The Faces of YES

Meet ANDREA FROST
Substance Abuse Counselor at Youth Eastside Services

Andrea Frost has worn many hats in her 15 years at YES. And after more than a decade, she still relishes coming to work for the kids she serves, the support of her co-workers, and the stimulation of dealing with new challenges every day.

Frost currently works at Redmond High School and Redmond Middle School, providing on-site, free counseling to help students deal with the stress and trauma of high school life.

“I love supporting them in learning and growing and making good decisions,” she says.

Frost also facilitates YES’ Alcohol and Drug Education Class (ADEC) and the UPRROADS program, which provides sober activities for teens and helps young people dealing with substance use.

Every year, youth who have been helped by YES speak at the event. Last year’s breakfast inspired donors to contribute more than $700,000 to help Eastside families overcome trauma, depression, substance abuse and other emotional struggles — as well as fund education and prevention services across the community.

Brad and Danielle Tilden will serve as community co-chairs for the event. Brad is the chairman and chief executive officer of Alaska Air Group and its two subsidiaries, Alaska Airlines and Horizon Air. Danielle is the owner of Capitol Hill’s Station 7 boutique, and her career working in youth-serving organizations spans over 25 years. Local news veteran and former Seattle Seahawk Steve Raible will emcee.

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Wilkens, who rose to local fame as a player and coach for the Seattle SuperSonics, has been inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame three times. Off the court, he’s made accessible, quality health care for children and families his top priority: The Lenny Wilkens Foundation has raised more than $18 million for the Odessa Brown Children’s Clinic — a community clinic of Seattle Children’s Hospital — as well as other services and programs in the Northwest.

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Building a System of Support for Your Child

A parent learns how to navigate community resources to bring hope to her family.

By Jae Holt

It’s rough when your child is not doing well in school. I remember dreading phone calls from the school principal, emails from teachers, and endless conferences with the school counselor. I remember the tears of frustration and the fear that I might be the worst parent ever. When circumstances lead you to feel broken down and helpless, don’t give in – your family isn’t broken, your support system is.

My child would come home from school crying, and would find any excuse to stay home. Test scores and classwork were below expectations, classroom behavior was poor, and friends were hard to come by. Our family made the difficult decision to change schools, but we worried that our child’s problems would follow.

We needed to figure out how to give our child a better chance at academic and social success. I knew we needed help, but where were we supposed to start?

Seek to understand your child’s challenges

We turned to a child and family psychologist to help us understand our child’s emotional difficulties and learn the skills needed to address those difficulties. Therapists like the professionals at YES can help you bridge any gaps in understanding what your family needs, and connect you to other resources.

They may also partner directly with your school to increase your child’s chances at success.

Communicate openly

So what do you do now that you have a better understanding of your child’s needs? Talk about those needs. Because our family encouraged a two-way conversation with teachers and staff, we learned about the different types of support available to students, and the availability of trained staff to help our child navigate any academic, social or emotional problems that might come up. We also talked to other parents who had experienced similar problems, and exchanged ideas and techniques to help support our children.

Take action

Don’t wait until your problems become too much to handle to actively seek help. We all need help, and when it comes to raising a family, sometimes we need a lot of help. It truly takes a village to raise a child, so make sure you have one that is actively working toward your child’s success. Your child has the right to grow up successful, both academically and socially.

Our family created a system of support by cultivating partnerships with community professionals and school staff. Now, my child is on the path to becoming a successful student with meaningful friendships. Knowing we have resources like YES to turn to takes away some of our worry.

Jae Holt is a writer and parent living on the Eastside. She was born and raised in Hawaii. Find her online at jaholt.blogspot.com.

New Board Member

YES welcomed a new trustee to its board in January 2016:

Swapan Hiray
Director, Portfolio Licensing
Intellectual Ventures

See a full list of YES’ Board of Trustees members at YouthEastsideServices.org.

Program Profile:
SUCCESS MENTORING

WHEN IT STARTED: Success Mentoring has been a cornerstone of YES’ education and prevention services for nearly 30 years.

WHO IT HELPS: Kids ages 6 to 17, most from low-income families in the Bellevue and Lake Washington school districts, who are dealing with emotional and behavioral issues.

