



Voice/TDD (540) 373-3223 / Fax (540) 371-3753

***NOTICE***

**To:** Public Information/Prevention Committee: Melissa White (Chair), Nancy Beebe, Sarah Ritchie, Greg Sokolowski, Glenna Boerner, Claire Curcio, Carol Walker

**From:** Joseph Wickens  
Executive Director

**Subject:** Public Information/Prevention Committee Meeting  
December 12, 2023, 12:30 PM  
600 Jackson Street, Board Room 208. Fredericksburg, VA

**Date:** December 8, 2023

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A Public Information/Prevention Committee meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, December 12, 2023, at 12:30 PM. The meeting will be held at 600 Jackson Street, Board Room 208, Fredericksburg, VA 22401.

Looking forward to seeing you on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

RAPPAHANNOCK AREA COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

**Prevention/Public Information Committee Meeting**

December 12, 2023 – 12:30 PM

600 Jackson Street, Room 208 Fredericksburg, VA 22401

***Agenda***

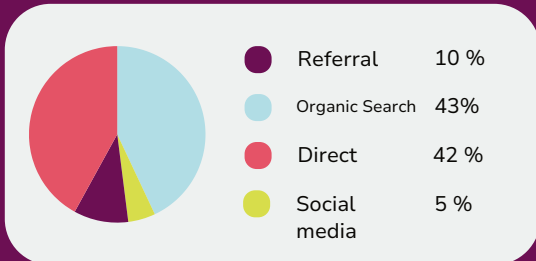
I.	December Website Report, <i>Umble</i> .....	3
II.	Social Media Report, <i>Umble</i> .....	4
III.	Prevention Trainings Mid-Year Update, <i>Wagaman</i> .....	13
IV.	Substance Use Prevention Block Grant Annual Report (July 2022 – June 2023), <i>Wagaman</i> .....	20
V.	2024 Virginia Young Adult Survey, <i>Wagaman</i> .....	24
VI.	Prevention of Problem Gambling – Update on Skill Machines, <i>Wagaman</i> .....	27
VII.	Healthy Families Home Visiting Brief, <i>Wagaman</i> .....	28
VIII.	Healthy Families FXBG Advance Article.....	31
IX.	Healthy Families 25 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala, <i>Wagaman</i> .....	34
X.	Other Business, <i>White</i>	



# Website Traffic Report

December 1, 2023

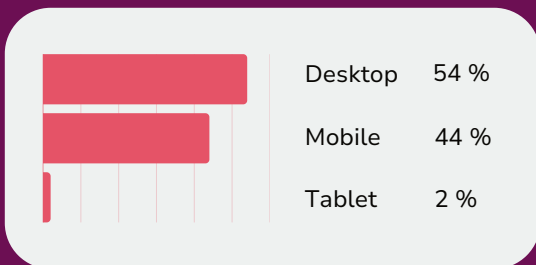
## \* Traffic Source Distribution



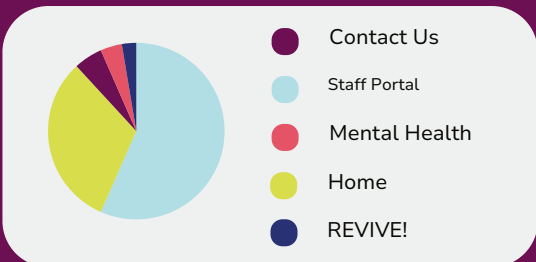
## \* Website Traffic Over Time



## \* Device Usage



## \* Page Views



## \* Fun Facts

**11.9%** More users in November 2023 vs November 2022

**102k** New users in 2023

**343** Users came from Fredericksburg. Today in November 2023

**Thursday** Top day of the week for website use

# Social Media Report

July 1, 2023 to November 30, 2023



“

“It's not enough to have lived. We should be determined to live for something. May I suggest that it be creating joy for others, sharing what we have for the betterment of personkind, bringing hope to the lost and love to the lonely.”

LEO BUSCAGLIA

hopestarter | 

## 4 BENEFITS OF EXERCISE FOR MENTAL HEALTH



### MOOD BOOST

Exercise improves mood and reduces symptoms of depression.



### STRESS RELIEF

Physical activity helps alleviate stress and promotes relaxation.



### COGNITIVE ENHANCEMENT

Regular exercise enhances cognitive function and boosts memory.



### INCREASED SELF-ESTEEM

Exercise improves self-confidence and body image.

hopestarter | 

Why does this report matter? What difference does it make if we gain a dozen Facebook followers in one month? Does a blue thumbs up mean anything?

If we're dealing with 100 open positions, waiting lists and closed programs, is it really important to have a content calendar?

## Glad you asked.

The short answer is yes. You knew it would be, right? Your communications coordinator is not likely to say that communications isn't important.

But let's take a moment to see why it matters. Otherwise, our 8.5% engagement rate on Instagram is going to seem meaningless.

Social media is how many people meet Rappahannock Area Community Services Board. It's our first impression. If you've searched for a job lately, you might know that one of the first things job seekers do is check out the social media accounts of potential employers.

These days, job searchers seek meaning. They want a career that matters, working in a company with a culture that cares. If they can't find any social media content--or if that content doesn't speak to their hearts--they're going to pass up the opportunity.

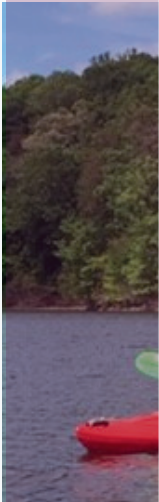
Social media is also how our employees can feel connected to our mission and can see our culture in action--something that is challenging when we operate in about 40 different facilities.

Additionally, this is how our community finds us. It's how new community partners see if we'd be a good fit.

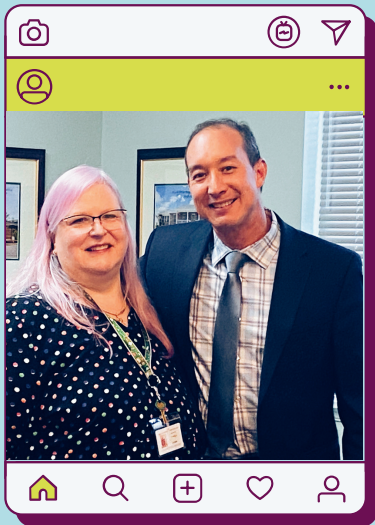
Most importantly, we now know that individuals and families impacted by mental illness, substance use disorders and developmental disabilities often turn to social media to find support.

