

Spreading Wellness Around Town (SWAT) Youth Council Raises Mental Health Awareness

Monroe County's [SWAT Youth Council](#) brings together youth who have had personal experience in one or more of the child-serving systems – Mental Health, Juvenile Justice, Child Welfare, Public Schools and who are interested in helping to shape efforts to improve systems and services. The council gets together each month to learn from each other, from community leaders and from other professionals about topics and issues that youth care about. Most importantly, SWAT is a way for youth voice to be included in these systems so youth can influence change and be heard. The change that SWAT youth are seeking is to improve the services and supports these systems and community agencies provide youth and their families.



SWAT was very active during Mental Health Awareness month:

- Members of the leadership team went to the [Families Together NYS](#) Conference in Albany where they presented on strengths-based assessments for self-advocacy.
- Through a partnership with the LIFE House program at [Villa of Hope](#), SWAT Youth Council helped with a community forum on addiction and recovery. Youth presented artwork that demonstrated their experiences and community members were able to connect with local resources.
- As part of a grant received by the [Gandhi Institute](#), SWAT has begun to give Youth Recognition Awards to adults in Monroe County who have brought awareness to youth issues, helped youth in service systems, promoted youth voice and used best practices in engaging youth.
- On May 9th, the Monroe County System of Care and SWAT Youth Council held the 12th annual Got Dreams Celebration. The celebration is held each year to bring awareness to and reduce stigma around children's mental health. The event had several speakers and performers from across Monroe County sharing their stories of triumph over addiction and mental health and show casing the amazing talent of young people in our community. SWAT youth shared their experiences of the youth serving systems and gave hope to families and youth in the community. On behalf of Monroe County Executive Cheryl Dinolfo, Dave Putney, Director of the Monroe County Office of Mental Health, presented a proclamation declaring Wednesday May 9, 2018 to be Children's Mental Health Awareness Day in Monroe County. This year's event drew an audience of around 200 people. Check out photos from the event below.



