

Umatter Youth & Young Adult Culmination Event

Tuesday, October 9th, 2018

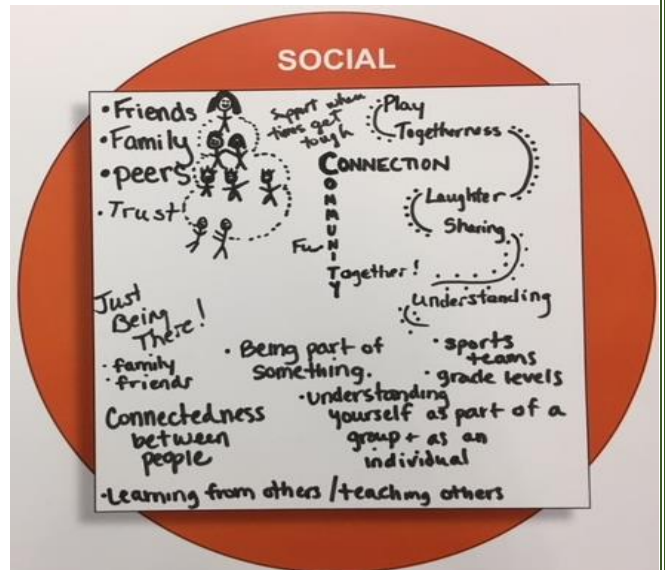
MENTALLY HEALTHY COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK REPORT

Umatter for Youth and Young Adults

Youth Learn About
and Promote Mental
Health Wellness



With funding from NEK Prosper! and Northern Counties Health Care, St. Johnsbury School and St. Johnsbury Academy gathered teams to implement the Center for Health and Learning's **Umatter Youth And Young Adult (YYA)** program in their schools. Umatter YYA is a youth leadership and engagement initiative aimed at promoting mental health wellness, developing healthy coping mechanisms among youth, and the ability to recognize when a peer needs help and how to provide it. The teams attended a kickoff event in March and worked on completing the curriculum and organizing a Community Action Project in their schools. The teams gathered back on October 9th in space donated by Catamount Arts to present their Community Action Projects, celebrate together and plan for future work (increasing scope and scale).



Meditation Helps Students Relax

Betsy Fowler led one meditation workshop, and the St. Johnsbury Shambhala Center led another one.

Students in this workshop could be seen relaxing, with eyes closed. Feedback was really positive!



We had two presenters from Therapy Dogs of Vermont.



Pet Therapy was very popular!

St. Johnsbury School:

St. J. School held a **Wellness Day** with workshops provided by over 12 community partners on topics like positive psychology and careers in the mental health field, healthy eating and snacking, restorative justice and ending school violence, yoga, substance use, pet therapy and mindfulness/awareness meditation.

*Lessons learned:

- **The students and staff all want to do it again = SUCCESS!**
- Some workshops were over-full, while others were not attended at all.
- SOLUTIONS:
 1. Location and registration - Work with Tech. Dept. to make a form and ask students to sign up ahead of time to avoid this problem.
 2. Offer one more food preparation workshop, as these were extra-popular!

"Talk to someone you trust about how you feel."

"It's not wrong to feel sad – feel the sadness to move beyond."

"Let the sadness be and it will pass."

"Learn about others before you make judgments."

"Every challenge is an opportunity to grow stronger."

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St. Johnsbury Academy:

- Raised money and gathered team to walk for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Out of Darkness Walk
- Capstone Project around Adolescent Depression and Suicide including a suicide prevention lesson plan that has become part of the mandatory freshman health curriculum starting this year
- AFSP safeTALK suicide prevention training participation
- Crisis Textline posters and tear-off sheets (17 tear-offs/sheet) posted in 28 bathrooms on campus (and bulletin boards) – had to be replaced a month after posting because all 476 tear-offs were gone
- Short student film posted to YouTube: [Grasp](#)



Lessons Learned

- Dedicated and tireless school adult facilitators are key to the success of this program. Deb Lee from St. Johnsbury Academy and Amy Hornblas from St. Johnsbury School are rockstars
- A regional implementation is preferable to a dispersed, Statewide model
- School administration should be a first point of contact and needs to be on board in order for programs to be successful
- For school based collaboration, program goals, outline, timeline, expectations and dates need to be clear and set in advance as far as possible – the longer the lead time, the better
- Momentum is difficult and near impossible to maintain over the summer break
- School schedules are king and need to be a key factor in early decision making discussions
- High school and middle school groups are at different places and need to have differentiated content focus, expectations and kick-off and culmination events
- Students resonate with the message that “it’s okay not to be okay” rather than messages like “just smile”, “get over it”, “other people have it worse than you”, “be thankful for what you have”, “just suck it up”
- Students want to be involved and help their peers
- Students appreciate the opportunity to use their particular assets and skills to become involved
- Students want to share their work and ideas with the larger community

What’s Next?

- Official program evaluations to follow
- St. Johnsbury Academy students are eager to expand their work within their school community and partner with more departments around positive mental health and wellness (i.e., chorus and newspaper)
- St. Johnsbury Academy students are looking for opportunities to share their work with community partners
- St. Johnsbury School is planning on integrating the Umatter YYA curriculum into the middle school guidance curriculum
- St. Johnsbury School is already working on their next Wellness Day
- St. Johnsbury School team members have expressed interest in attending the Mentally Healthy Collaborative Action Network meetings
- Both schools are interested in helping expand Umatter YYA to other schools in the NEK
- Both schools would welcome deeper collaboration with NKHS and the ZeroSuicide initiative
- Both schools provided feedback which will be incorporated into the redesign of the new Umatter YYA wallet cards
- Both schools have been invited to participate in the design and development of the next Statewide Umatter YYA program

If even one young person got the help they needed instead of ending their life by suicide, this program was a success. From conversations that adult facilitators have been having with students, it seems likely this is the case and that these actions to support one another are working.



VT to 741741