

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Momentum. Jim Collins describes the momentum of a "flywheel" in his book *Good to Great*. The idea is that a flywheel is incredibly heavy and takes a lot of effort to push, but as you keep pushing, and as others join you in pushing, the flywheel builds speed until it eventually starts to turn itself.

As I reflect upon not only the year 2019, but also my 14 years of leadership at WYN and even WYN's 35 years of existence, momentum is the word that comes to mind.

With each year that has passed by since 1985, we have been slowly, slowly, slowly turning the wheel. First there were a few Board members, then a few grants and a few staff members. Then there were more programs, more staff and more supporters. Impacts made. Lives changed. Growing and growing. Picking up speed. Then a few bumps in the road that set us back (hello 2008!), but we turned the wheel harder and regained momentum at a pace even faster than before. I am so pleased with where we are now and eager to see what the coming years bring.



Our last year has been spent joining forces with new advocates and strengthening the relationships we've had with faithful supporters. We dedicated time to improving our programs, expanding our reach, and making sure we're measuring our impact along the way.

I'm so excited for you to read the pages that follow and learn about all of the ways that WYN has held steadfast to our reason for existing-- helping youth and families navigate the incredibly difficult things that life throws at them. I'm also excited to showcase ways that WYN has expanded our vision to not only treat childhood adversity, but to work to prevent it from happening in our communities.

As you turn the pages of this report, I hope you will celebrate your role in turning the great flywheel that is Western Youth Network. You have helped create our organizational momentum, and it is transforming our community.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Warren

Jennifer Warren
Executive Director



What are ACEs?

"ACEs are Adverse Childhood Experiences that harm children's developing brains and lead to changing how they respond to stress and damaging their immune systems so profoundly that the effects show up decades later. ACEs cause much of our burden of chronic disease, most mental illness, and are at the root of most violence."

Source: acestoohigh.com/aces-101/

The Pair of ACEs Adverse Childhood Experiences



WYN's Work

Each of WYN's programs is working to address the negative impacts associated with ACEs.

After School, Summer Camp, Mentoring, and High School Success are working to mitigate effects of ACEs after they have already happened to youth in our community.

At the root of all ACEs are environmental factors that can be linked to the long-term negative health effects. Our **Community Health** Initiatives are working to break the cycle of ACEs and create a healthier environment for everyone in this generation and future ones.



MENTORING

Through our community-based program and school-based program, affectionately called "Lunch Buddies," adult volunteers in the community are paired with a youth in need of a friend and role model. Having an adult that makes you feel safe and confident is one of the number one protective factors to counter an ACE score. Our mentors help guide and encourage their mentees through the highs and lows of growing up. WYN's mentoring program is active in both Watauga and Avery Counties.

85%

of WYN mentees qualify for free or reduced lunch

5,500+

reported hours of mentoring

86%

of matches lasted at least 12 months

186

youth served



100%

of youth report improved self-esteem

105

youth currently on waiting list for a mentor

73%

of WYN mentees live in a non-traditional home, i.e. single parent or absent parent

AFTER SCHOOL

57
youth served

21,150+
miles driven

84%
of students are referred and come at no cost to their families

4,100+
hours of academic tutoring

6,840+
healthy snacks served

WYN provides the *only* after-school program for middle school youth in Watauga County. Programming focuses on social and behavioral development, academic improvement, physical and mental health, and community engagement. Each of the activities in after school programming plays an important role of mitigating the impacts of ACEs. Staff members work with students on stress management through mindfulness meditation, and resilience skills, and also teach life skills like cooking and financial literacy. These skills help students to work towards a future of full potential. Most youth are referred to WYN by school counselors.



During WYN's 6-week summer program, our campers build a strong and uplifting community. In an environment with appropriate challenges and empowering support systems, the youth develop critical confidence they can carry with them for the rest of their lives. Physical activity is one of the many ways to mitigate negative effects of ACEs and build healthy habits. Thanks to our Juvenile Crime Prevention Council Grant and our Sonny Sweet Scholarship Fund, **77% of youth** attended WYN's summer camp on a full or partial scholarship.

