

## **Resilient Youth Somerset, FY 2019/2020**

Resilient Youth Somerset (RYS) is a sub-committee of the Children's Hope Initiative, a nonprofit based in Somerset County, New Jersey, that is focused on meeting the unmet needs of children in the community. Specifically, RYS consists of volunteers from numerous nonprofits and child serving organizations that has been providing trauma-informed care trainings, targeting schools and law enforcement as they are often at the front line when vulnerable children struggle.

With funding assistance from Munich in 2018/2019, RYS was able to host not one but two day-long conferences geared towards educators about the physiological changes that occur in children's brains when they are exposed to traumatic circumstances, what amygdala-driven behaviors look like, and strategies for dealing with traumatized children. The first of these conferences was well-received, with over 75 participants attending. The second one is scheduled for May 31, 2019.

During FY 2019/2020, the hope is to again offer these day-long conferences but to focus them on the law enforcement community. The school to prison pipeline is real, and most law enforcement officers do not fully understand the underlying challenges for youth who are amygdala-driven because of traumatic experiences in childhood. We would like to see that pipeline disrupted by educating police officers on the lifelong impacts of these Adverse Childhood Experiences and to give them tools to deal with kids who may look aggressive but who are actually terrified.

Such a training would include an overview of the disruptions to brain development and physiological responses to stress, descriptions of the behaviors an officer might see, community resources that are available to help, strategies to de-escalate children in crisis, and evidence-based approaches to building rapport with traumatized children. If time permits, the plan is to also a section on self-care to avoid secondary trauma and burnout.

We at Resilient Youth are incredibly grateful to Munich and to CHI for its support of our Trauma Informed Care this past year. We've been able to educate hundreds of people about the impacts of trauma, and with your support we've been able to provide tools and strategies to teachers, to CASA volunteers, to clinicians, to police officers and more to better support the needs of wounded children. On behalf of all of us, I thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Tracey Heisler  
Team Leader  
Resilient Youth Somerset