

South End Teen Center Quarterly Newsletter

Issue: July – September, 2020



SETC Coordinator's Corner

And just like that, it's fall! Summer was lovely, albeit challenging because of COVID-19, but the SETC was able to remain positive despite the issues presented by the pandemic. Using our own hybrid system combining in-person Teen Time and virtual options to connect, the SETC offered a versatile menu of ways for often lonely teens to connect with us on a daily basis.

Our meal program was very busy, with hundreds being handed out daily to help support neighborhood children. Despite the cancellation of our typically well-attended Summer Blast trips, we were able to have a special day at Snow Pond, where we kayaked, swam, and enjoyed a fantastic cookout with our friends and outstanding hosts Christine Durgin, Mike Guarino, and Ben Bowman from Snow Pond Center for the Arts. At the SETC we used our own grill and taught the teens how to make kebabs. We also began a new relationship with Windy Dubay from Connected Credit Union who brings us delicious locally made pizzas for a special day every month! We created paid, entry-level work experiences right here on our front lawn with a special collaboration involving SNAP-Ed and Healthy Northern Kennebec!

Sticking close-to-home and with lower attendance numbers, we were blessed with the opportunity to provide our teens with more undivided attention. Relationships were built, strengthened, and some remarkable breakthroughs were observed. Our teens are truly remarkable and special people and they bring tremendous joy and light to the staff who support them.

Lastly, I have some sad personal news to share. October 9th will be my final day as the SETC Coordinator. I have experienced some extraordinary moments here with our teens and staff which I will forever cherish. The SETC will remain a KVCAP priority for area youth. I want to thank you all for your incredible support, friendship, and collaborative spirit in support of this very special place and its incredible youth within this community. I learned from Vicki Bynum, one of my personal mentors, that working with kids is like planting seeds – just keep watering and nurturing unconditionally, and in time the most amazing things will bloom. I was so fortunate to witness this firsthand!



Pandemic Got You Down? Snow Pond to the Rescue!

Learning that our beloved Summer Blast trips would be cancelled for the summer, we were fortunate enough to be approached by our friends Mike, Christine, and Ben from Snow Pond Center for the Arts, to prepare a special day-trip for our teens. It was just what we needed to feel normal, if only just for one amazing afternoon.



And what a day it was! It was an absolutely perfect Maine summer day – 80 degrees and no wind. Mike guided us up and down Snow Pond in kayaks. One teen, Jordan, was so inspired by his first time in a kayak that he said he can't wait to get one of his own someday. He smiled from ear to ear the entire time he was on the water. This was the first kayaking experience for several other teens as well. Mike is the best!



A lifeguard was also hired so everybody could swim safely. Christine coordinated a delicious barbecue with ridiculously huge burgers, hot dogs, and tasty sides. We made a campfire, played catch, and concluded the day with a nature walk through some trails.

Thanks again to Mike, Christine and Ben for providing what was one of the most memorable days of our year.

Ben's YOW Update

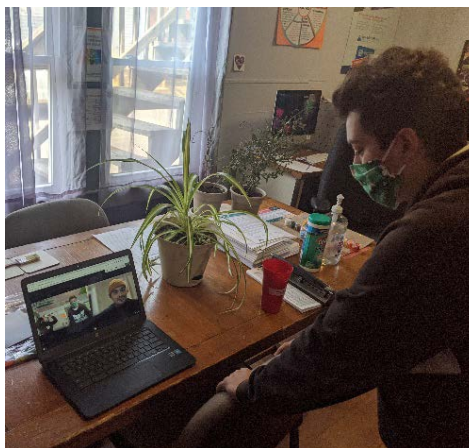
HEY SETC FAM-MUNITY! As you might have already heard, my role here at the South End Teen Center will be shifting slightly. Where I was heading up the Youth Outreach Program for the past two years, I will now be the Youth Advancement Coordinator! This role will allow me to focus most of my efforts on improving the SETC and to continue working directly with our members on academics, employment and anything else they may need assistance with – and you all know I am always around to throw the frisbee, paint something, take a neighborhood walk, and do all sorts of other fun stuff! I can be reached at the same phone number and email address, as well as via Facebook. I look forward to continuing to work with all of you in this new and expanded capacity!