SUMMER CAMP

44
youth served

5,000+
miles driven

745+
healthy snacks served

4,500+
hours of physical activity

HIGH SCHOOL

The second year of WYN's High School Success Program (2019-2020) has focused on three central goals: successful freshman transitions, increased structure of in-school vocational and academic mentoring, and advocacy for trauma-informed school culture.

In an effort to support the transition of incoming 9th graders, a new Club Expo was included at Freshman Orientation held August 15th. This was an exciting day full of practical information as well as an enthusiastic display of the ways students can get involved at school. Student-led clubs set up information tables; the marching band, pacers, and cheerleaders performed in the parking lot; and every freshman received a free meal ticket to cash in at the food truck outside.

The fall semester also kick-started the pilot year of Peer Group Connections at WHS. This peer-to-peer mentoring program brings upperclassmen into weekly sessions with freshman where they connect with near peers, discuss challenges, and work to build the resilience needed to be successful academically and socially in high school. WYN's High School Advocate, Kimberly Kop, is on the stakeholder team for this program.

This year has also seen progress in the structure of vocational mentoring efforts. As the collaborative relationship with local companies has grown stronger, the opportunities to connect students with them has also increased. Having a continued, on-campus presence, through Kim's position, has made selecting potential candidates, navigating their school and work schedules, and appropriately advocating for meaningful work opportunities far more effective.

Trauma-informed and relationship-centered practice is at the heart of everything WYN and the High School Success Program does. Kim has a unique opportunity to be a part of the day to day culture of the high school, and to connect with students of all kinds. The WYN High School Success Program seeks to support and innovate ways to connect, coach, and advocate for our high school students.

57

youth served



*Current
Watauga Co
Graduation
Rate*

90%



COMMUNITY HEALTH

Building a healthier and more resilient community through public health initiatives and policy advocacy.

