



Brookfield Cares Annual Report: 2021

Background

The purpose of this report is to inform the community about Brookfield Cares and its efforts to address public health concerns. Our focus has been and remains the health and welfare of the community as a whole.

Brookfield Cares is a 501(c)(3) organization, which enables us to seek and accept donations that allow us to expand the work supporting our mission and goals.

Mission

Our mission is clear:

Brookfield Cares is a community based organization dedicated to promoting awareness and education by focusing on the impact of substance abuse, depression, suicide, and other public health concerns.

We work hard to reach the entire community on issues that have an impact on our daily lives, including addiction, drug and alcohol use and misuse, anxiety and depression, eating disorders, suicide, mental health issues, smoking/vaping, and bullying. In this regard we strive to work with all sectors of the community through their representation on the coalition. The more our community can be informed and engaged, the healthier our community will become.

2021 Initiatives and Actions

Brookfield Cares remains deeply involved in outreach to the community on issues regarding substance misuse, mental health, and other health related concerns. This year, our efforts were again influenced by the many mitigating factors surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. A considerable increase in adverse mental health

conditions, substance misuse, and suicide ideation has been directly associated with the stressors surrounding the pandemic. With that in mind, over the past year we introduced or continued a variety of programs and initiatives to further our mission and goals:

Brookfield Cares designed and sponsored a sign at the Brookfield High School Stadium along the track fence. The messaging “It’s Okay to Not Be Okay...It’s Also Okay to Ask for Help” is accompanied by both a website address and QR code providing links to vital helplines and resources.

A Postvention task force was assembled to aid in the reduction of risk and promotion of healing following a death by suicide. The task force has been compiling resources and establishing protocols to facilitate the healing of individuals from the grief and distress of suicide loss, mitigate other negative effects of exposure to suicide, and prevent suicide among people who are at high risk after exposure to suicide.

With funding by a grant from the Western CT Coalition, through the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Brookfield Cares sponsored a Friday Night Concert in the Park. During the event, coalition members were present to answer questions, share resources, and offer bags with items and information to promote awareness of substance misuse and mental health issues. These bags were also distributed at the Brookfield Farmers Market, the Brookfield Senior Center, and the food pantry.

Brookfield Cares continues its sponsorship and support of the Parent Support Network of Brookfield. This family-driven, parent-led group provides parents who are concerned about their child’s mental health and well-being the opportunity to give and receive valuable peer connection.

In conjunction with the Western CT Coalition, Brookfield Cares hosted two virtual Narcan training sessions. This training teaches individuals to recognize the signs and symptoms of overdose, and how to obtain and administer naloxone. Several town employees and community members were trained in these potentially life-saving skills.

Through Brookfield Cares, the Town of Brookfield was identified as a “Recovery-Friendly Community”. This designation signifies the commitment to support individuals who are in recovery from a substance use condition by

reducing stigma and discrimination and improving the environmental factors necessary for recoverees to flourish.

The coalition was pleased to again be a sponsor of the Brookfield Grad Party, an event designed to allow graduating high school students to celebrate in a safe, substance-free environment.

Brookfield Cares has sustained the poster initiative providing education and helplines to our preteen and teenage students. Posters focusing on mental health and other health concerns, along with resources for help, are displayed in acrylic sign holders on the bathroom stall doors in Whisconier Middle School and Brookfield High School. Messaging this year emphasized the adverse effects of vaping, encouragement to seek help for mental health issues, and reduction of harmful risk behaviors while driving (driving under influence, seatbelt use, and distracted driving).

The coalition continues to distribute the “Parent’s Guide to Helping Your Child Succeed” throughout the community. This 32-page booklet provides valuable information and resources for help for many of the challenges our youth face: alcohol and drug use, bullying, mental health and suicide prevention, and COVID-19 stressors. It additionally communicates details and results from the 2019 Student Attitudes and Behaviors Survey. We plan to administer the survey again in 2022, gaining critical data to help guide future initiatives.

Brookfield Cares, partnering closely with the community, remains committed to improving awareness, providing education and outreach, and reducing the perceived stigma of behavioral and mental health issues. As we face these challenges, we are grateful for the cooperation and collaboration of all constituent groups, including parents, the schools, town government, clergy, the medical community, seniors, and more. With the community’s support, understanding, and involvement, we can continue this vital work.