Virtual Tutoring!

The thing about volunteers is that they're always game to try new ideas and solutions to tough problems. At the SETC we typically have community volunteers helping out and mingling with the teens throughout the year.

As with many places during the pandemic, the SETC is taking extra precaution with respect to who can be in the building, which is currently limited to teens and staff. So what should we do about our volunteers?

We decided to create a virtual tutoring opportunity! This mostly features Colby College students, but in this photo you can see volunteer Alex introducing himself to Jordan!



It turns out they have a LOT in common, especially sports and gaming, and they hit things off perfectly. As an engineer, Alex has also helped another teen with a computer science assignment. Thanks for joining the squad, Alex!

Planting more seeds...

In March the SETC was approached by our friend Samuel McClean from the SNAP Ed Program and Healthy Northern Kennebec, to create a special opportunity for our teens, featuring a paid work experience using the comfort of our own space and garden, and led by Sam, his work partner, Samantha, and SETC staff.



During the winter, two of our teens worked together by starting their own snow shoveling work experience within the community, earning their first paychecks. When the gardening opportunity presented itself, these enterprising young men decided to give it a shot. Throughout the summer, Justin and Jordan learned how to plant and maintain the garden (watering, weeding, pruning, harvesting, and installing a trellis). They were guided wonderfully by SETC Youth Specialist Anna Holdener and both Sams. They learned how to communicate daily with each other and staff to ensure the responsibilities were taken care of, yielding what Sam McClean said was the best garden of all the sites he was overseeing in the entire town! It took months for payment to arrive, but they kept the faith in us to ensure they would be paid for their hard work. To their credit, they worked hard for a very long time before the funds arrived. Their respective \$500 checks should be arriving in the mail any day now!

Justin and Jordan are tight friends and have been for many years. I've had the pleasure of watching them grow from junior high pranksters into serious, caring, intelligent, inquisitive, resilient, and remarkable young men. I look forward witnessing them in their caps and gowns soon as high school graduates and into a life of continued friendship and fulfillment.

Garden to Table!

Meet Isaiah! This kid is just delightful. We've had the pleasure of indulging his desire to cook. And let me tell you, this kid's got talent! From our garden we made eggplant parmesan completely from scratch using our homegrown eggplant. Isaiah played a key role with every step (except for slicing and drying the eggplant, done by Evan). We made our own sauce, learned how to season slowly, how to mince fresh herbs, experienced slicing fresh mozzarella and grating parmesan cheeses, and dredged the eggplant in an egg wash, flour and bread crumbs.



He loved it so much he begged us to make kale chips after tasting it for the first time at the SETC this past winter. He picked kale from the garden and this time got adventurous with the recipe. He added fresh dill, and even made his own ranch/dill/pepper dip for them. I'm being completely honest by stating these were by far the best kale chips I've ever tasted, and everybody who tried his amazing new recipe had a reaction of amazement. We've got a chef in training!

“Let’s Build Bridges, Not Walls”

Did you know there is a stunning trail next to the Kennebec River? It goes from the Hathaway Center and ends just after the SETC. Recently I was approached by community member and Rotarian Peter Garrett and volunteer extraordinaire Scott McAdoo, to see if we could involve the teens as part of a renovation project with Kennebec and Messalonskee trails. Of course, the answer was yes! We’re always looking for ways to get involved in the community!

First, we were invited to explore the trail with teens interested in the renovation project, along with the town’s code enforcement officer Daniel Bradstreet, Lindsey May from the Maine Conservation Corps, and Mr. Garrett. We identified areas to improve, with the goal of renovating the South End section by dropping a 40-foot aluminum bridge over the high ground near the South End entrance where creeping water becomes an issue.

While the plan is in the hands of the city at this time, the teens got to work by shoveling out the stairs from years of debris and trash. After shoveling away years of sediment, we discovered there is a grading issue in one section of the stairs which Peter will add to the renovation proposal.

