



## **ANNUAL REPORT: JULY 1, 2009 - JUNE 30, 2010**

**Vision:** The vision of the American Association of Caregiving Youth (AACY) is to be the national resource for the support of children who are caring for family members who are ill, injured, elderly or disabled so that they achieve success in school and in life and experience a bit of childhood.

**Mission:** The AACY mission is threefold: 1) to increase awareness about youth caregiving and foster the replication of the Caregiving Youth Project (CYP) model within Florida and the U.S.; 2) to provide direct and indirect support services for youth caregivers and their families; and, 3) to establish the Institute on Youth Caregiving as AACY's research, education and publication arm.

### **Background of the American Association of Caregiving Youth**

The American Association of Caregiving Youth began in 1998 as Boca Raton Interfaith in Action with Faith in Action program funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. A subsequent grant from the Quantum Foundation formed the cornerstone of its family caregiving support services. In 2005, the organization's name was changed to Volunteers for the Homebound and Family Caregivers (VHFC). A skeleton staff and volunteers contributed more than a decade of hard work, perseverance and dedication to meet the growing needs of an older and more diverse population. Research findings led to the establishment of the U.S. pioneering model project for youth caregiving. By the end of 2009, VHFC transitioned its Boca Respite services to Aloesea, a non-hospice program of Hospice by the Sea, and began its focus solely on youth caregiving. Effective January 1, 2010, the organization officially changed and adopted its new name, the American Association of Caregiving Youth (AACY).

### **Major Accomplishments and Their Impact**

In 2006 the Caregiving Youth Project (CYP) received funding and began the first U.S. program to identify and support this otherwise significant and hidden population of providers of long term care services. By the Fall of 2009, CYP had expanded to seven middle schools located in Boca Raton, Boynton Beach, Lantana,

Green Acres, Wellington and West Palm Beach. The CYP directly serves 300 youth caregivers and their families. Additionally, more than 200 other children, who have been identified as caregivers within the schools, are in various phases of program processing.

During the 2009-10 academic year, the CYP also reached 4,719 middle school students through 295 in-school classes and lunch and learn sessions. Although the eligibility process is conducted on one day, family health situations are dynamic so the CYP team presence and reach to them is important throughout the school year. Students see the CYP to be of value especially in light of the effects of our economy and their family's diminished financial resources. Thus, there has been an increase in self referrals, as well as encouragement from their peers to join CYP. In addition to the CYP team reaching out to youth eligible to participate in its services, CYP receives referrals from school staff.

Highlights of CYP/AACY accomplishments for the 2009-2010 academic year include that the team:

- Continued to conduct in-home assessments by a social worker resulting in more than 250 referrals for appropriate community, medical access and medical service assistance along with assisting various families with home safety equipment, getting special donations of supplies and labor;
- Received 193 completed end of the year feedback forms from students with an excess of 1500 responses regarding the CYP impact on their lives, their family's life, school, in their role as caregivers, what else they want to learn and why they think it is important for other schools to have a CYP;
- Sponsored various activities including Camp Treasures, Reunion Camp, fishing trip, participation in the Diabetes Walk and a family holiday party. Another event, "Sugar Coated" included classes and fun for kids who care for family members with heart disease or diabetes. A "Wellness and Fun" day at the YMCA gave program participants respite, education, exercise and fun;
- Supported student academic success by obtaining and distributing school supplies, 24 refurbished and 75 new laptop computers, internet access, tutoring and/or mentoring assistance;
- Continued well-received monthly e-newsletter, "Treasure Talk", by distributing 6,792 copies to a growing number of program participants and interested others. In addition, 1100 copies of the printed VHFC newsletter (through 12/09), which contains a significant amount of information about the CYP, were printed and distributed with another 600 copies sent by email.

Each of these communication pieces are archived on our websites at [www.aacy.org](http://www.aacy.org), [www.cyppb.org](http://www.cyppb.org) and [www.caregivingyouthvolunteers.org](http://www.caregivingyouthvolunteers.org);

- Obtained multi-media exposure regarding CYP youth and their challenges in local and national newspapers, magazines and journals, as well as television, radio and internet coverage;
- Produced, through the staff of The Education Network, a video highlighting our youth who received Awards of Courage for their participation with the media;
- Participated in research projects with a doctoral student from Brandeis, as well as a masters student from Stanford University who is producing a video;
- Established ongoing relationships and advocacy with various high school guidance staff and student leadership groups to further support CYP students who are enrolled at their schools and began monthly groups at four of the 17 high schools in which there are a cluster of CYP students.

### **Works in Progress**

There are several activities which remain works in progress. This includes the certification process through NonProfits First with whom AACY is actively working. The trailer of the yet to be filmed documentary "Grown Up Kids" may be viewed on the AACY website; however, the complete film remains on hold pending funding. The challenges of reaching students in school have accelerated this past year due to the unrest within the school district administration. This is compounded because each school has different rules regarding when CYP staff are permitted to interface with their students. Often students who are very much in need of our services are ones that are likely to have academic struggles; yet they are the ones without an elective period during which we can connect with them. As we work towards solutions instead of band-aids this is one hurdle to further address.

### **Financial Status**

The annual audit was conducted and was deficiency free. The AACY expenses exceeded revenues by \$27,217; however, due to a medical emergency there was a delay in receipt of a \$25,000 expected grant from the Schmidt Family Foundation which has extended their support for the CYP on an ongoing basis. Thankfully, AACY received \$50,000, the national Purpose Prize award, received by the AACY President in recognition of her work with caregiving youth. Additionally, AACY received an increase in funding in support of the CYP work from Jarden Consumer Solutions Community Fund, as well as an increase from the BOMAR

Foundation. Soroptimist International of Boca Raton/Deerfield Beach again supported our work to provide for tutoring.

Hands on Tzedekah, which has recognized the value and need to develop a transitional bereavement program, awarded a special grant to benefit the increasing numbers of children who experience the death of their family member during their caregiving years. The longer our program exists, the more deaths our youth experience. Recently, one girl came home from school to find her mom dead. We knew that death would happen and have partnerships with various support organizations to assist their grieving process. However, it is with our staff that the youth have a relationship and trust. Thus, prior to referral to another agency, we want and need to be there for them in the immediate time after death; it is different when a child experiences a loss and has been a caregiver than when that loss occurs and they have not been in that role.

### **Additional Comments**

As we reach to new partners, we remain challenged by their lack of knowledge about youth caregiving. Similar to many other non-profits, our traditional local fundraising avenues have also diminished. Through Ashoka, we are seeking new opportunities through their Ashoka Support Network. Also with Dr. Siskowski's upcoming Distinguished Alumna Award, there will be more exposure to the Johns Hopkins University network. Pro bono legal services through both the Purpose Prize and Ashoka, have been valuable in reviewing our corporate documents and personnel policies. The Caregiving Youth Project now has its own web site ([www.cyppb.org](http://www.cyppb.org)) and more of a presence on Facebook, which the kids are using to connect with each other. Additionally we are meeting with various elected officials to promote their understanding of our work and assist us in seeking public funding. Finally, we are initiating new partnerships, such as with Communities in Schools, Palm Beach County Mental Health Association and Knights of Pythagoras to mutually augment our work and to seek collaborative funding.

The Board of Directors has spent time together in two retreats and is working synergistically on its expansion. By the end of June, AACY welcomed a new Board member from Arkansas who was a youth caregiver, is an adult long distance caregiver and an executive in the corporate offices of Walmart. Her experience and expertise, gleaned from many corporate roles, are terrific additions to the talents of the AACY Board of Directors.