

Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center Interim Report for CHI for 2019

Through October 15, 2019, CHAP at the Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center has provided services and programming for over 50 youth who have a history of trauma related to abuse and neglect.

Year-long programs include the Teen Coping Skills group, which uses art, music and conversation to help teens, ages 13-18; learn the skills to assist them manage their daily stressors, and their symptoms of depression and anxiety. They do this with the support and guidance of the group leader and other group members. The group assists participants in developing a sense of community by exchanging their shared experiences and feelings, leaving them feeling less isolated and increasing their sense of belonging. The group is comprised of individuals from various areas in the community and allows participants to support each other and share ideas for coping with life's stressors.

The Social Butterflies group targets children ages 8-12 years-old, who benefit from learning social skills, such as: Basic Communication Skills. These include the ability to listen, follow directions and refrain from speaking; Empathy and Rapport Skills; Interpersonal Skills; Problem Solving Skills and Accountability. The children in this group use play, meditation, yoga and art as ways to increase self-esteem and build relationships.

Our summer CHAP program included two camp sessions. The CHAP Camp served ten youth ages 9-11 and Summer Connections, served 10 teens' ages 12 - 14. Both programs provided campers with the opportunity to experience equine assisted therapy, yoga, karate, and art and music therapy, cooking, technology, along with trips off site to Duke Farms, the planetarium at Raritan valley Community College and the Grounds for Sculpture.

The greatest benefit reported by both campers and parents was the opportunity to be part of a group that helped them to manage their emotions and to ask for help when they needed it. One story told by a CHAP staff member was that there was a camper who at the beginning of the experience, was very sad and did not interact with the other campers. He was slowly encouraged to reach out and participate and became attached to other campers. He soon started coming to camp with an uplifting infectious energy every day until the end of the session. The camp concluded with a dinner of campers and parents who all expressed an interest in returning to the camp next year.