Studies show that many will peruse social media for a while before becoming comfortable reaching out for services. Done correctly, RACSB's social media can be a place for support and healing before individuals ever walk through one of our doors.

While I enjoy that we have an audience growth rate that is well above industry benchmarks, I really love that we are creating a community that fights stigma, busts barriers and embraces inclusion.



# Top Facebook Posts



105  
38

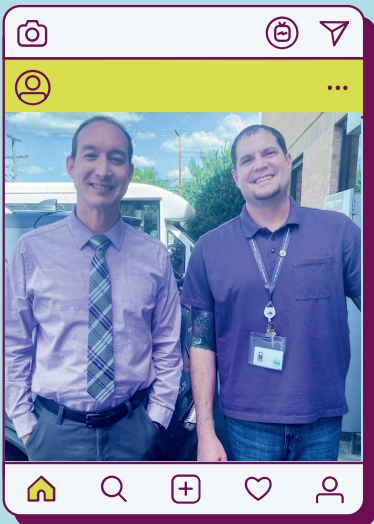


99  
15



80  
3  
4

# Top Instagram Posts



24  
1



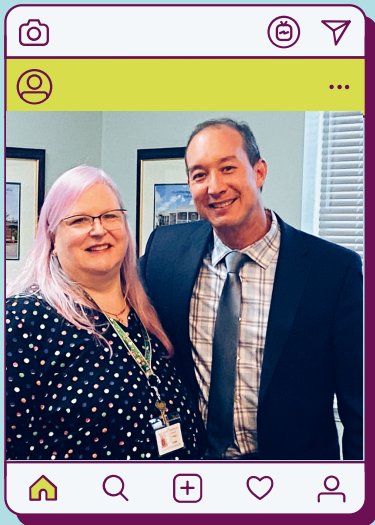
22  
2



20  
1



# Top LinkedIn Posts



15  
5  
3



13  
1



11  
12

Overall, the content that does the best on RACSB social media accounts includes photos of employees and individuals served.



**WE ARE HIRING**

**SUNSHINE LADY HOUSE**

OPEN POSITIONS:

- Mental Health Professionals
- Licensed Practical Nurses
- Peer Specialist
- Registered Nurses

Apply Now!

hopestarter | RAPPANNOCK AREA COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

\*RACSB does have an X account. However, this report does not review statistics/metrics for X. Due to some significant changes within the platform, metrics are inconsistent at the moment.



## At a Glance



Followers

**2,400**



Content

**250**



New Fans

**93**

## Post Performance

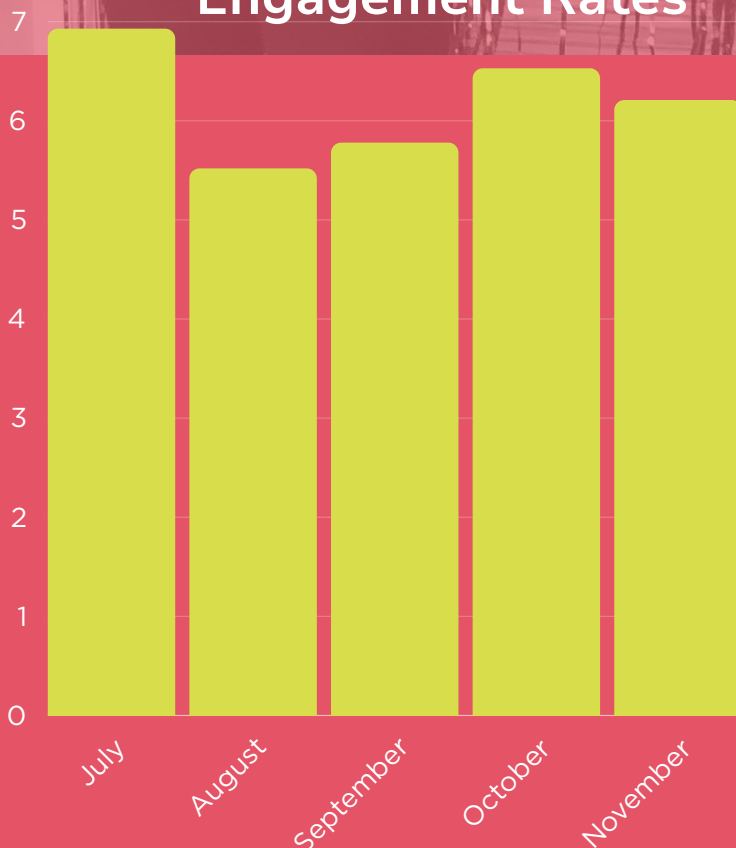
A white circular icon containing a black heart, representing reach.

**97k**  
Reach

A white circular icon containing a black speech bubble with three dots, representing engagement rate.