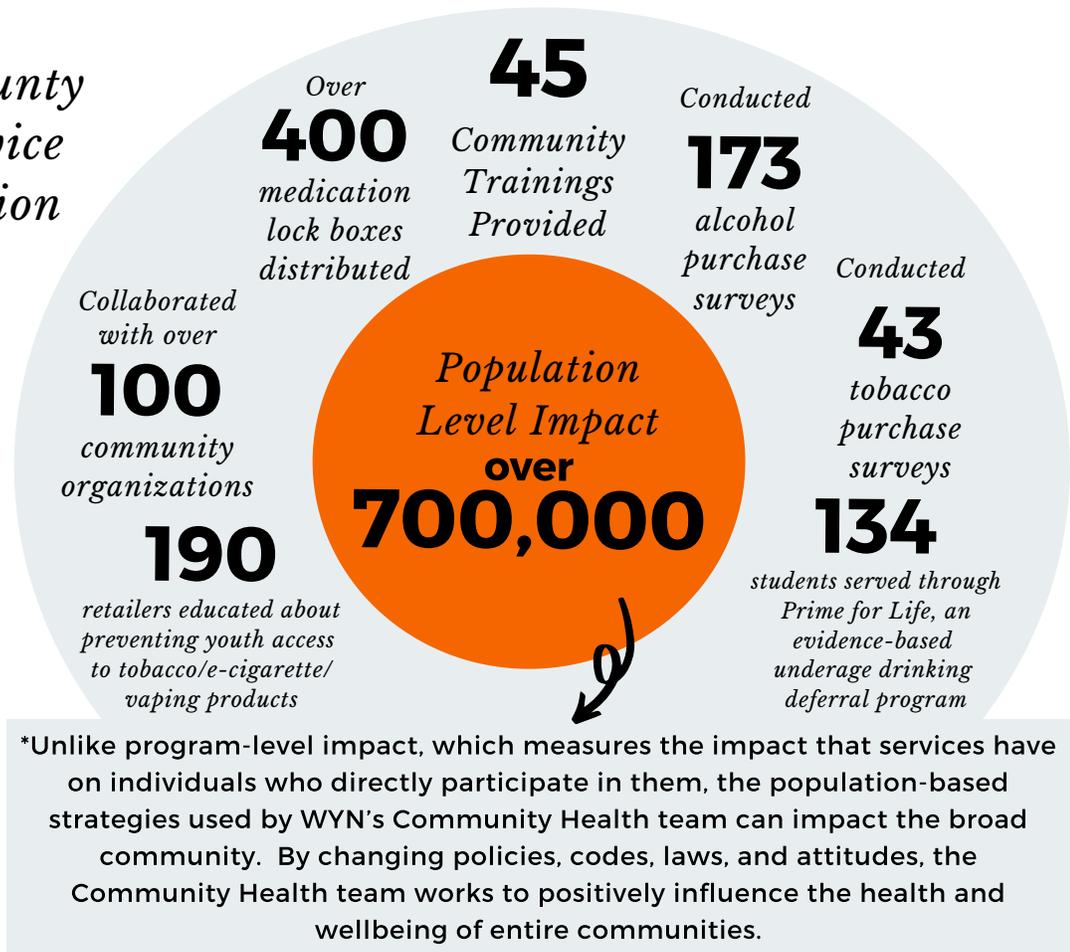


5 County Service Region

WYN's Community Health (formerly Prevention) program experienced a year of significant growth in 2019 due to a new Partnerships for Success grant and a collaboration with community partner, Project Lazarus of Wilkes County. The Partnerships for Success grant even enabled WYN to open a new satellite office in Avery County in November of 2019.

WYN's community health team is now comprised of 5 full time staff positions with 2 of those roles specifically serving the counties of Alleghany, Ashe, and Avery. The Community Health team continues to partner with experts in Appalachian State University's Public Health, Geography and Planning, and Psychology Departments in many initiatives. This partnership allows for more hands-on learning opportunities for students as well as building sustainability within WYN's initiatives.

With this community support, WYN's Community Health team will continue to enhance community partnerships, implement environmental strategies to prevent youth substance use and its contributing root causes, and address health equity, all in the name of creating a stronger, healthier High Country.



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

Establishing Mentoring Program in Kandi, Benin, West Africa

Last year, 102 American professionals representing 30 U.S. states and the District of Columbia were selected to travel to 34 countries to work on projects with Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumni through the Reciprocal Exchange program.

We are thrilled that our very own *Charlene Grasinger* connected with a Mandela Washington Fellow who was at App State in 2016 and they co-wrote a successful proposal to allow Charlene to travel to Benin, a country in West Africa, to help establish a mentoring program in one of the towns there.

Utilizing the best practice standards she has learned and implemented with WYN's mentoring program, Charlene is now assisting Mandela Washington Fellow Jean Bamigbade with volunteer training, youth orientation and all other aspects of starting a successful mentoring program.

2019 brought another year of growth for WYN and many accomplishments to celebrate.

In May 2019, 14-year WYN employee, *Angela McMann* was awarded the NC Governor's Medallion Award for Volunteer Service. One of only 25 individuals in the state to receive this prestigious award, Angela was recognized for her outstanding accomplishments in service to the High Country through her role as the director of WYN's mentoring program. WYN is so lucky to have such a dedicated, compassionate, and hard-working individual on its team. Congratulations, Angela!

