



SAFE COMMUNITY COALITION

Working Together for Our Youth Since 1995

2021-2022 Annual Report

The Safe Community Coalition (SCC) saw a return to some in-person events and the continuation of other events in a virtual format. The board's goal was generally to collaborate with community groups and rebuild name recognition while maintaining and even expanding programming.

The SCC kicked off the year of programming in September with a virtual discussion on “Back to School Anxiety” with four local mental health professionals: Robyne Davis, Dr. Melissa Sporn, Jennifer Weaver, and Mimi Weisberg. The talk was designed to help ease the anxiety that some students were feeling about the return to in person learning in schools. This video can be found on the Resources section of the SCC website: <http://mcleanscc.org>.

Thanks to our collaboration with Fairfax County School Board Dranesville Representative Elaine Tholen, the SCC continued to meet quarterly with area PTA/PTO leaders to share ideas and promote mental health wellness in schools. These meetings have become vital ways to connect local school parent groups and foster collaboration.

With our founding mission being one of combating teen substance abuse, the SCC strives to include alcohol and substance abuse awareness as part of its year of programming. During homecoming season in the fall, the SCC was able to print and hang banners at Langley and McLean High Schools that said, “Be Safe This Homecoming Season.” Because of the SCC's inclusion in the Fairfax Prevention Coalition, we promoted the DEA's Drug Take Back Days in the fall and spring.

The SCC's Mental Health Committee, composed of local mental health professionals, guides the SCC on programming and mission and also raises money through continued education programs for local mental health professionals. This fall saw a successful virtual event featuring local trauma and ethics expert Lisa Ferentz.

November saw a fun collaboration with the McLean Community Center (MCC) as part of the SCC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts. The MCC hosted the Grammy-nominated Alphabet Rockers for a week as their artists-in-residence and the SCC was able to host a special inspiring night of songwriting and dance for local elementary students and their families as part of a general message of standing up to hate and acceptance of diversity.

The SCC began meeting with the school social workers and school psychologists at Langley and McLean High Schools quarterly as a way to collaborate and discuss programming ideas and to generally "take the pulse" on general trends. It was out of this meeting that the idea was born to host another webinar for parents. This February webinar was called "Tips for Talking to Your Kids" and featured Dr. Melissa Sporn, Dr. Heather Tedesco, and Mimi Weisberg from the SCC's Mental Health Committee. This video can be found in the Resources section of the SCC website: <http://mcleanscc.org/>.

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 more than 100 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 the Middle School Forum (MSF). Both Longfellow and Cooper Middle Schools were able to host our YAC students for in person programs in March. A Google survey showed that only 20% of the 8th graders at Cooper and Longfellow said they felt confident about starting high school before MSF. After MSF, 94% said they were confident about starting high school.

The SCC's popular signature program, 6th Grade Ethics Day, has typically been a half-day field trip program, but space and logistics that met pandemic requirements were still not in place at the time of planning. Local elementary counselors met with SCC organizers, and a hybrid program was created with about half the schools choosing to host a shortened 6th Grade Ethics Day program at their schools and about half choosing to show a video to 6th graders on how to make ethical decisions. Dr. Melissa Sporn, long-time leader of 6th 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. 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. Dr. Sporn led the in-person programs as well with parents

serving as small group leaders.

In April 2022, the SCC and The Potomac School co-hosted a presentation by Julie Lythcott-Haims entitled “Throw Out the Checklisted Childhood: Tips and Strategies for Raising Successful Kids.” More than 600 registered for the presentation (held at The Potomac School after a power outage forced a relocation from Temple Rodef Shalom) to either attend in person or watch online. Approximately 50 community leaders attended a daytime discussion and Q&A with Julie at the McLean Community Center. See the SCC website at <http://mcleanscc.org/> for Julie’s 12-Step Parent Pledge and to watch the video of Julie’s talk.

The end of this year also saw a smooth transition to new SCC leadership with the election of Courtney Brown as president, Lavina Colaco as treasurer, and Michelle Francis as secretary/communications. We look forward to continuing our 27-year commitment to the youth and families of McLean! Please reach out to us anytime at info@mcleanscc.org and visit our website at <http://mcleanscc.org/>. You can also follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @mcleanscc.

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, the JV Shiro Zavela Foundation, the Arthur and Madeline Millman Foundation, and various private donors— in assisting to fund, market, and sustain our programs. Thank you all for your continued support and desire to work together for our youth.

2020-2021 SCC Officers:

Elizabeth Hale, President
Laura Przepyszny, Treasurer
Laurie Plishker,
Secretary/Communications

SCC Board Members:

Brad Kuebler
Julie Hohl
Chrissie Lavin
Laura Skeen
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Lavina Colaco
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Committee