**6.07%**  
Engagement  
Rate

## Monthly Engagement Rates



### At a Glance



Followers

**356**



Content

**92**



New Fans

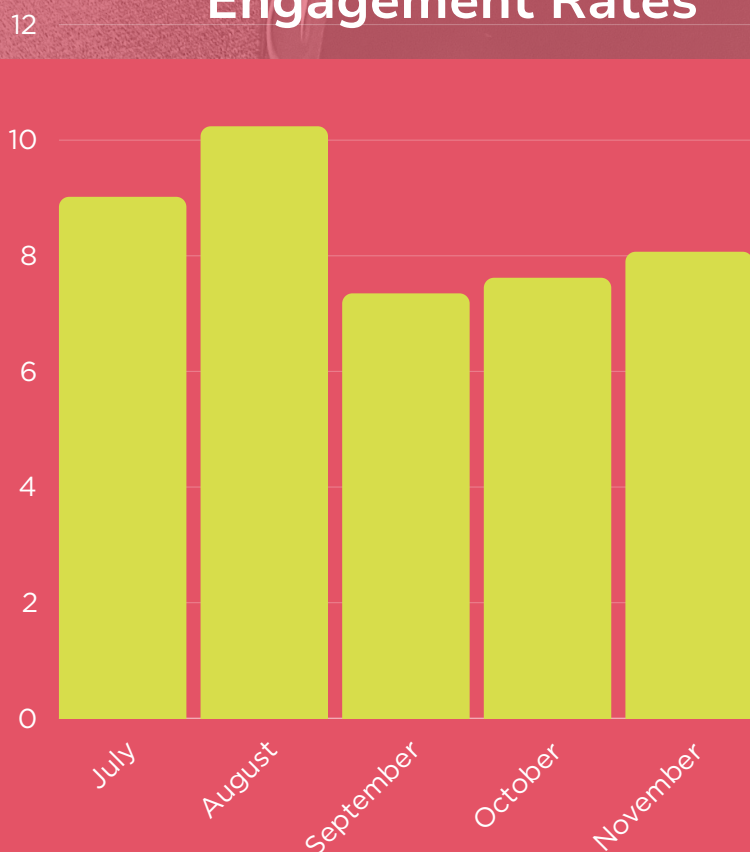
**35**

### Post Performance

**5.6k**  
Reach

**8.5%**  
Engagement  
Rate

### Monthly Engagement Rates





## At a Glance



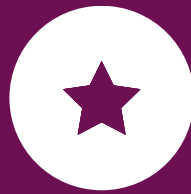
Followers

**411**



Content

**65**



New Fans

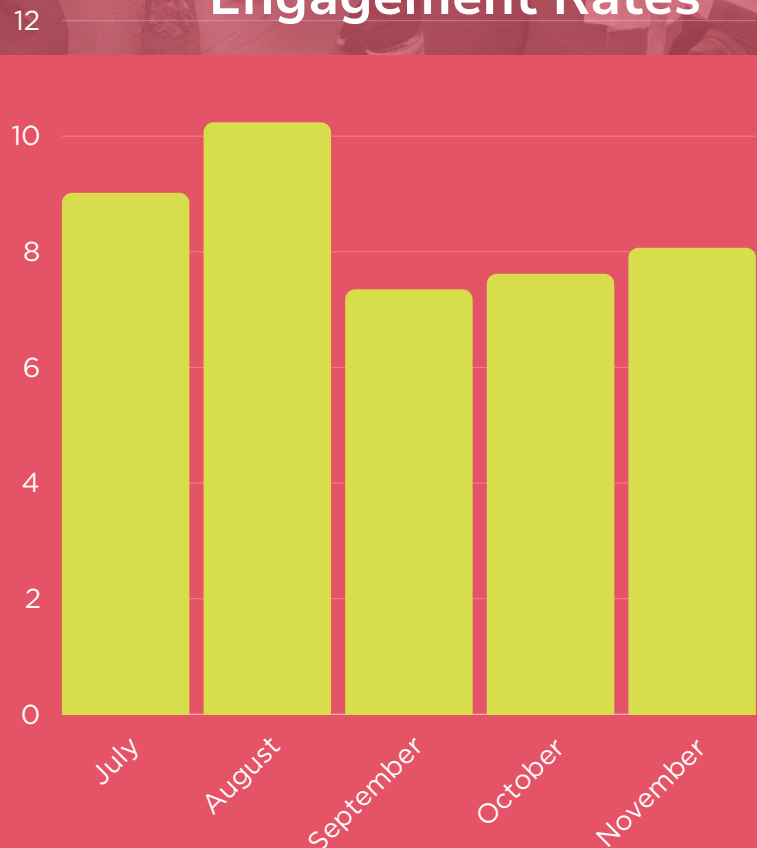
**38**

## Post Performance

**6.8k**  
Reach

**7.2%**  
Engagement  
Rate

## Monthly Engagement Rates





# Best Time to Post

	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn
<b>Monday</b>	8 p.m.	8 p.m.	3 p.m.
<b>Tuesday</b>	7-8 p.m.	8 p.m.	
<b>Wednesday</b>	2 p.m.	8 p.m.	2 p.m.
<b>Thursday</b>	10 a.m.	4 p.m.	4 p.m.
<b>Friday</b>	5 p.m.	8 p.m.	2 p.m.
<b>Saturday</b>	9 a.m.	8 p.m.	1 p.m.
<b>Sunday</b>	7 p.m.	7 p.m.	noon

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- 1 Get an empty jar
- 2 Write down your favorite self-care ideas on strips of paper.
- 3 Whenever you're feeling down, stressed out, or drained – pull out a strip of paper and then do that activity

[www.rappahannockareacsb.org](http://www.rappahannockareacsb.org)



Want a job that's a work of heart? We're hiring for multiple positions. No matter what you do at RACSB, you're starting hope in our community! Apply today: [www.racsbjobs.com](http://www.racsbjobs.com)



hopestarter |

# Benchmarks

## Industry Benchmarks: Nonprofit

- Instagram Audience Growth Rate:
  - Industry: -10.75%
  - RACSB: 7.23%
- Instagram Post Engagement Rate:
  - Industry, 2.01%
  - RACSB, 6.84%
- Instagram Posting Frequency:
  - Industry, 0.9 posts/day
  - RACSB, 0.6 posts/day
- Facebook Audience Growth Rate:
  - Industry, -3.3%
  - RACSB, 4.6%
- Facebook Post Engagement Rate
  - Industry, 1.58%
  - RACSB, 6.04%
- Posting Frequency:
  - Industry, 0.5 posts/day
  - RACSB, 1.63 posts/day
- LinkedIn Audience Growth Rate:
  - Industry, 0.54%
  - RACSB, 10.33%
- Post Engagement Rate:
  - Industry, 2.08%
  - RACSB, 12.73%
- Posting Frequency:
  - Industry, 0.44 posts/day
  - RACSB, 0.41 posts/day

## **Prevention Trainings**

### **Fiscal Year 2024 Mid-Year Update**

In FY 2024, RACSB Prevention Services continues to facilitate the following trainings: Mental Health First Aid; Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST); safeTALK; Understanding ACEs; Community Resilience Initiative Course 1 and Course 2; and REVIVE/Naloxone. This is a mid-year report to provide participant numbers and initiative highlights for the period covering July 1, 2023 through November 30, 2023.

#### **Mental Health First Aid Trainings**

RACSB has the following instructors: Michelle Amey; Benjamin Henderson; Sherry Norton-Williams; and Michelle Wagaman. RACSB trainers are certified to facilitate the adult, youth, higher education, and public safety curriculums.

In the first half of FY 2024, 364 community members were trained (17 adult and 4 youth trainings held). Since we began offering the Mental Health First Aid training in 2014, a total of 4,046 community members have been trained. This curriculum is facilitated over 8-hours.