WHAT IT DOES: Matches each young person with an adult mentor who wants to make a positive difference in a child’s life. Get mentees on the track to academic success.

PRIMARY GOAL: YOUNG PEOPLE IMPACTED: HOW IT WORKS:
40 to 50 annually

Mentors apply through a formal application process. After an in-person interview and background check, mentors attend a group training and receive materials on topics such as cultural sensitivity, adverse effects of substance abuse and domestic violence on youth, tutoring, career exploration, and best practices on successful mentor-mentee relationships. Mentors also receive ongoing training and support from YES.

TIME DEDICATED: Mentors work with their mentees for a minimum of 200 hours every year, two to four hours each week. The time typically includes one to two group activities for all mentors and mentees every month, such as hikes, potluck gatherings or bowling.

IS IT WORKING? Of the 46 middle and high school students enrolled in 2014, 96% improved or maintained their GPAs.

GET INVOLVED!

“I’m a mentor because it’s what I need.” – Larry Rush, Success mentor

“Before I came here, I felt like a blank Facebook photo—just a name. Now I’m not just existing; I have a face and an identity.”

It’s comments like these from the kids and teens she sees that convince Robyn Bennetts, ARNP, that she’s in the right role. Bennetts has been a board-certified Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner for 16 years. She joined YES in November when the agency expanded its psychiatric services—a move that quadrupled the number of hours available for psychiatric consults. Through the expansion, YES also welcomed Dr. Rebecca Hopkinson, whose presence at YES is part of a collaboration with Seattle Children’s Hospital.

Both Bennetts and Hopkinson work with YES’ therapists and clinical directors to treat anxiety, depression, ADHD and many other issues that may interfere with the effectiveness of counseling. Bennetts emphasizes the critical need for early treatment. “Kids are hopeful [about their situation],” she says. “It’s good to intervene before adulthood, when they may have been experiencing issues for many years.”

Psych Services Help Kids Feel Whole Again

“I was really in a dark place. She truly made me believe in myself.”

One in five children living in the United States experience a mental disorder in a given year. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Youth Eastside Services is a lifeline for kids and families coping with challenges such as emotional distress, substance abuse and violence. Through intervention, outreach and prevention, YES builds confidence and responsibility, strengthens family relationships, and advocates for a safer community that cares for its youth.

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Frost currently works at Redmond High School and Redmond Middle School, providing on-site, free counseling to students to help them with everything from simple issues to big traumas.

“I love supporting them in learning and growing and making good decisions,” she says.

Frost also facilitates YES’ Alcohol and Drug Education Class (ADEC) and the UPROADS group, which provides sober activities for teens struggling with substance abuse; supervises school-based services in the Lake Washington and Bellevue school districts; coordinates presentations to the community about drug and alcohol use; and manages cases directed to YES by King County Juvenile Court.

She has many fond memories of the young people she’s worked with over the years, including some that stand out, like one student from Kamiakin Middle School.

The teen, who was living with her sometimes-absent, substance-addicted mother, joined Frost’s “affected others” group, which helped students impacted by friends’ or family members’ drug and alcohol use. Introverted and self-conscious, the girl was quiet and rarely participated. But through Frost’s counseling; YES’ Camp Mariposa, an overnight camp that supported the children of substance abusers; and BGLAD, YES’ LGBTQ support group, the teen began to open up and make new friends.

Years later, Frost met the young woman — who was now self-assured, happy and attending college — for coffee. She thanked Frost and told her about the impact that YES’ programs had on her life.

Encounters like these are a big part of what sustains Frost’s love for her work. The other parts: collaborating with school staff, seeing an eclectic mix of kids, competent colleagues, and working in different environments every day — those are just the icing on the cake.

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For more information: Visit www.YouthEastsideServices.org or call 425-586-2326
Suggested donation: $150

Want to help a child in distress?

Donations help ensure that YES can extend a lifeline to struggling youth and families, regardless of their ability to pay for services. You can make a gift online at YouthEastsideServices.org or call 425-747-4932. We gratefully accept monetary and in-kind donations, as well as gifts of stock. Ask us about convenient pledge payment or planned giving options.