



## **Brookfield Cares Annual Report: 2022**

### **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 non-profit volunteer community-based organization dedicated to creating awareness and positive change around the issues of substance misuse, depression, suicide, and other mental health concerns.*

We do this by engaging with all members of the community to reduce harmful behaviors, destigmatize mental health issues, and promote and support healthy choices.

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.

### **2022 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. We aim to be responsive of current data and emerging trends to address this objective. 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 continues to sponsor a sign at the Brookfield High School Stadium along the track fence and added sponsorship of a similar banner on the Cadigan Town Park field fencing. The messaging “It’s Okay to Not Be Okay...It’s Also Okay to Ask for Help” is accompanied by links providing vital helplines and resources.
- The Postvention task force, assembled to aid in the reduction of risk and promotion of healing following a death by suicide, continued its work to establish protocols and create a resource booklet.
- Brookfield Cares provided funding of the QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Gatekeeper Trainer Certification Course for three Brookfield Public Schools staff members. This certification allows them to train other staff members in QPR, which teaches individuals to effectively recognize and intervene on behalf of suicidal and in-crisis people.
- With funding by a grant from the Western CT Coalition, through the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, 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 other events throughout the community.
- Through the same grant, Brookfield Cares was present at the town’s National Night Out event to share resources and information, in addition to offering Narcan training. Several people were trained in this potentially life-saving skill.
- The coalition 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.
- Brookfield Cares has continued 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 mental health support and the adverse effects of vaping, along with associated helplines.

- Brookfield Cares purchased the “Too Good for Drugs” program materials for Whisconier Middle School health classes. This substance use prevention initiative empowers students to meet the challenges of middle school life, fostering confidence and building resistance to substance abuse.
- The coalition sponsored a presentation at Brookfield High School featuring a former BHS graduate who spoke of her drug addiction and recovery. This powerful program focused on the dangers of prescription drug misuse and the opioid epidemic.
- With funding by a grant from the Western CT Coalition, through the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Brookfield Cares introduced several initiatives designed to reduce vaping use among teens and increase public awareness of vaping risks and prevention. The coalition designed and conducted focus groups for Brookfield High School students regarding vaping attitudes and trends. Though these dynamic sessions, valuable information was gathered to aid in vaping messaging and outreach. Funding was provided to 5 staff members of Brookfield High School for the American Lung Association’s “Not On Tobacco” and “InDepth” programs, which train individuals to run teen smoking and vaping cessation programs. Additionally, messaging regarding the harms of vaping was designed and presented on the digital displays at check-out lanes at the Brookfield ShopRite grocery store.
- In collaboration with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a Wellness Guide was created and produced. This booklet explains what wellness is and the vital role it plays in recovery from mental or substance use disorders and provides local and national resources. The booklet is distributed at Brookfield Cares events and throughout the community.

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.