In addition to hosting trainings open within the community, trainings were held in partnership with the following organizations:

- Rappahannock Regional Criminal Justice Academy (4)
- University of Mary Washington (2)
- Central Rappahannock Regional Library (4)
- Stafford County Government
- Germanna Community College
- Caroline County Public Schools
- U.S. Air Force Air Traffic Controllers (via Langley, VA) (2)

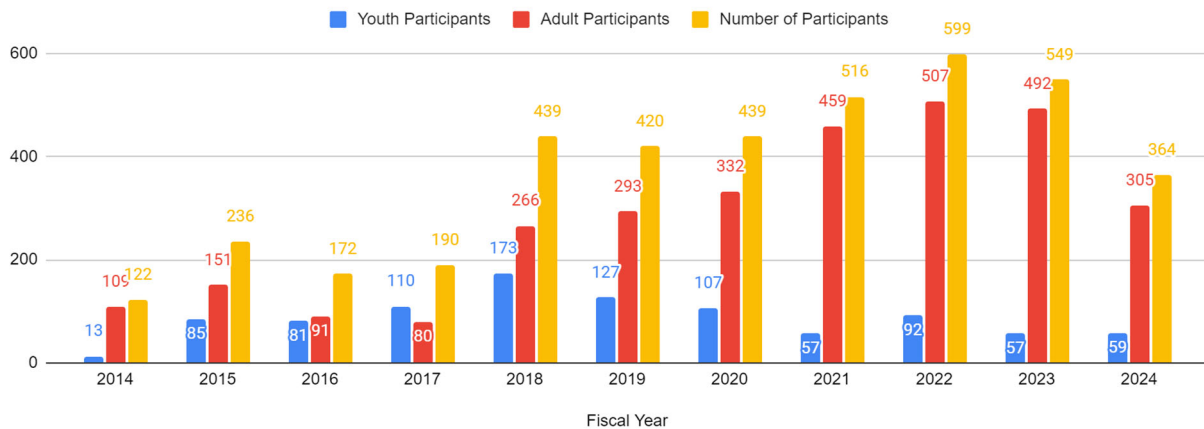
# RAPPAHANNOCK AREA

COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

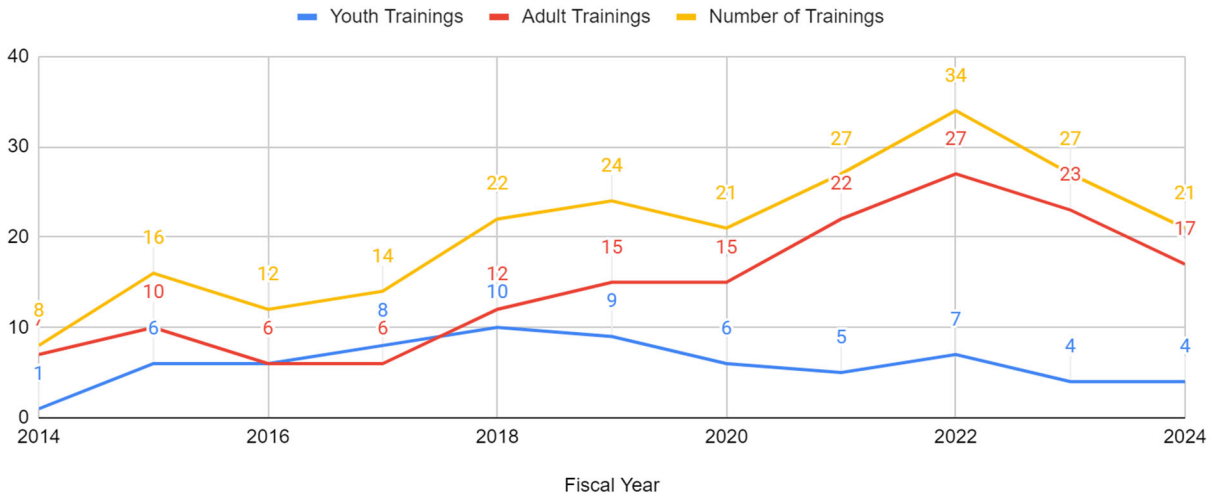
Fiscal Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*	Cumulative
Youth Trainings	1	6	6	8	10	9	6	5	7	4	4	<b>66</b>
Youth Participants	13	85	81	110	173	127	107	57	92	57	59	<b>961</b>
Adult Trainings	7	10	6	6	12	15	15	22	27	23	17	<b>160</b>
Adult Participants	109	151	91	80	266	293	332	459	507	492	305	<b>3085</b>
Number of Trainings	8	16	12	14	22	24	21	27	34	27	21	<b>226</b>
<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>4046</b>

\*Reporting the first five months of FY 2024

Mental Health First Aid Training Participants (FY 2014 - mid-year FY 2024)



Mental Health First Aid Trainings Held Annually (FY 2014 - mid-year FY 2024)



**ASIST: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training**

This suicide prevention “first aid” is a 2-day training the supports participants to identify and intervene to help keep a person with thoughts of suicide safe for now. RACSB initially began facilitating this training in FY 2019. Training was suspended in FY 2020 following the departure of the second training and the COVID pandemic. This training is only provided in-person. We were successful in getting a second internal instructor certified in March 2022 and resumed offering this training in FY 2023.

One (1) training was held for a total of 20 participants in the first half of FY 2024. We cancelled the training scheduled for September 2023 due to registrations not meeting the minimum number required to host the course. An additional training is scheduled for December 7-8, 2023.

Fiscal Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*	Cumulative
Number of Trainings	1	1	0	1	6	1	10
Number of Participants	8	15	0	30	53	20	127

\*Reporting the first five months of FY 2024



# RAPPAHANNOCK AREA

COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

## SafeTALK

SafeTALK is a 3-hour suicide alertness training. RACSB began offering this training in FY 2023 to allow for an option of a suicide prevention training with a shorter duration.

We cancelled one (1) training due to not meeting the minimum number of required participants.

Fiscal Year	2023	2024*	Cumulative
Number of Trainings	2	1	3
Number of Participants	31	11	42

\*Reporting the first five months of FY 2024

## ACE Interface

“Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences and Building Self-Healing Communities” is facilitated both in person and virtually. The content allows for options from a 20-minute introduction/overview to a 6-hour course. We have been facilitating a 3-hour virtual version as well as in-person.

Registration and attendance have been low for in-person trainings; we cancelled one (1) training due to low registration numbers.

