

Summer 2022



# CARING COMPASS

Newsletter from Teton Youth and Family Services





# Letter from Sarah

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Ted Nichols, *Wilderness Program Director*

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Dear friends and supporters,

As we transition out of the buzz of summer and back into the rhythm of fall, I'm looking ahead to some tremendously exciting opportunities on the horizon. We're proud to have officially launched Building Brighter Futures – a comprehensive campaign that will empower TYFS to revitalize therapeutic spaces at the Van Vleck House, Hirschfield Center, and Red Top Meadows. Additionally, it will allow us to expand our programming for the children and families of Wyoming.

Some of these much-needed renovations are already underway, and others are set to begin in coming months; this investment in critically-important community resources is needed now more than ever, as demand for our services grew 40% last year alone. We're grateful to all who have contributed to the campaign so far, and invite each of you to make a gift to help us raise the remaining funds if you haven't yet. It's your support that will help us reach our goal of \$10 million in private gifts and \$5 million in public funding.

I would also invite you to join us on one of our "hard hat" tours we are offering of the Van Vleck remodel. We host these on Wednesdays at noon, just let us know if you would like to take a look at what this building project is going to offer our community.

In just a few weeks, our community will also have the opportunity to vote on SPET initiatives – one of which supports Building Brighter Futures. I certainly understand that times are difficult for many members of our community, and that making a financial gift to this important campaign may not be feasible. I would invite everyone – regardless of their ability to make a philanthropic gift – to vote in November, and to keep in mind the impact that TYFS makes on so many young lives.

Wishing all of you a safe, healthy, and happy autumn!

Sarah Cavallaro  
Executive Director



## Celebrating 45 Years

In the last newsletter excerpt of Teton Youth and Family Services' (TYFS) history, we discussed how the organization was built on the idea of providing care and support for early childhood/traumatic experience and creating services to serve the regionally needs of children and families of Teton and neighboring counties. In the first three years of operation, Teton Youth and Family Services started the Van Vleck House as a teen drop in center with summer programming and hired John Thorn and Liz Hickman to overlook the psychological services for the School District contract. Bruce Burkland was also brought onto the team to develop family therapy, parenting classes, and enhance summer programming at the newly opened Red Top Meadows residential facility. TYFS was asked to join the local Youth Council and the Child Protection Team. Furthermore, John and Liz joined the Wyoming Psychological Association (WPA) and Bruce joined the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) and the WPA within the same year. Connecting with committees and organizations overlooking the wellbeing of families served to support Teton Youth and Family Services' mission and help establish legitimacy within the community of Jackson and build relationships on a state level.

In 1982, Claire, John and Liz all leave TYFS within the same year, and so does the school contract, leaving the Board and Bruce to manage the organization during a tough transition. The Van Vleck House almost closed due to lack of funding. For many weeks, Bruce works without pay just to cover staff salaries.

Over the next four years, Bruce focuses on programs that are needed in the community. He attends Justice Court as a Court liaison to work with kids assigned group therapy/ education. The Big Buddy Program begins at the Van Vleck House to establish mentors for struggling youth. And when the Van Vleck House relocates to Glenwood street and shares office space with SWARA (now known as the Curran Seeley Foundation) and the Task Force on Family Violence (now the Community Safety Network), human service organizations work together to literally weave a safety net for the community of Jackson. Bruce would help do evaluations and DUI check(s) for SWARA; Andy Turner, the Director of the Mental Health Center, overlooked kids and parents' classes at the Van Vleck House; and in 1985, the Van Vleck House starts the Latchkey Program with the Parks and Recreation Department, Community Child's Project,



Department of Family Services, PTA, Girl Scouts, Teton County Sheriff's Department and Dancers Workshop! Without having a real home for the Van Vleck House, the collective and shared effort to develop programs needed for kids were very formative for TYFS. But that was soon to change. In 1986, the Task Force on Family Violence leaves the Greenwood location, opening up space for the Van Vleck House to create a Group Home and Crisis Shelter with a grant of \$80,000. Within the same year, Red Top Meadows received a negative evaluation and is almost closed due to a lack of placements and money. The board fires the Executive Director and appoints Bruce as the new Executive Director of TYFS and Director of Red Top Meadows. Bruce and Red Top leadership team work to improve policies, procedures and staff training. Bruce also works with the Department of Family Services to secure a higher daily rate. As the program stabilizes, RTM quits sending students to public school and moves to have all therapy and schooling on site. The original building on site, commonly known as the "milieu building" operated as residential quarters. With every service to be done onsite, the 1,000 square foot cabin had to operate as the Administration, Therapy and School building.

By the end of the 1980's, the Van Vleck Group Home and Red Top Meadows joined the Wyoming Youth Services

Association. The Van Vleck House moves again to 60 East Simpson and starts the Time-Out program for the school system. Red Top Meadows starts wilderness programs throughout the year and in 1989, Bruce becomes President of WYSA and begins annual work at the Legislature – likely not knowing that his role would serve as his greatest advocacy challenges for children and families of Wyoming, a role he still serves in now.

