

TNOYS

TEXAS NETWORK OF YOUTH SERVICES

TNOYS TODAY: A Quarterly Newsletter



SUMMER 2017 ISSUE

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THEIR FUTURE IS OUR BUSINESS.



CONFERENCE BRINGS STAKEHOLDERS TOGETHER WITH SONG

For over three decades, TNOYS' annual conference has brought training, networking, and inspiration to youth services professionals. This year, we started what we began in 2016 by widening the circle of conference attendees to include youth, families — and for the first time — community volunteers. Using our conference theme, "Many Voices, One Song," we focused programming on bringing these groups together to learn important lessons they can take back to their lives and work.

Grammy-award winning Nina Rodriguez of Drum Café, truly brought the conference theme to life by having hundreds of attendees work together in a drumming exercise that showed the power of harmony and cooperation. Other keynote speakers, including business adviser Manny Diotte, University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work Dean Alan Detlaff,

and educator and activist CeCe Jordan also provided inspiration and learning on topics of perseverance and inclusion.

We were once again able to offer over 40 workshops on various topics important to youth, families, and those who serve them, as well as a full day of conference pre-institutes with a focus on learnings for administrators.

This year's conference partners, including the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health's Harris Transition Coalition, the Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards, and Children Protective Services, were crucial to bringing many different types of attendees to the table.

We look forward to working with these partners and others when we bring our conference back for its 35th year — we hope you will be there!



GETTING TO KNOW TNOYS: RTP TRAINING SERIES



RECOVERY THROUGH PARTICIPATION

Last fall, TNOYS was honored to receive a two-year, \$100,000 grant from St. David's Foundation's Opportunity Grants initiative to launch Recovery Through Participation, a new project in Central Texas incorporating youth voice into trauma-informed care. We are pleased to share that we have just completed a key piece of the project's first year, a three-part training series for Central Texas providers focused on sharing the key tenets of the project. Next year, providers and other participating organizations will use what they have learned to strengthen youth engagement in their programs, with support from TNOYS.

Read more about each of the "Recovery Through Participation" training sessions for an idea of what attendees learned and will be applying to their own work when the second year of the project kicks off.

TRAINING SESSION #1: TRAUMA-INFORMED WAYS TO GATHER YOUTH INPUT

This session covered the nuts and bolts best practices of one-time or ad hoc youth engagement and how they support trauma-informed care. These practices include using client surveys and feedback forms; conducting focus groups to gather input; and co-presenting or co-facilitating with youth who are currently or formerly in services.

TRAINING SESSION #2: YOUTH-DRIVEN PROGRAMMING, BOARDS, AND EVALUATION

This session covered best practices of ongoing youth engagement and how these are the building blocks of trauma-informed organizations. This includes forming and sustaining youth advisory groups; adding youth in meaningful ways to boards and councils; and giving youth meaningful roles in evaluation, employee hiring, or communications.

TRAINING SESSION #3: INSPIRING RECOVERY, DEVELOPING PEER SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES

This session covered the nuts, bolts, theory, and research behind youth in peer support roles, including paid staff positions. We discussed the considerations around organizational capacity and culture to ensure youth on staff feel valued and supported. We also reviewed the incredible impact youth in peer roles can have on other youth being served -- and how it can aid in their own recovery.



ANNUAL AWARDS RECOGNIZE LEADERS AND INNOVATORS



There is a lot to look forward to at TNOYS' annual conference each year, but one of our favorite parts of the event is presenting annual awards to deserving youth services professionals, organizations, and leaders. This year was no exception,

as we had an exceptional group of awardees to recognize.

We were excited to present TNOYS' Distinguished Leadership Award this year to **State Rep. Sarah Davis** (R - West University Place), who was instrumental in advocating on behalf of Texas youth and families during the 85th Texas Legislative Session.

Austin-based organization **Upbring** received the Steve Wick Innovative Program Award for its "Be Real" program, which provides a continuum of support for transition-age youth. We also recognized several

individuals who have demonstrated dedication to youth, including **Eric Elizondo**, case manager for Turning Point Transitional Living Program at Roy Maas' Youth Alternatives; **Sadaf Meckfessel**, program director for CCD Counseling's Services to At-Risk Youth program; and **Mark Morkovsky**, volunteer with Roy Maas' Youth Alternatives.

We are grateful to all the of these individuals and organizations who do such important work on behalf of Texas' youth and are glad we had the chance to recognize their contributions.