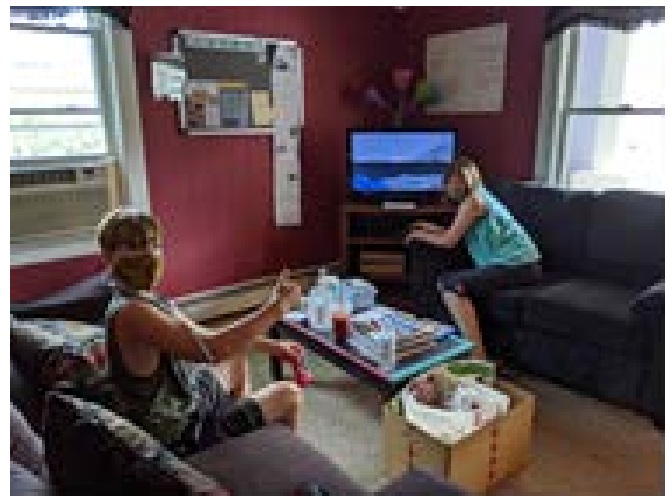
Hopefully this project will be granted permission by the town to complete. In the meantime, we have these three young men to thank for their efforts with this proposal. Nice work, Isreal, Evan and Isaiah, and thank you Peter for the opportunity to get involved!



Mission Moments!



Pizza from our friend Windy Dubay and Connected Credit Union!



Creating a whole new world playing Minecraft!



Our traveling band! Ben Bowman, teens and staff walk throughout the neighborhood playing music for residents!



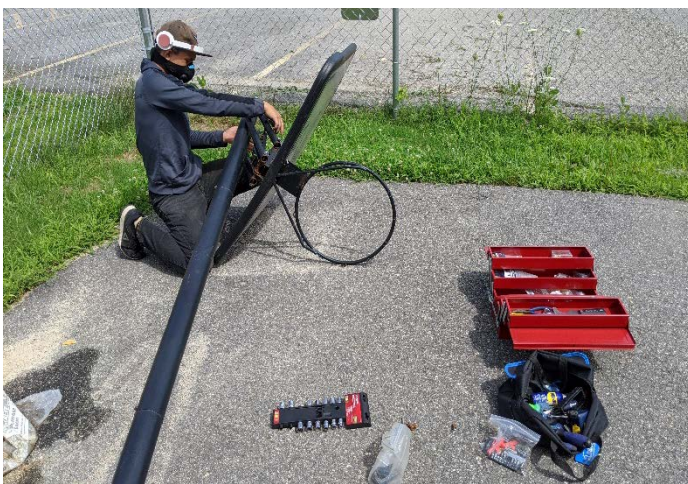
Our incredible music teacher, Ben "The Maker" Bowman, made the front page of the paper! Support his music!



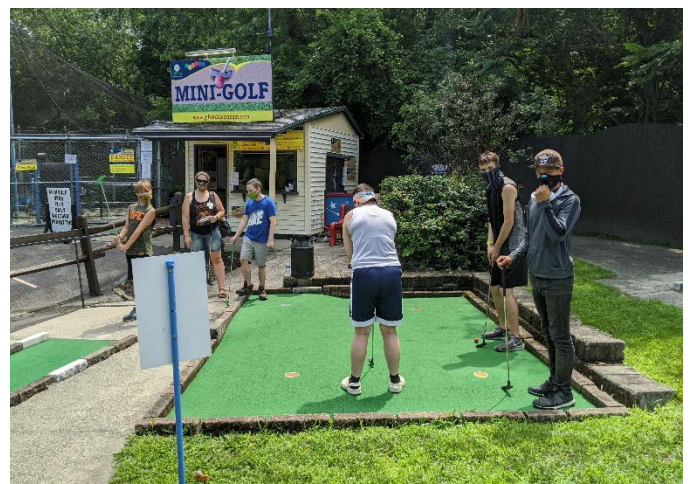
Preparing Bob's Kebabs!



Oh yeah!



Turnin' wrenches!



Mini Golf at Giffords!



Look at the little eggplant parm baby!



Beautiful (and wicked tasty) kale!



"All the flowers of all the tomorrows are the seeds of today." Thank you for everything, my professional partners and youth of Waterville. You'll forever be in my heart! –Ryan

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