involving school personnel, families and community in order for all of our students to reach their potential," Geary said. "Having an FRC in every building from the Preschool Center through Bennet will help us develop, nurture and sustain better relationships with families, and build a greater capacity throughout our system to support students and their learning."

Funding for the programs come mostly from the district's Alliance Grant, from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and from Title I—which is a federal program that steers money to schools with high percentages of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals based on family income.

Easterling-Turnquest noted that FRCs might be especially helpful for parents or guardians who are single, or who don't speak English, or who face other challenges—but she emphasized that they serve all families.

"By adding staff we are increasing access, giving more people more opportunities to everything that we offer," she said, and then referenced the adage about fairness meaning that everyone doesn't get the same thing, but that everyone gets what they need. "By making our FRCs more accessible, we certainly believe we are moving toward more equity in our community."

The new hires will work at Keeney, Highland Park and Washington elementary schools and the Preschool Center.

Returning FRC coordinators are Rachel Hyman at Verplanck, Adele Muraski at Robertson and Rene Bryan at Waddell.

Sean Webster will be full time at Buckley (he split time last year, also covering Highland Park) and John Fournier will be full time at Martin (he was also at Keeney) with Brittany Hall moving to Bennet Academy from Washington, where she'd worked the past few years.

"We have an excellent team and we're excited to build on the success of last year," Easterling-Turnquest said.

Every site has the same five-pronged approach. These components are: family engagement; outreach; playgroups; positive youth development; and resources and referrals.

What does the work look like? Well, FRC coordinators each run a 'lunch bunch', inviting the parents and guardians of K-2 students to visit at lunchtime, eating with their children while reading together and building literacy skills. On other days coordinators having 'lunch groups', eating with fourth- and fifth-graders, building relationships as students work on leadership skills.

Coordinators also collaborate, working – for example – with the district's Adult Education department by recruiting parents and guardians for English Language Learner classes, GED classes, and so on.



*"We're all in this together," says Latasha Easterling-Turnquest, director of the school district's Family Resource Centers.*

They also get involved with partners throughout the community, helping with everything from hat & mittens drives to developing relationships with various faith institutions to publicizing and supporting programs run by the town's Office of Neighborhoods and Families and its Youth Services Bureau.

More? Well, Easterling-Turnquest taught a parent leadership class last year, and other coordinators are expected to be involved when those classes resume this year.

It's not a cookie-cutter approach, though, and coordinators are encouraged to work within their school community to do what makes the most sense there.

For example, at Waddell, FRC coordinator Rene Bryan took the lead in scheduling assemblies conducted by representatives of the Anti-Defamation League, an organization dedicated to protecting civil rights. Principal Kim Loveland said the anti-bullying pro-

gram was part of Waddell's comprehensive campaign to build a healthy and positive climate at the school.

At Buckley, FRC coordinator Sean Webster led the way as the school held a multi-cultural night, while at Robertson, Adele Muraski helped coordinate the FRC's role supporting birth-to-three programming that included sessions held at night.

"Their flexibility and versatility have been especially helpful," said Scott Ratchford, who oversees the district's Family and Community Partnership office. "The work of the FRC's is evolving, and will continue to do so. Parents, guardians and other caregivers have a huge impact on their children – on their academics, their health, their social and emotional development and more. By supporting the entire family we are improving the chances for our students to maximize their potential and realize their dreams."

*Continued on page 10*

Continued from page 9

There has been an FRC at Washington for years, supported in large part by an affiliation with the Eastern Connecticut Health Network, but all the others are new. The 2015-16 academic year started with FRCs opening at Bowers, Waddell, Robertson and Verplanck, with the HP/Buckley and Martin/Keeney part-time programs starting later during that school year.

Easterling-Turnquest noted that FRC coordinators have much the same goals as teachers, school counselors and psychologists, administrators and others. "Working to support students and develop positive relationships with families is a team effort and we are most effective when we communicate and collaborate," she said. "But everyone has different roles and responsibilities – and as FRCs we have the opportunity to really focus on this area, and build and nurture different kinds of relationships."

By way of example, she said FRCs have been contacting faith-based groups such as New River Community Church to explore informal 'adopt-a-school' partnerships.

"We're excited about this," said Pastor Doug Rowse, whose church is on Woodbridge Street – about a half-mile from Bowers (which is on Princeton Street). "The mission of our church includes outreach and we are optimistic that we can help have a positive impact on families at Bowers."

New River already has had an impact – donating 35 supply-filled backpacks to Bowers in July for distribution to families in need.

What else? Well, Pastor Rowse and Easterling-Turnquest say they have discussed having church volunteers help Bowers students with their homework after school.

"We're committed to helping build a better Manchester," Pastor Rowse said. "And we are open to any ideas that will help improve and strengthen our community."

Easterling and Ratchford have met with representatives of more than a dozen other faith-based groups and say they have been well-received.