NEW HIRE EXPANDS TNOYS' RESEARCH AND POLICY WORK



Dr. Valerie Zanders, TNOYS' new Houston-based Director of Policy, Research and Evaluation

In May, TNOYS began an exciting new chapter as we officially established operations in Houston with the hiring of Dr. Valerie Zanders, our new Director of Policy, Research, and Evaluation there. We're excited to have a stronger presence in Houston, which is such an important center for youth services in Texas, and to introduce our members there and across the state to Valerie.

Valerie comes to TNOYS with over a decade of clinical and academic experience with youth and other vulnerable populations. She has served at various organizations in Houston, including Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston Houston, Baker-Ripley (formerly Neighborhood Centers, Inc.), DePelchin Children's Center, and Goodwill Industries of Houston.

Valerie says that what initially drew her to TNOYS was a commitment to youth engagement principles. "Youth can tell their stories like none other and they know when something is successful," Valerie said. "TNOYS is one of the few organizations I've encountered that makes a concerted, continual effort to engage clients themselves in the process of continually refining and strengthening services."

Valerie's role will be focused on three interconnected areas – public policy advocacy, public policy research, and program evaluation. Her work began with a listening tour in July to gather information on the landscape of youth services in Houston, including Houston's strengths, limitations and gaps in services, and how TNOYS can help bolster organizations and strengthen systems serving Houston's youth and families.

"I am so excited about bringing Valerie on board to work with providers to strengthen data collection and program evaluation efforts, and to strengthen TNOYS' policy advocacy," said Christine Gendron, TNOYS Executive Director.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



The El Paso Center for Children (EPCC) offers a wide variety of programs – everything from a foster care placement program, to an emergency shelter for homeless and runaway youth, to a counseling program for youth and their families that aims to prevent crises before they occur.

These many varying programs didn't emerge over the years by chance, though – they are fully intentional. As EPCC's Executive Director, Beth Senger, says, "Our agency from the outside looking in probably looks unusual because we have a wide range of services but what we're really looking to do is build a continuum of services for homeless and traumatized youth."

Now, just shy of 100 years since it opened, EPCC is looking to fill the last piece of the continuum with a transitional living center to help youth aging out of state systems on the path to adulthood.

It hasn't been an easy road, though. Senger points out that there are many challenges to operating in El Paso, which is so far removed from other parts of the state. "We're a big city but without the resources of Texas' other big cities," she says.

Being a part of the TNOYS network has helped EPCC feel a bit more connected and aware of statewide events, resources, and best practices.

"What I really value about TNOYS is that I've gotten a great heads up about things that are going on in the state, like pending legislation or the creation of the Emergency Shelter Task Force," says Senger. "I really appreciate those efforts to help all of us understand what's happening with the Legislature and also how we can connect and provide better services."

Visit tnoys.org/events to learn about upcoming meetings of the Emergency Shelter Task Force.



UPCOMING EVENT HIGHLIGHT: TNOYS MEMBER TOURS



TNOYS' success depends on our incredible network of member organizations across the state, who are doing exceptional work to support Texas' youth. Our new series of member organization tours gives our other members and people in the community a chance to hear about this work first-hand.

Currently scheduled tours include:

- Aug. 16: Jonathan's Place, Garland
- Aug. 23: STARRY, Round Rock
- Sept. 20: Roy Maas Youth Alternatives, Boerne
- Oct. 3: Covenant House, Houston
- Oct. 3: SAFE Alliance, Austin
- Oct. 3: LifeWorks, Austin
- Oct. 11: Pegasus Schools, Inc., Lockhart

Learn more and RSVP at: tnoys.org/events



WHY I'M A TNOYS MEMBER

Membership in TNOYS has a variety of benefits: discounts on products and services, free and discounted trainings, representation at the highest levels of state government, a chance to connect with other youth services professionals across the state, and more. But don't take it from us — hear what other members are saying about the value of a TNOYS membership, below.

"In the nonprofit world, we often have a lot of questions about our programs and not a lot of answers. TNOYS has been an invaluable resource for training and technical assistance to help us be the best we can be for the youth and families we serve.

- John Bracken, CEO,
Montgomery County Youth Services

"Each year, STARRY benefits immensely from the expansive work of TNOYS. The capacity of TNOYS to bring advocacy, action, and achievement across a network that spans the entire state of Texas is incredibly important."

- Richard Singleton,
Executive Director, STARRY

"Our organization appreciates and respects the constant efforts of TNOYS to support our work, and the countless days they spend advocating at the Capitol for various youth programs."

- Candreas Jones,
Manager, Andrews Center

Experience the benefits of our network. Visit www.tnoys.org/members to join today.

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