“

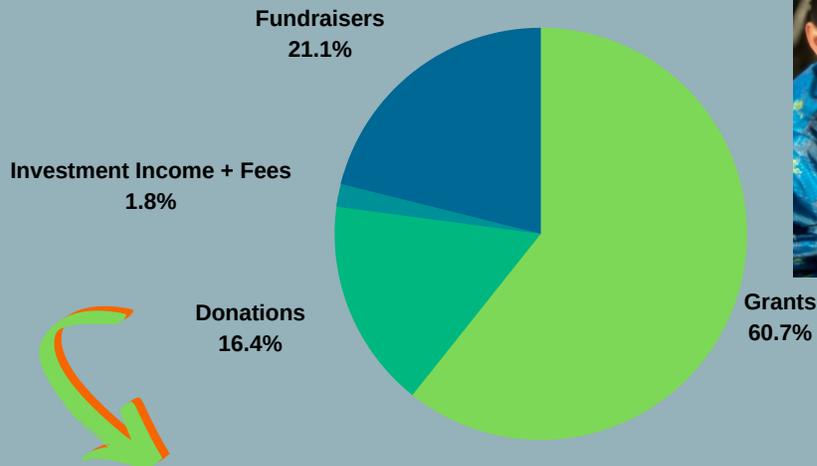
Having worked side by side with Angela for the last 15 years, I can say that her compassion for youth and families is unparalleled. She has an amazing ability to gain the trust of families in our community, stay in touch with them for years, and become a part of their lives. As a mom of two incredible boys herself, Angela knows how important it is for youth to have a nurturing adult in their lives, and she works every day towards the vision of every child in the High Country having the support they need to grow, thrive, and feel secure.

Jennifer Warren ”



FINANCIAL STATEMENT

WYN's 2019 Revenue



Opportunities for Growth in 2020

1. The number of youth waiting for a mentor is staggering. Our goal is to bring as many of these youth into the WYN family as possible this year.
2. Expand the hours of our after school program so that youth have more opportunities to experience safety and resilience-building skills.
3. Extend the number of weeks that we offer summer camp from 6 weeks to 8 weeks.



Our Larger Vision

1. Provide after school programming to elementary-school aged youth.
2. Secure a larger facility.
3. Continue to expand our services to neighboring communities.



Ways to Give

1. Become a monthly donor. A gift of even \$25 per month makes a substantial difference the opportunities we can provide our youth.
2. Make a gift to WYN's endowment funds-- Legacy Fund (all WYN programs) or Sonny Sweet Fund (summer program).
3. Make a one-time contribution towards the program of your choice.



Board of Directors

Cindy Wallace, *chair* Brenda Lowman
Bob Holder Keith Shockley
Wayne Miller Tucker Deal
Wysteria White Heidi Ragan
Billie Howell Greg Lovins
Dave Robertson Kelli Wilson

Advisory Board

John & Faye Cooper Richard Sparks
Hanes Boren Coach Jerry Moore
Kent Tarbutton Dr. Harry Davis
Rev. Gary Gloster Chuck Mantooth
Joe Miller Kim Shepherd
Sonny Sweet Thomas Barrett,
Dr. Jan Riennerth, *Emeritus*
Emeritus *Emeritus*

 Western Youth Network

 @wynstagram_1  @WYNINC



Find us online
www.westernyouthnetwork.org

Dedicated Staff

Jennifer Warren Kiersten Kleene
Caroline Davis Olivia Farmer
Angela McMann Sammi Silar
Charlene Grasinger Dalton Ward
Sabena Maiden Gretchen Summerville
Melanie Hollis Tommy Boyd
Kimberly Kop Amber Dixon
Heather Canipe Brittany Duncan
Tiffany Moon

Get Involved Today!

It takes a community to raise a community.
Your talents and resources could make a
difference in a child's life.

Make a **donation**
Apply to be a **mentor**
Sign up to **tutor**
Host a fundraiser event

Fund A Need for Our Youth

\$125 provides 1 month of after school for 1 youth

\$750 provides 6 weeks of summer camp for 1 youth

\$375 provides 3 months of mentoring for 1 youth

\$1500 provides 1 month of transportation for all our youth

