



Times-Standard

County renews commitment to youth collaboration program

Donna Tam/The Times-Standard

Posted: 12/30/2009 01:24:20 AM PST

As the year comes to a close, the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services is looking forward to a second year of hearing about what they're doing wrong from those who don't often get a say in it— Humboldt County's young people.

With approval from the Board of Supervisors earlier this month, the county plans to increase youth participation in the Humboldt County Transition Age Youth Collaboration (HCTAYC), a partnership formed last year to help develop policies and programs that affect local youth.

DHHS Assistant Director of Programs Barbara LaHaie said the feedback from the youth collaboration has been very helpful, if somewhat difficult to hear sometimes.

"It's a challenge because we have to hear criticism of our system," she said, adding that the criticism is coming from those who have "intimate knowledge of our system."

The collaboration includes the partnering of the Youth Offering Unique Tangible Health (YOUTH) Training Project, California Youth Connection and Youth in Mind. The youth participating are between the ages of 16 and 26.

Rochelle Trochtenberg, HCTAYC's youth organizer, said the group is a youth-driven effort that has allowed the young people of Humboldt to express their concerns with programs they rely on for support, whether it be child services or mental health.

Through trainings on how to create and present policies, as well as focus groups meant to discuss ideas, HCTAYC hopes

to give youth a voice.

Trochtenberg said the collaboration wants to emphasize always bringing youth into the conversation — which means talking with them, not just to them — and remembering that "youth are not the leaders of tomorrow, they are the leaders of today."

One of the collaboration's participants, Tia Richardson, 24, also joined HCTAYC's Youth Advisory Board. She has been serving since May.

Richardson said the collaboration has allowed her to learn about how the system works, meet new people, and given her chance to talk about her own experiences — both good and bad — with the county's mental health branch.

"Part of it was I was able to draw from the positive experiences to share with the other youth," she said.

Richardson, who has had multiple suicide attempts in the past and used to cut herself, said she used to be a frequent visitor to the Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES), a 24-hour crisis intervention and stabilization service, and has been a client at Sempervirens Psychiatric Health Facility. She had

Advertisement

Own a new computer for just \$29.99* per week!

And improve your credit score at the same time!

Give us a call today!

1-877-294-3988

*Prices start at \$29.99 but may vary by model.



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



Times-Standard

very strong opinions about her in-patient experience and was able to turn those into suggested policy changes regarding communications and privacy.

dtam@times-standard.com.

"I'm in a better place now," Richardson said, adding that HCTAYC has allowed her to feel empowered.

"I think that was another thing," she said. "I knew them all very well because I'd been up there a lot. It's really cool to have them see me in a different light."

In addition to holding trainings and focus groups, HCTAYC helped some youth create digital stories about their lives, conflicts and triumphs, which were later used to hold trainings for staff.

"It was probably one of the best trainings I had ever seen," LaHaie said. The trainings not only presented suggested policies, they also incorporated discussion and reflection on the stories being told by the youth.

"It gives (staff) further insight into the experience of youth," she said.

Richardson said the experience has given her a way to make changes, something she didn't know how to do before.

"I'm very vocal about my experience and very willing to help others who share the same experience. ... I've just never had the means or wasn't aware of a way to change things," she said.

To learn more about HCTAYC, go to www.humboldtboldyouth.org.

Donna Tam can be reached at 441-0532 or

Advertisement

Help people in need.

Donate your car, boat or RV

Free Towing ■ Tax Deductible

FREE
3 day vacation to over
80 destinations.

Call Toll-Free

1-877-225-9281



Heritage
The Best

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™