Fiscal Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*	Cumulative
Number of Trainings	10	35	23	26	29	10	7	130
Number of Participants	157	733	646	1562	690	212	121	3,964

\*Reporting the first five months of FY 2024

**Community Resilience Initiative Course 1 and Course 2**

RACSB has two trainers for The Community Resilience Initiative’s Course 1: Trauma Informed and Course 2: Trauma Supportive. Each training is 6-hours. Course 1 is a requirement for Course 2. We did not offer these trainings in 2021 or 2022 due to the duration being too long for virtual facilitation.

Course 1: Trauma Informed covers NEAR Science (Neuroscience, Epigenetics, ACE Study, and Resilience), Brain States, and ROLES strategies for individuals seeking a trauma-informed certification.

Course 2: Trauma Supportive covers the science of resiliency and shares promising strategies to build culturally and contextually resilient individuals and communities.

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024*</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
Course 1 Trainings	5	0	0	1	1	7
Course 1 Participants	160	0	0	16	19	195
Course 2 Trainings	1	0	0	1	1	3
Course 2 Participants	23	0	0	17	15	55
<b>Number of Trainings</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>250</b>

\*Reporting the first five months of FY 2024

**Save One Life/REVIVE! Opioid Overdose Reversal Training**

RACSB began offering the REVIVE! Opioid Overdose Reversal training in 2019. We have clinical staff trained as well as all of the Prevention Team as facilitators. We have two Master Trainers on staff. Locally, we began using the Save One Life campaign for harm reduction initiatives in 2023.

In the first half of FY 2024, we have trained 797 community members in Save One Life and dispensed 758 boxes of Narcan (1,516 doses). Since beginning to offer REVIVE in 2017, we have now trained 4,370 community members.



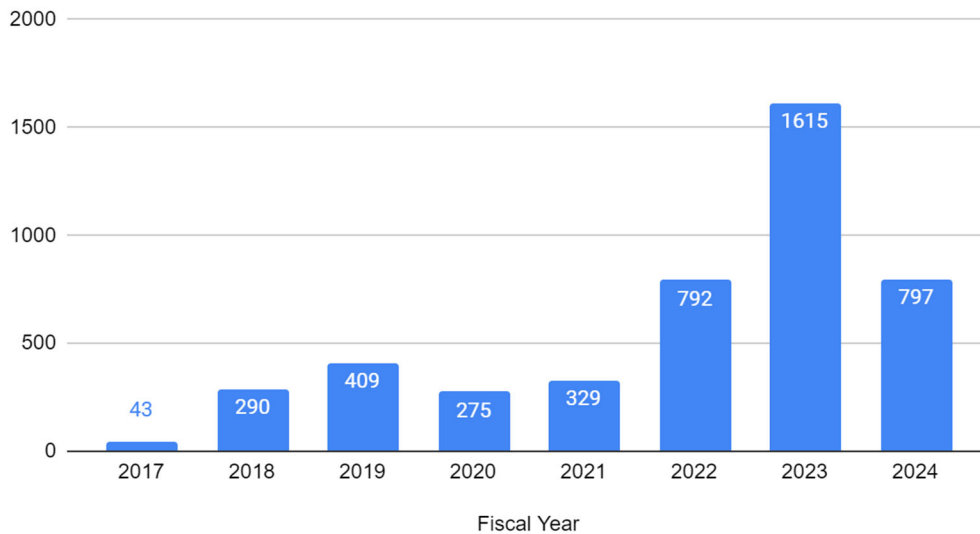


# RAPPAHANNOCK AREA COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

Fiscal Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*	2024*	Cumulative
Number of Trainings	3	25	30	21	26	63	108	50	326
Number of Participants	43	290	409	275	329	792	1,615	797	4,550

\*Reporting the first five months of FY 2024

## REVIVE! Training Participants



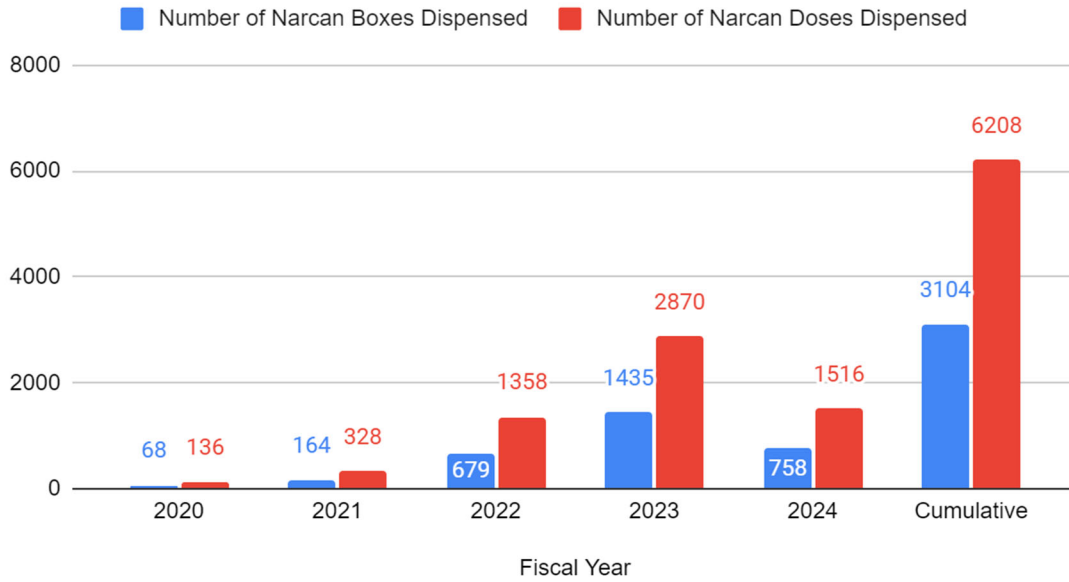
RACSB began dispensing Narcan in February 2020 and have dispensed a total of 3,104 boxes of Narcan/Naloxone or 6,208 doses. Each box contains two doses.

Fiscal Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*	Cumulative
Number of Narcan Boxes Dispensed	68	164	679	1435	758	3104
Number of Narcan Doses Dispensed	136	328	1,358	2,870	1,516	6,208



# RAPPAHANNOCK AREA COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD

## Narcan Dispensing



# Rappahannock Area CSB Substance Use Prevention Block Grant

*Annual Report: July 2022 to June 2023*

The Substance Abuse Prevention Block Grant is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) and is distributed to all 40 Virginia Community Service Boards (CSBs) through the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS). These funds allow communities to plan, implement, and evaluate activities that prevent substance use. Through a data-driven decision-making process, CSBs engage their communities by enacting efforts such as coalition development, trainings, community events, and media campaigns. This report includes information regarding the prevention efforts of Rappahannock Area Community Service Board.