It wasn't until the early 90's did TYFS start planting permanent roots in Teton County, Wyoming. The TYFS board approves to buy the Red Top Meadows property once the conditional use permit had been settled and goes from twelve (12) to a fourteen (14) bed facility. In 1992, summer programming for kids was generally lacking in Jackson; RTM started its Summer Wilderness Program for young men who would benefit from the wilderness experience. Van Vleck also started the Summer Leadership Program. Both programs are still running today and considered one of TYFS' greatest prevention programming they offer to the community. Shortly after hiring Cindy Knight as the new Director of the Van Vleck House, they move into the current address of 510 S Cache and expand from 8 to 10 beds for Group Home and Crisis Shelter.







**BUILDING**  
*Brighter*  
**FUTURES**

**Reinventing and rejuvenating spaces  
to heal and inspire Wyoming youth**

A comprehensive campaign to support critical building renovations at the Hirschfield Center, Van Vleck Group Home and Red Top Meadows Residential Facility – allowing enhanced programming in safe, welcoming spaces for young people navigating crises and seeking hope – in addition to expanding existing programming and ensuring long-term sustainability.





**We believe in a community where our youth and their families have every opportunity to thrive.**



Teton Youth & Family Services offers a path to healing and hope-filled futures for the young people and families of Teton County, WY. Over the past two years, the needs for our services – from case management and therapeutic support for young children navigating trauma to residential and wilderness-based opportunities for teenagers facing an array of challenges – have increased significantly.

With your support, we can meet their needs and help them find paths forward. Safe and welcoming facilities are fundamental elements of our programs.

**Goal: \$15 million**

## **TYFS Supports Growth**

**With \$15M we can transform our facilities and enhance the quality of our programming.**

**Secure, harmonious spaces invite healing.**



### **SAFETY**

Incorporating state-of-the-art design and building elements, TYFS will provide facilities for children and families that prioritize safety and ensure that all areas are utilized as efficiently as possible.

**Welcoming, peaceful facilities encourage healthy connections.**



### **HEALING**

The path to healing is gentler in an environment that offers a sense of peace, safety, and community. TYFS aims to create both private and communal spaces that foster a sense of individual and collective wellbeing.

**Trusting, authentic connections are the bedrock of a thriving community.**



### **CONNECTION**

Genuine growth doesn't happen in a vacuum – it occurs with support, compassion, and in a space that invites vulnerability and openness to new ideas. This critical exchange is the foundation for resilient individuals and relationships.

## Programmatic Enhancements

This funding will also empower TYFS to expand our impact through new and enhanced elements including:



Family Wilderness trips to build or rebuild bonds



Additional scholarships for Leadership Camps



Capacity building and stabilization of staff



Early intervention outreach in schools



After-school programming for teens



Broadening of Support Groups



Integrated Suicide Prevention in residential treatment centers



Parenting Classes

**THE PROOF IS IN OUR WORK,  
THE POWER IS IN YOUR HANDS.  
BE THE CHANGE.**

This campaign calls upon the collective will of visionary donors and champions of the youth and families in our community to help us realize the enduring future of TYFS. We believe this campaign will bring to bear the power of ingenuity to support human resilience in partnership with our natural world: the greatest healer.

**Make your gift today, and join us in building brighter futures for all.**







## Phase 1 — Hirschfield Center

The Hirschfield Center for Children, originally constructed in 2002, includes facilities for forensic interviews, family advocacy and therapy, and the Court Diversion Program. The planned remodel will add a welcome and waiting area, staff offices, a board room, and student study area.

Ultimately, this will make the space more efficient and allow the facility to reflect the high quality of services that TYFS offers.

**Estimated cost: \$1.9 Million**

## Phase 1 — Van Vleck House

The Van Vleck House is a residential facility for young adults. Currently, the structure — which was built in 1967 and last remodeled in the mid-1980s — is far below the industry standards for therapeutic spaces of this type. The renovation will include state-of-the-art safety features, including a safe space for youth at risk of self-harm, a community room, 7 double-occupancy bedrooms, improved kitchen facility, staff offices and respite space, and a communal multi-use room.

Van Vleck House will offer the ideal balance of structure, safety, and warmth — a framework fundamental to healing.

**Estimated cost: \$3.3 Million**



## Phase 2 — Red Top Meadows

Red Top Meadows is a 14-bed residential treatment and therapeutic wilderness program established in 1980 to serve adolescent males. Located on 20 acres bordering the Bridger-Teton National Forest, the historic buildings — which date to the 1960s — have rustic charm, but they fall short in terms of meeting staff and students' everyday needs.

All aspects of a student's day are seen as opportunities for learning and applying treatment goals. A safe, modern facility will maximize the impact of these everyday growth opportunities: providing a homebase, school, and launching point for the program's integral Wilderness Programming components, and facilitate programming for young men who are working to recover their lives and discover paths to healthy, opportunity-rich futures. Our goal is to create a facility that fully reflects the exceptional quality of Red Top Meadows' services.