"It not about proselytizing," Ratchford said, noting that all involved agree that there will be no efforts to attempt to convert families from one religion, belief, or opinion to another. "This is just one more way we can capitalize on the many resources in our town as we seek opportunities to deepen relationships and benefit our students and community at large."

Measuring the value of the FRCs is difficult, because the centers are but one piece of the district's multi-dimensional effort to support families in the interest of improving student achievement.



*Family Resource Centers support a variety of programs including classes for English Language Learners.*

Nevertheless, Easterling-Turnquest said there is ample evidence that the FRCs are making a positive difference. Climate surveys given during the school year elicited many positive comments about the centers. A sample:

- Lunch Bunch is such a wonderful program. I enjoyed getting to see my child during the week, having lunch with him, and enjoying an activity. My son (and !!) looked forward to it every month. Latasha is so engaging and great with the group!
- Ms. Muraski was very nice, told interesting stories and was prepared and organized, Thank you! Purely wonderful program!
- Love participating in school events, they're always a lot of fun and an excellent way to engage in school fun/activities with family and friends!
- Great program - Mr. Webster is a great role model
- Thank you for this opportunity. I enjoy/love feeling like I am a part of this school (partnership is important)

Those comments were from adults. Feedback from students, who were surveyed separately, was also positive. In response to the question of what they learned through their FRC, students said things like: "With teamwork you can accomplish more", "Different cultures are cool", "How to stand up for someone who is being bullied" and the always helpful "How to deal with stuff."

School leaders say such feedback is encouraging, but that the goal remains seeing more students achieving at higher levels academically -- something that is affected by a variety of factors.

"It's all connected," said Geary. "Our schools need to be welcoming and inviting. They need to be safe and inspiring. Students need to receive excellent instruction challenging them to develop 21st Century skills requiring problem-solving, collaboration and critical thinking. We need to make smart choices so that students have the best resources that our community can afford. There's a lot to this, and all of this work becomes more attainable as we involve and empower our parents and families."

Added Easterling-Turnquest: "We try to build bridges, because we know we're all in this together." ■



*At Waddell Elementary School, the Family Resource Center has been involved in efforts to improve school climate.*



# Manchester

# Government Academy

## REGISTER TODAY!

Inform. Connect. Engage.

### Become Informed, Engaged, and Connected Through Manchester's Government Academy

One of the main goals of the Academy is changing the public's perception of local government. To many, the government's main role seems to be to apply taxes and limitations to its citizens. Bonnie Stevenson, who enrolled in the Academy last year, says the opportunity to visit and speak with staff at each department gave her a new appreciation of the services of local government. "I put myself in the position of an emergency worker," said Stevenson. "What if I was the one who got that call? It gave me an appreciation of the risks and stress, and I felt very fortunate that I had people willing to take that call for me."

The Academy also strives to allow citizen participants the ability to better navigate government resources and services. Finally, it hopes to inspire residents to become civically involved. Through these government sessions, residents will be able to learn the advantages of becoming involved, and hopefully go on to have their voice heard for years to come. When asked if the experience was worth it, Samuelson responds, "It's been worthwhile. No question in my mind. I wish more people would sign up."

The 2016 Government Academy program begins September 15 and concludes with a graduation ceremony on November 17. Sessions will take place primarily (with a few exceptions) on Thursdays 6-9 from PM.

Additional information, including a full session descriptions, is available at [hrd1.townofmanchester.org/government-academy](http://hrd1.townofmanchester.org/government-academy) or at the Town Hall Human Resources Department and Customer Service & Information Center. The program is free and open to all living or working in Manchester. For more information, contact Tricia M. Catania, Government Academy Coordinator at (860) 647-3102.

- **SESSION I**  
General Manager/Local Government, Department of Leisure, Family and Recreation (formerly, Neighborhoods and Families, Recreation and Youth Service Bureau)
- **SESSION II**  
Water Department and Water Waste Treatment Plant
- **SESSION III**  
Public Works and Sanitation
- **SESSION IV**  
Fire Rescue & EMS
- **SESSION V**  
Police Department
- **SESSION VI**  
Planning & Economic Development, Building Division, and Information Technology
- **SESSION VII**  
Human Services
- **SESSION VIII**  
Probate Court & Manchester Public Libraries
- **SESSION IX**  
Customer Service & Information Center, Town Clerk, Budget/Finance/Assessment & Collection



Manchester  
Government Academy  
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### APPLICATION

Complete application and mail to Town of Manchester c/o Tricia Catania, Academy Coordinator, 41 Center Street, P.O. Box 191, Manchester, Connecticut 06045-0191. For additional information and or questions call, (860) 647-3102 or (860) 647-3126.

Name:

Address:

Phone (Home):

Phone (Cell):

E-mail:

Employer:

Occupation:

How did you learn about the program?

Signature

Date

If the Fall 2016 session is full, I would be interested in the Fall 2017 session