## Why Prevention Matters



Prevention efforts can **stop substance use before it begins** – particularly among youth and adolescents – and promote a health future for our community.



Research shows that **every dollar spent on substance use prevention saves up to \$65** in medical costs. Prevention efforts save not only lives, but money.



We **build caring community networks** through efforts that target shared risk and protective factors.

## 2023: The Year At-A-Glance

5

Localities served

328K

Community population

1.8M

Engagements with community members



RACSB Prevention Specialists attend more than 50 community events annually.



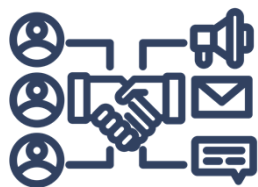
## Building Community Connections

Our coalitions inform and engage our communities in substance use prevention through CADCA and/or CCoVA membership. Coalitions support strategy implementation and are key in creating a network of community stakeholders that care.

**2 active coalition(s)**  
with **137 members**  
representing **15 sectors**



## Preventing Suicide through Lock and Talk Efforts



**311,119**  
Impressions/reach

### Materials Distributed:

Lock Boxes	255
Cable Locks	364
Trigger Locks	469



**21**  
Community  
Presentations

Lock and Talk educates communities on storing and securing lethal means while distributing safety devices. Lock and Talk also engages communities through information dissemination strategies.



## Promoting Mental Health and Preventing Suicide

Trainings such as Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), SafeTALK, QPR, or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) help participants identify, understand, and respond to the signs of mental health or substance use challenges. Participants leave equipped to connect people to resources and care.



**34**  
Trainings



**779**  
People Trained

# BG 2022-23 Priority Strategies



## Raising Awareness to Address Adverse Childhood Experiences

ACE Interface trainings disseminate ACE and resilience science in diverse communities. Participants learn about the biological, health, and social impacts of ACEs and how to support the health and well being of community members.



**24**  
Trainings



**537**  
People Trained

### Sectors trained:

- Schools
- Public Health
- Law Enforcement
- Dept. Social Services



## Preventing Youth Tobacco Use

By providing education to tobacco and nicotine retailers across our catchment area, we are able to prevent youth tobacco use through reduced access.



**3**  
Merchants visited

### Materials distributed:

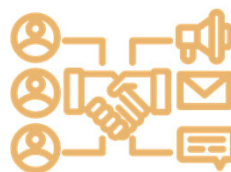
- Counter mats
- Window clings

\*This is an initiative planned for FY 2024.



## Understanding the Risks of Problem Gambling/Gaming

New laws have expanded access to legal gaming and gambling across Virginia, including online gambling and newly opened casinos. This has led Virginia prevention efforts to focus on Problem Gambling –an addictive disorder when you’re constantly placing a bet or wager where outcomes are dependent at least partly upon chance. Merchant education, media campaigns and information dissemination are some of the common strategies being implemented to raise community awareness.



**363**  
Impressions/reach

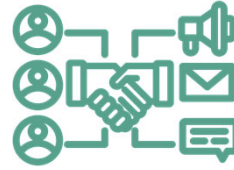
### Other Activities Implemented:

- Trainings for staff
- Community Education
- School Resources



## Addressing Cannabis Use

Changing legislation across Virginia has expanded access and use to medical and recreational cannabis. Many CSBs have begun implementing prevention efforts, such as education and media campaigns, and wider information dissemination campaigns to increase knowledge and awareness.



2,500

Impressions/reach

### Other Activities Implemented:

- Building staff capacity
- Youth Education
- Parent Education

## Prevention In Action!



### RACSB Prevention Recognized at Youth First Conference

While demonstrating what builds a health community, the RACSB Prevention team engaged with 500+ attendees at the Youth First Conference. In addition to handing out wallet resource cards and other information, the team trained 75 individuals to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose using Naloxone.

*Left, members of the RACSB Prevention Team at Youth First, February 2023*

“I think this is a great course and I would love it if more people could take it and easily talk about Mental Health issues.” – participant, Mental Health First Aid Training

“Fantastic experience – I was a little worried with it being virtual- but you nailed it!”  
- participant, virtual Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences Training

For more info, contact us at [prevention@rappahannockareacsb.org](mailto:prevention@rappahannockareacsb.org)  
[www.rappahannockareacsb.org](http://www.rappahannockareacsb.org)

This report was prepared in partnership with the OMNI Institute, Virginia’s evaluation partner for the Substance Abuse Block Grant. OMNI is a non-profit social science consultancy based in Denver, CO.



## **2024 Virginia Young Adult Survey**

The Office of Behavioral Health Wellness (OBHW) at the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) has directed CSB Prevention teams to implement the 2024 Young Adult Survey. This survey was first administered in spring 2022.

The survey is directed towards young adults ages 18-25 and was developed by OBHW and OMNI Institute.

The goal of the survey is to better understand young adult experiences with substance use, mental health, and other related topics. The survey asks about alcohol, marijuana/cannabis, cigarettes/e-cigarettes, stimulants, opioids, and other illicit drug use. Additionally, the survey asked about mental health topics/suicide, gaming and gambling behavior, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey is voluntary and takes 10-15 minutes to complete. It is confidential and anonymous. Upon exit of the survey, personal information is gathered to that an incentive can be provided. We have elected to once again work with VCU for the tracking and distribution of incentives (\$15 e-gift card).

Our goal is to have 150 surveys completed by April 15, 2024.



# 2024 Virginia Young Adult Survey

Guidance provided from OBHW & OMNI for CSB YAS Administration



**Target Audience** Young adults ages 18 to 25



**Timeline** OMNI target dates for YAS data collection: January 16- April 15



**Funding** \$5,000 has been provided to each CSB as part of the problem gambling prevention funds. This is written into CSB Exhibit D's and Anne Rogers supplied CSB Prevention Offices with a copy of the Exhibit indicating this YAS allotment.



**Goal** Increase from your CSB total from 2022 or a minimum of 150 valid responses. See [www.vasis.org/yas](http://www.vasis.org/yas) to see your 2022 response rate.



**Incentives & Thank You Gifts** Problem gambling prevention funds do not have heavy restrictions for purchasing incentives. They may include branded items and standard giveaway items like mugs, t-shirts, or gift cards. **Gift cards must be \$25 or less.**

Optional offer to partner with VCU (Mary Moore) on management

CSBs will be responsible for collecting and verifying contact information for those seeking to obtain gift cards. This will include setting up a Survey Monkey contact form, Google form, or other system to gather complete contact information.