**Estimated cost: \$5.4 Million**



# Summer Wilderness at Red Top Meadows

by Ted Nichols

The theme of our Summer Wilderness Trip is Dependence to Interdependence. I'll be honest. I think this year's group went into this trip a bit over confident and casual regarding the monumental challenge you had in front of them. While they had participated in all sorts of wilderness classes, it can be hard to feel genuinely prepared for the real thing. I'm sure as they started your way down the trail and the vehicles left, the reality of your next 24 days was daunting. But they put your packs on and started putting one foot in front of the other, making their way back to Red Top. Initially the group was dependent on staff for support and encouragement on trail and in camp. As the days went on they started to take more initiative and began to gain more confidence in themselves and in each other. They learned how to pick a camp, efficiently set up their tents, how to use the stoves, how to filter the water, tie the right knots, how to go to the bathroom without a toilet and stay somewhat hygienic without a shower. They learned how to manage their food and water intake to make sure you had enough

energy to make it through a grueling day on the trail. They learned how to voice encouragement to a peer in need and how to accept help from others. They learned how to play your part within a community. Like in any community we all have our strengths and weaknesses and with the support of each other they were able to accomplish a monumental task. They found a good balance between independence, or self-reliance, faith in your own abilities, sharing your strengths with others in your community and having a willingness to rely and trust in others for support when you needed it. Interdependence in action is a sign of a healthy and thriving community.

While many of our students may never choose to hike up and down Everest 2.5 times nonstop over the course of 24 days ever again, I know they will take the thousands of memories from this experience with them into the future and remember that extraordinary things are possible when you have confidence in yourself and can rely on others for support when you need it most.

**24**  
**DAYS TOTAL**

18 days hiking  
3 days climbing  
3 days of rest

**116**  
**MILES HIKED**

6.5 miles averaged per day  
250,000+ steps on trail in  
total

**13**  
**MAJOR MOUNTAIN  
PASSES**

27,500 ft. elevation gained  
and lost  
*(29,029 ft. is the elevation of  
Everest)*





# Back to School

By Chris Moll, LCSW, Director of Hirschfield Center for Children

Growing up, I can vividly remember the first 'back to school' commercials airing on television advertising the must haves for returning to class. For myself, and I think most kids, these images do not conjure thoughts of a joyous return to a learning environment where unicorns and rainbows line the hallways.

Some children thrive in an academic environment and others struggle with not only the classroom work, but also the behavioral expectations. Whatever camp your child may fall into, there are things we can do as parents to help set the stage for success for the upcoming school year. Generally, I believe that children want to succeed in school and they look to the parents for guidance on how to be their very best.

## Sleep

It is estimated that the average elementary school student needs 10-11 hours of sleep per night. It is difficult to be fully engaged in a learning environment and make solid behavioral choices if your child is constantly tired. As we approach the beginning of the school year, start to get your child in the routine of a consistent bedtime to ensure they are getting appropriate rest.

**Mornings:** The unfortunate part of sleep for many kids (and adults) is waking up in the morning. This can be a rough part of the day for both parents and kids. Getting ready for work, walking the dog, getting the kids dressed and fed and whatever your morning routine entails all takes valuable time. This applies to everyone in the house; consider having several practice mornings to get your routine dialed in before the first day of school so that mornings are not quite so chaotic. Do the parents need to wake up 20 minutes earlier to make for an easier morning? Maybe consider making lunches and packing backpacks the night before so that there is less to accomplish in the morning.





## Expectations

Prior to the first day of school, have a conversation with your child about how you would like the school year to go. While this varies from family to family, talk with your child about grades, behavior, time playing video games and media, chores and what this is going to be like during the school year. The more expectations can be aligned between the home environment and the classroom, the less confusing it will be from your child. Consider incorporating the language your child's teachers use into the home. It can be overwhelming when children have to navigate several sets of standards.



## School time



## Homework

Kids start to have homework in Kindergarten. Whether or not this is a good practice is probably another article in itself, but the reality is your kids will have work that they need to accomplish at home. Remember that kids look up to their parents, so your attitude about the homework will have an impact on how your children react to the work. As part of the expectations, talk to your children about how and when homework will be done. Set aside a quiet space that is free from distractions, put the phones aside and engage in the homework with your kids. This is also a conversation with middle and high school age kids (where you may not be able to help with homework!).

## Balance

It is also important to remember that kids need to be kids and have some fun. For most families, the after school hours are chaotic as well. Kids attend after school activities, parents are rushing home from work to get children to sports, get dinner on the table, or whatever is going on. Take a minute to breathe and slow down to enjoy the time with your kids. Do a fun activity before the evening routine begins as you and the kids might just need a little time to unwind after a busy day for everyone.







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## TYFS wish list

- Electric keyboard
- Microphone
- Propane Grill
- Gas gift cards
- Restaurant Gift cards or activity passes
- Acoustic Guitars
- Used or new hiking boots
- Supplies for the Little Food Pantry: non- perishable food items, toiletries, socks, etc.



At Teton Youth and Family Services our vision is to reinvent and rejuvenate safe, welcoming spaces for young people and families navigating crises and seeking hope.

But we can't do it without your help! Donate to TYFS through Old Bills, and your gift will have an extra impact.

**Donate today [oldbills.org](http://oldbills.org)**