



# **BROOKFIELD CARES**

Promoting social health and emotional well-being in our community.

## **Brookfield Cares Annual Report: 2023**

### **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**

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 in the coalition and their involvement and support of our programs. The more our community can be informed and engaged, the healthier our community will become.

### **2023 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 to 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 signs at the Brookfield High School Stadium along the track fence and on 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.
- With funding by a grant from the Western CT Coalition, through the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, 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.
- 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.
- 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 order to gain a better understanding of students’ attitudes and actions relating to at-risk behaviors Brookfield Cares, in grateful partnership with the Brookfield Public Schools, surveyed students in grades 7-12 in November 2022, with results available early 2023. The surveys are designed to provide quantifiable input that helps us:
  - Focus on developmental assets: the strengths, supports, and skills that young people need to succeed.
  - Provide actionable information and guide messaging and outreach to our youth based on current trends noted in survey results.
  - Bring young people’s own perspectives and experiences to planning.

A presentation of the results was made to the Boards of Education and Selectmen, and can be found [here](#). In addition, Brookfield Cares hosted a Community Forum, where the results of the survey were used to spur dialogue on how the community can help to strengthen developmental assets in our youth. The forum report can be found [here](#).

- Brookfield Cares additionally used the survey results to conduct student focus groups, to gain better understanding of how our students felt about the results and what outreach they felt would be most beneficial.
- 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 continues to be a presence in events throughout the community, such as the Brookfield Block Party, YMCA Healthy Kid's Day, and Brookfield Public School's open houses, orientations, and curriculum evenings. During these events, resources were distributed and information provided.

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, Brookfield Police, clergy, the medical community, seniors, and more. With the community's support, understanding, and involvement, we can continue this vital work.