CSBs will need to provide OMNI with a link to the incentive contact form no later than December X, 2023 so we can program and test the link with the survey.



**Technical Assistance**

Contact OBHW for:

- questions about ways to reach participants or roll out the survey in your community
- questions about funding-related matters or staff time

Contact OMNI for:

- technical questions about the survey
- support on creating an incentive contact form
- questions about recruitment
- to receive a custom survey link and QR code for in-person events
- to receive a special data entry link for paper survey data entry
- suspected survey spamming or fraud detected in your incentive contact form data

# 2024 Virginia Young Adult Survey

## Orient yourself to all the YAS materials in Box.com

- Visit the OMNI TA Resources >> Young Adult Survey 2024 Folder and review all materials

## Determine your incentives

- Identify incentives type(s) that your CSB will distribute
- Nail down your incentives budget
- Set up your incentives survey and send the link to OMNI by December 1, 2023
- Determine your incentives distribution process and whether you will engage any partners in this, such as VCU. If contracting with VCU, get contracts in place as soon as possible. *Note: You will not be able to contract with VCU if you wait until January to start this process.*

## Nail down your recruitment approach

- Identify any key events in your community that you can use to recruit survey participants
- Determine your in-person survey taking strategy – will you use paper copies? iPads or tablets? QR codes? *Note: if you'll be distributing paper surveys, identify your process and staff who will be responsible for entering those surveys into the system.*
- Print out any materials you'll need such as flyers, posters, paper surveys, survey talking points
- Identify CSB staff, coalition members, and volunteers who will be supporting your recruitment efforts
- Plan out your social media strategy, including setting up a calendar for posting, pre-scheduling posts on your accounts, and determining whether you'll purchase any ads (and setting aside a budget for those if you are)

## Establish partnerships (and identify how each partner will support your efforts)

- Local coalitions
- Regional or neighboring CSBs
- Young adult serving organizations and programs such as those at community centers, YMCAs, leadership or community service groups, and faith-based programs/youth ministries
- Schools, colleges and universities. *Note: Don't forget that many high school seniors are 18+!*
- Libraries, community and recreational centers, and other community-serving organizations such as LGBTQ+ community centers and organizations serving refugee and immigrant communities
- Faith-based organizations such as churches, mosques, temples, and spiritual centers
- Military bases, recruiting offices, and veteran's associations
- Local businesses such as gyms, bowling allies, restaurants, movie theaters, bars, coffee shops, game and hobby stores, and other stores frequented by young adults in your area
- Local trade schools, trade groups, or unions



## **Prevention of Problem Gambling Update on Skill Machines**

In October, the Virginia Supreme Court reinstated a ban on electronic skill games in Virginia. These machines or games look and play similar to slot machines. Manufacturers say there is an element of skill involved.

The General Assembly passed legislation outlawing skill games in 2020. However, former Gov. Ralph Northam delayed the ban for a year to help the state raise money for COVID-19 relief efforts.

When the ban then took effect in 2021, a lawsuit resulted in an injunction that allowed games already registered with the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority to continue until the issue is resolved. The lawsuit was scheduled to go to trial in December.

Following the Virginia Supreme Court decision, the lower court dismissed the lawsuit challenging the state ban on skill games. Retailers had 30 days to remove the games/machines (November 16). If the games/machines are active within stores, the public can call the Virginia State Police Tip Line at 1-833-889-2300 to report the name and address of the violating retailer.

It is anticipated that supporters of the skill machines will take this issue up with the General Assembly next session.

Prior to the Supreme Court decision and subsequent lawsuit dismissal, CSB Prevention teams were planning to visit all retailers where such machines are registered. As part of these audits, merchant education would be provided with regards to use by those age 18 and older, promotion of 1-800-Gambler support, and product placement.

## **Healthy Families Rappahannock Area Home Visiting Brief**

### **State Funding of Virginia's Home Visiting Programs**

Virginia's home visiting programs connect pregnant and parenting families with young children to a registered nurse and a trained family support professional who provide customized coaching and support through pregnancy and the early stages of a child's development. Home visitors help families realize their strengths and unlock their child's potential. They also work to prevent child abuse while breaking intergenerational patterns of at-risk behavior while building protective factors within the family.

Currently Virginia's home visiting programs serve approximately 4,600 children (4,000 families) in 123 Virginia communities.

Locally, Planning District 16 is served by Healthy Families Rappahannock Area. This successful home visiting program has served the community for 25 years. Last year, the program served 318 children in 139 local families. RACSB serves as the fiscal agent.

Virginia's home visiting programs are at risk of losing funding because of the decline in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) balance over the next two fiscal years. Early Impact Virginia and Families Forward Virginia are leading the effort to close the upcoming funding gap as well as develop a long-term sustainable plan for the growth of our local home visiting programs.



# Home Visiting Issue Brief 2024

**If you could ensure Virginia's mothers and babies are healthier, would you?**

**If you could help Virginia's families become more self-sufficient, would you?**



**The solution depends on you!**

**FUNDING FOR HOME VISITING IS AT RISK DUE TO SHORTFALLS IN TANF**

## Families Forward Virginia Home Visiting

Families Served	Prenatal Families	Home Visits
<b>12,456</b>	<b>5,925</b>	<b>377,808</b>

## Total # of Home Visits

<b>248,953</b>	<b>28,799</b>	<b>100,056</b>
<b>Healthy Families Virginia™</b>	<b>parents as teachers®</b>	<b>CHIP<sup>SM</sup> of Virginia</b>

**FY18-FY23**



# Funding for



Healthy Families  
Rappahannock Area

## is at risk due to shortfalls in TANF.

### Empowering & Enhancing our Region's Families

Home Visits  
in the last 5 years:

11,325

Families served  
in the last 5 years:

558

Pregnant Women  
served in the last  
5 years:

400

"Being a single first time mom is scary, and to know I had a nonjudgmental mentor guiding and supporting me towards unimaginable goals for my child and I. Without the help of healthy families, I would not have been fully equipped to embark on the journey of motherhood alone"

~Nia W.



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# FXBG Advance



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## New parents 'have a friend' in Healthy Families

ADELE UPHAUS - DECEMBER 6, 2023



**b**y Adele Uphaus  
MANAGING EDITOR AND CORRESPONDENT

When Chelsea Neal found out earlier this year that she was pregnant, her very first thought was, "Let me contact Ivy."

