



SAFE COMMUNITY COALITION

Working Together for Our Youth Since 1995

2020-2021 Annual Report

The Safe Community Coalition (SCC) pivoted to virtual programming this year due to Covid restrictions on in-person gatherings. The goal of programming this year was to offer coping strategies for parents and students and to maintain hallmark SCC programs in an online format.

The SCC's Mental Health Committee, composed of local mental health professionals, created videos on various coping strategies to help families through the pandemic isolation and stress. A total of 14 videos—in a program entitled **Managing the Moments**—were created over several days of taping at the McLean Community Center with a local videographer. Feedback from parents, school counselors, and the local community has been very favorable. Video topics included the following list and can be viewed on our SCC website: <http://mcleanscc.org/portfolio-items/mtm-2/>.

- Deescalating Conflict
- Effective Communication
- How to Talk to Your Parents
- Brain Breaks During Distance Learning
- Self-Care and Calming Techniques
- How Are You?
- Coping With the Holidays
- Creating Coping Capacity
- Connecting Through Play
- Anxiety in School
- Your Daily Prescription to Cope with Covid
- Launching Your Kid to College
- Building Resilience
- Supporting Your Teen through Covid-19

During the winter months of 2020 when the pandemic caused tremendous isolation, the SCC worked to develop a list of 50 safe and socially-distanced ideas for fun during quarantine. The list was well received by parents and supporters in the community.

The SCC's popular signature program, **Sixth Grade Ethics Day**, also became a virtual program. Sixth grade counselors at local elementary schools were consulted and they asked for a 20-30 minute video that they could share with their 6th graders in small group sessions. Dr. Melissa Sporn, long-time leader of Sixth Grade Ethics Day, filmed a portion of the popular program that focuses on how to make an ethical decision using a "Could, Should, Would" method. Area high school students, who are also members of the SCC's Youth Advisory Council, were filmed reading various scenario questions that counselors could use as conversation starters with students. These scenario questions focus on real-life situations and were created by area students.

Our **Youth Advisory Council (YAC)** is a group of area high school students who are trained to meet in area middle schools with approximately 1,200 eighth graders and help them prepare for the challenges of high school. This year, our 80 YAC students spent time in several training sessions learning how to answer questions, provide support, and encourage balance in traversing the high school years in what we call **Middle School Forum**. Due to Covid-19, Middle School Forum was not held at Cooper or Longfellow Middle Schools in person, but YAC members and adult MSF volunteers were able to create a virtual program for the middle school counselors to use with their students using videos and the online Padlet program to answer questions submitted by middle school students. The online program is available for viewing on our SCC website: <http://mcleanscc.org/portfolio-items/msf/>.

SCC's **annual spring parenting event**, which usually features a community talk with a nationally-known speaker, became a two-part webinar featuring the SCC's guest from the 2019-2020 school year, Ana Homayoun, whom we had to cancel due to Covid restrictions. Ana spoke in the fall of 2020 and the spring of 2021 on ways to navigate the online and hybrid school year. More than 300 families tuned into both webinars with feedback being strong for such a program that offered concrete suggestions on how to cope with the unprecedented school year.

The SCC works each year to build relationships in the larger community and this year the board worked to build its **School Liaison** program by organizing four online meetings between area PTA leaders and the FCPS School Board Representative for the Dranesville area, Elaine Tholen. These four meetings proved to be a valuable resource for PTA leaders to share ideas on ways to engage with parents and their school communities. The SCC hopes to continue these virtual meetings next year as a way to facilitate communication among schools.

The SCC continued to build coalitions in the faith community of McLean through its **Faith Liaisons** program. A fall program featuring members of the local faith community, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Dranesville representative John Foust, a local police officer, and a local mental health professional was warmly received and focused on mental health issues during the pandemic and how faith leaders can address those issues in their congregations.

In 2020 the Safe Community Coalition sponsored a summer pilot of a program designed by and for students: **WeCoach:Student2Student (S2S)**. The vision for WeCoach:S2S was to create opportunities for young adults to connect, build relationships, develop leadership skills, and both give and receive support from other young adults during COVID-19. WeCoach used a peer circle coaching model to address and mitigate teens' every day problems. Several participating students surveyed at the end of the pilot reported feeling less isolated and anxious. While the pilot has officially ended, several small groups from the original WeCoach: S2S groups continue to meet. Efforts to expand the program continue with SCC serving as the online home of WeCoach: S2S.

In a typical year, the SCC focuses on youth substance abuse and underage drinking by supporting **Project Sticker Shock** with the McLean police department. The SCC has also worked to make sure that students received messages about being safe during prom and graduation season by asking local florists to insert special **Prom Notes** into corsages and boutonniere boxes. Because of the pandemic, the SCC was not able to support either program. But targeting underage drinking will once again become an SCC program next year as traditional school dances return.

The SCC is proud to support young professionals as they begin their careers. This year, the SCC worked with a young designer—Shanna Gerlach (<https://www.shannagerlach.com/>)—to create an updated SCC logo and a logo for the Managing the Moments program. Ivan Bautista filmed and edited our Managing the Moments video series, and Payge Kerman with Made by Wink (<https://www.madebywink.com/>) created the updated SCC website in 2018. By supporting young professionals, the SCC is able to help build careers and keep costs low.

Without your help, none of these programs would be possible! We are grateful for the amazing support of our community partners—such as the McLean Rotary Club, the New Dominion Women's Club, the McLean Community Foundation—and various private donors, foundations, and sponsors in assisting to fund, market, and sustain our programs. Thank you all for your continued support and desire to work together for our youth.

2019-2020 SCC Officers:

Elizabeth Hale, President

Laura Przepyszny, Treasurer

Laurie Plishker,
Secretary/Communications

SCC Board Members:

Brad Kuebler

Julie Hohl

Emily Yosmanovich

Gina Manning

Amber Syed

Chrissie Lavin

Laura Skeen

Margaret Kaplan