

QUARTERLY REPORT

JANUARY - MARCH 2021



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HELPING YOUTH TO HEAL, CONNECT, AND THRIVE

Our team at Vermont Afterschool made a commitment to ourselves and to each other to be intentional about taking time off over the holiday break to rest, restore, and re-energize. Our office closed and we were all off from December 21, 2020 through January 3, 2021. The goal? To start the New Year with a boost of energy and a refreshed mindset. And, of course, we jumped right back into the work full throttle. January always marks a major shift in our advocacy work because the new legislative session begins. Much of Holly's time has this past quarter been spent on various policy initiatives that you can read about on page 5, and it is very exciting to see some of our longstanding dreams--a youth council bill, funding for summer programs, and universal afterschool--become a very real possibility in 2021.

Another noteworthy piece of our work from the past quarter is the VYP data release. The VYP survey is given every year in the fall to middle and high school youth in the [five VYP communities](#). New for 2020-21, the survey added questions on COVID-19 and revealed startling data around mental health:

- 52% of 11th/12th graders say that they are more lonely due to COVID-19
- 46% of high school students say that COVID-19 has made their mental health worse
- 47% of high school students report that COVID-19 has worsened school connections
- 57% of 11th/12th graders say it hurt their educational experience

Overall, you can see that COVID-19 has significantly impacted youth mental health and wellbeing. This will be a major factor driving our work in the next quarter as we turn our focus to summer programming. We're all in to ensure VT youth have what they need to heal, connect, and thrive.



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI)

Our DEI work continued with another workshop with Rebecca Haslam of Seed the Way. In January, she presented “The Power of Language: How Word Choice Can Reinforce or Challenge Bias.” During the workshop, we examined the power of word choice and making simple and significant shifts in our language in order to be more aware, respectful, and affirming. We practiced unpacking terms that normalize racism, our country’s history of slavery, and other forms of oppression. You can also check out this recent blog post on our DEI efforts here: www.vermontafterschool.org/our-dei-approach-for-2021

Grants and Funding

The Vermont Community Foundation recently distributed money from their VT COVID-19 Relief Fund to sustain and support third space programs. We are grateful for their continued partnership.

- \$50,000 to add to the second round of the Afterschool for All Grants in December 2020
- \$110,00 for a Teen Center COVID Relief Grant in February 2021

Operations Updates

From Nicole Miller, Assistant Director

We have been hard at work refining our internal structure and shared leadership model over the last few months. Our team leads now meet bi-monthly with Holly and Nicole to ensure that we’re on track for grant projects and supporting team members in their development. Additionally, our strategy team (Cassie, Erin, Holly, Nicole, Robin, and Tricia) met for the first time in December. We’ve now solidified that monthly meeting as a place to discuss vision, brainstorm ideas, and look at how we communicate and measure impact.

And we are growing! We are in the process of interviewing for a new STEM and Career Awareness Coordinator position and hope to have someone hired by April 1. Additionally, the team has spent time identifying ways to support a new team member hired remotely.

SUMMER 2021

A time for healing, connection, and learning

Our team is looking ahead to Summer 2021 and working with summer and third space programs to feel empowered to deliver safe, accessible, high-quality programs. Our focus is on professional development, strategy, funding, and outreach. We know now, more than ever, children and families need these programs to recover. Summer learning programs can offer:

- **Enriching academics that accelerate learning gains**
- **Caring mentors who focus on kids’ social emotional learning and mental health**
- **New ways and places for kids to learn, have fun, and be outside**
- **Healthy snacks and meals**
- **A robust support system for students and their families**



Strengthening Programs Update

From Tricia Pawlik-York, Program Improvement Coordinator

Quality and Best Practices

21C and licensed programs were supported through trainings, individualized meetings, and a half-day retreat for 21C directors to network and share successes. The SEL PQA process continues for programs as they move from the assessment process to completing their program improvement plans. Staff at Vermont Afterschool have also performed several “virtual program visits” to assist programs with reflecting on their practices and with increasing their STARS. Holly, Tricia, and Nicole met with the leadership team at the Child Development Division this quarter to highlight our work under their grant; the CDD team expressed support and praise for our organization’s efforts to boost quality in programs across VT.

Training

We continue to offer our Equity Series mentioned on p. 2 and are receiving excellent feedback on Rebecca’s interactive, approachable, and engaging virtual facilitation. We also are preparing for a new Spring Speaker Series that will feature national keynote speakers in March, April, and May. As we approach summer, our team also is participating in the monthly statewide Summerama committee meetings in preparation for this year’s event on June 6th. Summerama is a collaborative event that provides a comprehensive summer camp training day experience for summer camp staff. Vermont Afterschool is partnering to provide resources and trainers for the event.

Afterschool for All Grants

We have seen AFA grantees share wonderful stories in their quarterly grant reports about how the funds have increased access and options for creating programming in their communities. Interactive STEM adventure programs, enrichment kits, and even a blacksmithing program were all made possible this quarter with the AFA grant funds. Also, 10 new programs were funded in the AFA Round Two grants in December 2020 with some of the funding from the Vermont Community Foundation (see p. 2). Projects like “build a bike camps” to apprenticeships for high-risk teens were awarded funds. Exciting and valuable programming for our young Vermonters!