She wasn't expecting to get pregnant again and she still didn't have any family support in the area. But she wasn't worried. Ivy Lee, a family support specialist with Healthy Families Rappahannock Area, had seen her through the birth of twins five years ago, connected her with resources, helped get her enrolled in an associate degree program and given her confidence in her parenting – and she knew she could do it again with Ivy's support.

"She makes it so easy to ask for help, and often, I don't even have to ask," Neal said. "She's like my subconscious."

Healthy Families Rappahannock Area is a home visiting program that works with new parents in the Fredericksburg region, offering free, voluntary in-home support and guidance.

Family support specialists such as Ivy are trained in early childhood development and can help their clients access safety-net resources.

No income limits are required to receive services. Families at risk of child abuse or neglect can be referred to the program by their physicians, the hospital or social services – but anyone who feels they might benefit from the program can refer themselves, whether they are in crisis or not.

"Babies don't come with handbooks," said Melodie Jennings, who directs the program. "There's no 'how to' guide and every single child is different. Sometimes it's nice to have that support system to come in and normalize and guide you and be your #1 cheerleader."

### "Home visiting is a highly effective prevention strategy"

There are 29 Healthy Families programs active throughout the state of Virginia, and the program is just one of eight different models of home visiting under the umbrella of Early Impact Virginia, a nonprofit alliance of early childhood home visiting.

"All the models grew up or were developed for different reasons or out of different organizations, but they all come from the same base or foundational understanding that when we're able to really support families from the earliest point and center our support around what their needs are and what their goals are for children and themselves, we can be really successful," said Laurel Aparicio, executive director of Early Impact Virginia.

Home visiting is "a highly effective prevention strategy that can disrupt generational poverty while helping kids become prepared for school," Aparicio said.

Home visiting in its different forms has been around for decades, has a strong base of evidence for its success and a high return on investment, reaching \$5.70 for every dollar spent, according to Early Impact Virginia.

Last year, 572 family support professionals served more than 6,700 families statewide, according to Early Impact Virginia, and the services benefit both parents and children.

Mothers who participate in home visiting are less likely to give birth to pre-term babies. Children are more likely to be referred for intervention when developmental delays are evident. Parents with substance abuse or depression are more likely to be connected with resources to help with these conditions.

And while 50% of participating mothers reported that they themselves had been abused as children, more than 99% of participating children had no founded cases of child abuse or neglect, according to Healthy Families Virginia, the umbrella organization over the local Healthy Families program.

"If you are a parent that was raised to think that you didn't matter, or that when you did something wrong, you were told you were stupid or got knocked upside the head, there's a likelihood of you repeating that behavior if you've never had somebody to say, 'Hey, there's a different way,'" Jennings said.

### A lack of funding and awareness

But statewide, home visiting programs reach less than 10% of the families that could benefit from their services, according to Early Impact Virginia.

That's due to a combination of funding – which for Healthy Families comes from federal, state and local levels as well as private donations – workforce shortages and a lack of awareness.

Jennings said Healthy Families Rappahannock Area is currently serving 132 families with eight family support specialists. They have the capacity to serve up to 176 families, but there are two new family support specialists who keep their caseloads at half the maximum for the first year of their employment.

The majority of families in the local program are introduced to its services in the hospital, Jennings said. Healthy Families Rappahannock employs a family resource specialist who visits local hospitals and talks with parents after the baby has been delivered.

Local social services departments also refer families, but Jennings said she would love to see the number of self-referrals grow, rather than having to rely on overworked nurses and social workers.

In 2021, a baby died from malnourishment in Spotsylvania County. Jennings said she looked in her database to see if Healthy Families had ever received a referral about the baby's family.

They hadn't, but her mind still swirls with "what ifs."

"What if the mom was watering down the baby's formula because she didn't know where to get the next can from? What if she was suffering from post-partum depression and no one knew the signs?" Jennings wonders.

If there was more awareness of the free, voluntary resources offered by Healthy Families Rappahannock, the outcome of this one case might have been different, she thinks.

"So we've started a community awareness open house," Jennings said. "We invite anybody and everybody to come over, tell us about you and let us tell you about us. We know it takes a village. There should never be a parent that is having a child and they have to do this journey alone. We're here, we're free – let us help."

### "My life changed"

Local moms who receive home visits from Healthy Families Rappahannock Area told the Advance that they can't imagine their lives without the support it gives them.

Zoe Williams, the mother of a six-month old son, said she was skeptical about home-visiting because she is a private person and she worried she would be judged.

But "my life has changed" since she was connected with a family support specialist, she said.

"I was on edge during my pregnancy," Williams said. "I thought, 'I don't know how to do this.' But (her family support specialist) was someone I could vent to, who offered me reassurance. She checks on how I'm doing as a person. She texts throughout the week. She's helped me connect with other moms. Now, I ask, 'When are you coming? I need you!'"

Yvette Breaux said home visits through Healthy Families helped alleviate her fears over her daughter's development. Her family support specialist was able to reassure her that children reach milestones on their own schedules.

Breaux has two young children just one year apart, and her family support specialist would bring activities for the older child so she could focus on the younger.

The visits were “something I could look forward to,” Breaux said. “She always made me feel like she wasn’t there to judge, but to help.”

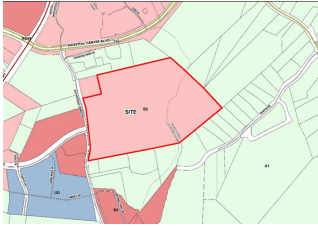
Home visits can continue through Healthy Families Rappahannock until a child enters kindergarten, Jennings said. Many families don’t want to leave the program, so she asks them to act as “parent ambassadors.”

“I’ve been here for 19 years, and my proudest moments have been in the last three years when we hired three former participants,” Jennings said.

Rebekah Schumaker is one of them. She said she wants to pay forward the guidance and support she got from her family support specialist, who she credits with helping her leave a domestic violence situation.

“For me, she is what kept me going,” Schumaker said.

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## **Healthy Families Rappahannock Area 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala**

Healthy Families Rappahannock Area is celebrating 25 years of quality home-visiting services to the residents of Planning District 16.

A gala is planned for April 26, 2024 at Stevenson Ridge in Spotsylvania County.

Sponsorship and tickets are available.





Healthy Families  
Rappahannock Area



# Celebration Gala

April 26, 2024 6pm

Stevenson Ridge,  
6901 Meeting St  
Spotsylvania VA 22553

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