



## BE THE INFLUENCE COALITION: A WINDHAM RAYMOND COLLABORATIVE

8 SCHOOL ROAD | WINDHAM, MAINE 04062

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

With the trauma of Covid and isolation effecting youth and communities, substance use prevention resources and services have never been more important. As a result, BTI in partnership with former Windham High School student Tatianna Velilla and the St. Joseph marketing class surveyed parents, youth and community on what events and efforts would help to provide needed resources for youth, family and community engagement and services. The general consensus was that youth and community members are looking for ways to connect, understand mental health issues, reduce stress/anxiety and learn healthy alternatives to overcoming adversity other than substance use. With this in mind, BTI was able to increase membership from 186 to 199 members and successfully create and implement numerous programs and opportunities. Due to these efforts, BTI has been recognized on a National level as one of the top coalitions for youth engagement and was highlighted in the DFC Best Practices Report as well as requested to serve on a panel at the upcoming CDC Webinar to share those practices. Some exciting highlight successes include:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> annual **Day Of Abundant Hope** involved 8 clergy preaching on “hope and resiliency” coupled with an outdoor resources fair with over 10 prevention and recovery resources including Narcan demonstrations as well as mindfulness and yoga demos, an art puzzle piece project, games and more. Swag bags with area resources and services were provided.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual **Family, Fun Fitness and Film Festival**-partnering with the Windham and Raymond Parks and Rec Departments and sponsored by the Sebago Lakes Chamber, Otelco and Bangor Savings Bank, this event offered an evening for family and community connection including resource vendors, food, yoga on the beach, mindfulness, a scavenger hunt, stage events and contests, swag bags and an outdoor screening of Toy Story 4. Attendance increased from 35 to 120 from last year!
- **Arts in Prevention series** including a Van Gogh project with Katahdin, the alternative High School, where students learnt to use art as a healthy form of expression through chalk art, journaling and Glenn Simpson’s Puzzle Piece art project focused on “connecting us through adversity and bringing hope”. DEA360 funded an after school, online dance program featuring mime and dance artist Karen Montanaro that helped teens to deal with isolation, BTI and parks and Rec offered a Middle School Monologue program where student and parent feedback confirmed their support in the program that hugely helped in providing healthy coping skills and a support system that was badly needed. BTI was recognized at Katahdin’s Graduation for its contributions to their students.
- **“If They Had Known”**, a film about preventing mixing alcohol and prescription drugs was screened and discussed in WHS Health Classes
- **EmpowerME Health Series** offered online sessions for youth and community on substance use prevention and brain science, overcoming trauma and building resiliency, parent courses on how to talk to youth or identify use, peer-to-peer courses on how to effectively help each other and other topics
- **Flavor Hook Kids Campaign** allowed numerous RSU 14 youth, health professionals and parents to engage in conversations on the dangers of vaping and how flavors are the number one reason youth use. Local PSA’s were used for statewide campaigns.

- **The BTI Opiate Task Force** started initiatives on safe storage and disposal messaging, stigma campaigns, Narcan education, possible needle disposal projects and a youth PSA on opiates that played at the DEA360 Sea Dogs Drug Awareness game.
- BTI, RSU14 and the SEL District Committee have partnered to create and implement an October **Mental Health Summit** to include subjects on overcoming trauma, substance use education, suicide prevention, working with LGBTQ Youth, overcoming stigma, healthy coping tools and more. See flyer attached.
- In November, BTI has been working with Westbrook Partner's in Prevention and Points North Films to bring the nationally acclaimed film, **Jacinta** as a free event for both communities. Jacinta features a Maine woman who came from generational adversity and heroin misuse and overcame the odds and will be followed by a panel discussion with Maine's Director of Opioid Response, Gordon Smith, Jacinta herself, Jessica Ershaw, the Director and Brittany Fearon, another Windham High School graduate who has gone on to "be the influence" by sharing her own testimony of recovery and hope.
- November will also bring an **Alcohol Awareness Night** in collaboration with SAMHSA featuring Sterling Campbell (the B-52s drummer), key speakers and BTI PSA's by youth
- **BTI Youth Groups** are starting up again at each school where students will start peer-to-peer programs, theatrical and art projects, Maine Youth Court training, media campaigns among many other things
- **Parent Engagement Committees** are working on a parent series of programs
- **Cannabis/Vaping Task force** is working on a regional summit and offering youth compliance opportunities for vendors
- While the nationally recognized "**Taking Back Maine's Future**", a 7<sup>th</sup> grade opiate education project effecting hundreds of students and parents created by WMS teachers was cancelled last year due to COVID, plans are underway to implement it this Spring
- BTI and law enforcement distributed information through ongoing media campaigns and at area community events including National Night Out, Dundee Concert Series, Chamber membership blitzes, and other venues

For information on becoming a coalition member or on upcoming events goto [www.betheinfluencewv.org](http://www.betheinfluencewv.org)

See attachment below!

**CALLING ALL**

**TEACHERS, PARENTS, YOUTH & COMMUNITY MEMBERS!**



Join us for a  
**VIRTUAL**

## **MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT**

A Windham & Raymond  
Community Conference  
hosted by RSU 14 and  
Be The Influence

**THURSDAY 10/7 & FRIDAY 10/8 • 8AM-NOON**

**ATTENDEES WILL RECEIVE** advice from experts in the field of mental health about overcoming stigma, accessing coping skills for resiliency, understanding brain science, ways to reduce stress, as well as working with LGBTQ youth, peer and adult support services - and much more!

**INCLUDED ARE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS AND BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**PRESENTERS INCLUDE** • Professionals from NAMI-Maine • Be The Influence  
• Opportunity Alliance • Sweetser - Options Program • Maine Behavioral Healthcare  
• City of Portland Health Department • Maine Resilience Building Network  
• American Foundation of Suicide Prevention & more

**WITH SPECIAL GUESTS** Matt Bellace (*motivational speaker/comedian*)

John T. Boderick (*former Chief Justice of New Hampshire Supreme Court*)

Both Days



Sponsored by  
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**NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED • Zoom links will be posted on [RSU14.org](http://RSU14.org) Sept. 24th**