STEM

Part 1 of Linking Engineering to Life has concluded and approximately 35 youth will be continuing in Part 2 which will culminate with a showcase to be held on April 1 at 6:30-8PM. The Linking Engineering to Life project is funded through STEM Next and Million Girls Moonshot, a national initiative designed to engage more girls in STEM learning opportunities through afterschool and summer programs over the next five years. We also learned that we were selected as one of three afterschool networks nationwide to receive the STEM Next Booster Pack Grant. The focus is STEM transitions and jobs for the future. Starting in March, our team will receive training and strategic advising for delivering this programming to the field.



Empowering Youth Update

From Robin Katrick, Youth and Community Health Coordinator

Vermont Youth Project (VYP)

One of the biggest developments out of YET in the past quarter is the data release that is an integral part of VYP. This year's survey included questions on COVID-19 and revealed how VT's young people are doing. Along with select data points on p. 1, you can also view more data on youth here: www.vermontafterschool.org/vypdata

In January 2021, the VYP coalitions came together to participate in learning about the key findings, changes from last year, and taking action in their community. All five VYP communities left with an action plan to strengthen coalitions, outreach to key partners in the community, and goals and strategies under the key findings.

Workshops

Since January, the YET team has facilitated eight workshops for the youth councils (including youth and adult facilitators) and VYP. We have also created a workshop "Coaching Beyond Winning: SEL in Action" that will run this spring. Designed for sports coaches and third space leaders, this workshop can be combined with our Youth Mental First Aid training to increase knowledge in SEL, resilience, adolescent development, and youth mental health.

Youth Councils

Nine youth councils across Franklin, Chittenden, Rutland, Washington, and Orange counties are meeting currently with our support. Thanks to funding from the Northfield Savings Bank Foundation and the Vermont Department of Health, each youth council has \$5,000 for youth-led initiatives in their community. Youth-led proposals are due in March and will be selected by peers through a participatory budgeting process. A student from the Swanton VYP youth council stated in one of our workshops: "I can't wait to work with you and make this country better." Take a look at the new youth council video here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ONcMbYZchY

Website and Resource Development

Resources developed for YET have included data summaries for VYP communities and youth councils, a community asset mapping guidebook, and a youth prevention and wellness page on the website.

Partnerships and Community Outreach

Four UVM Health Science students have joined YET for the semester to support VYP. They will be working on a project that addresses what it means to be a youth-friendly community.

Additionally, Building Flourishing Communities (BFC) has continued to build a strong partnership with the field service directors and they have been working on community outreach centered around focus groups as well as a mini-grant process. BFC also distributed \$20,000 in grants to support local organizations/projects focused on trauma and resilience building. Grants were awarded in December 2020 through Vermont Afterschool.



Increasing Access Update

From Holly Morehouse, Executive Director

We are definitely sitting in interesting times and are moving forward on our advocacy and policy work. We have a full advocacy plate involving both youth and adults, are still deeply involved in COVID response and relief efforts, and are carefully watching several avenues with the legislature and the administration.

Afterschool Task Force

We have been working closely with Rep. Kelly Pajala and Sen. Andrew Perchlik on the Afterschool Task Force, and are making slow steady progress. The Task Force, which includes state agencies, education groups, and third space program representatives, is charged with writing a report by April 2021 on how to ensure universal afterschool access in Vermont.

Youth Council Bill

The Youth Council Bill was recently introduced as H.293 with 24 cosponsors, in addition to Rep. Diane Lanpher and Rep. Mike Mrowicki as co-lead sponsors. You can read the bill [here](#). Una, a leading member of the summer youth advisory group, testified on the bill last week in the House Government Operations Committee. You can watch the video of the testimony [here](#). From here, we wait to see if the bill gets passed out of the committee and then will be referred to a different committee based on if it includes an appropriation or not.

Afterschool in Senate Appropriations

Sen. Brian Campion, chair of the Senate Education Committee, testified in Senate Appropriations on the Senate Education's proposals for spending \$12M in coronavirus relief federal funds. He included summer learning programs, and said that they need money now so they can gear up for summer. These federal relief funds are being fast-tracked for allocation so we should see movement on this in March after the legislature returns from their break over town meeting week.

Afterschool Week of Action

We opted out of our annual Afterschool & Summer Learning Day in-person event and instead held a virtual advocacy forum to share about recent policy developments and build our advocate base, as well as recruited advocates to testify at the public budget hearings. A few afterschool programs also had virtual meetings with their legislators and youth.

Recent Press

Representing Vermont Afterschool, Holly joined Governor Scott at his weekly press conference last week to talk about the importance of summer and the mental health of youth. It was a great chance to reference the new VYP data around mental health and highlight the growing need for young people to feel connected and engaged during the out-of-school time hours. Video of the press conference can be seen [here](#) and also in this Burlington Free Press clip [here](https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/app.newsmemory.com/?publink=1a7161cbd): [burlingtonfreepress-vt-app.newsmemory.com/?publink=1a7161cbd](https://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/app.newsmemory.com/?publink=1a7161cbd)



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Our Board of Directors

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3/25: Dr. Ainissa Ramirez STEM Keynote
4/1: Linking Engineering to Life Showcase
5/5: Dr. Dena Simmons SEL Keynote
5/25: Sarah McKinnon Summer Keynote
6/11: Youth Mental Health First Aid

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