

OUR YOUTH MATTER: A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION REPORT



Harrisonburg – Rockingham County

faces4change.com

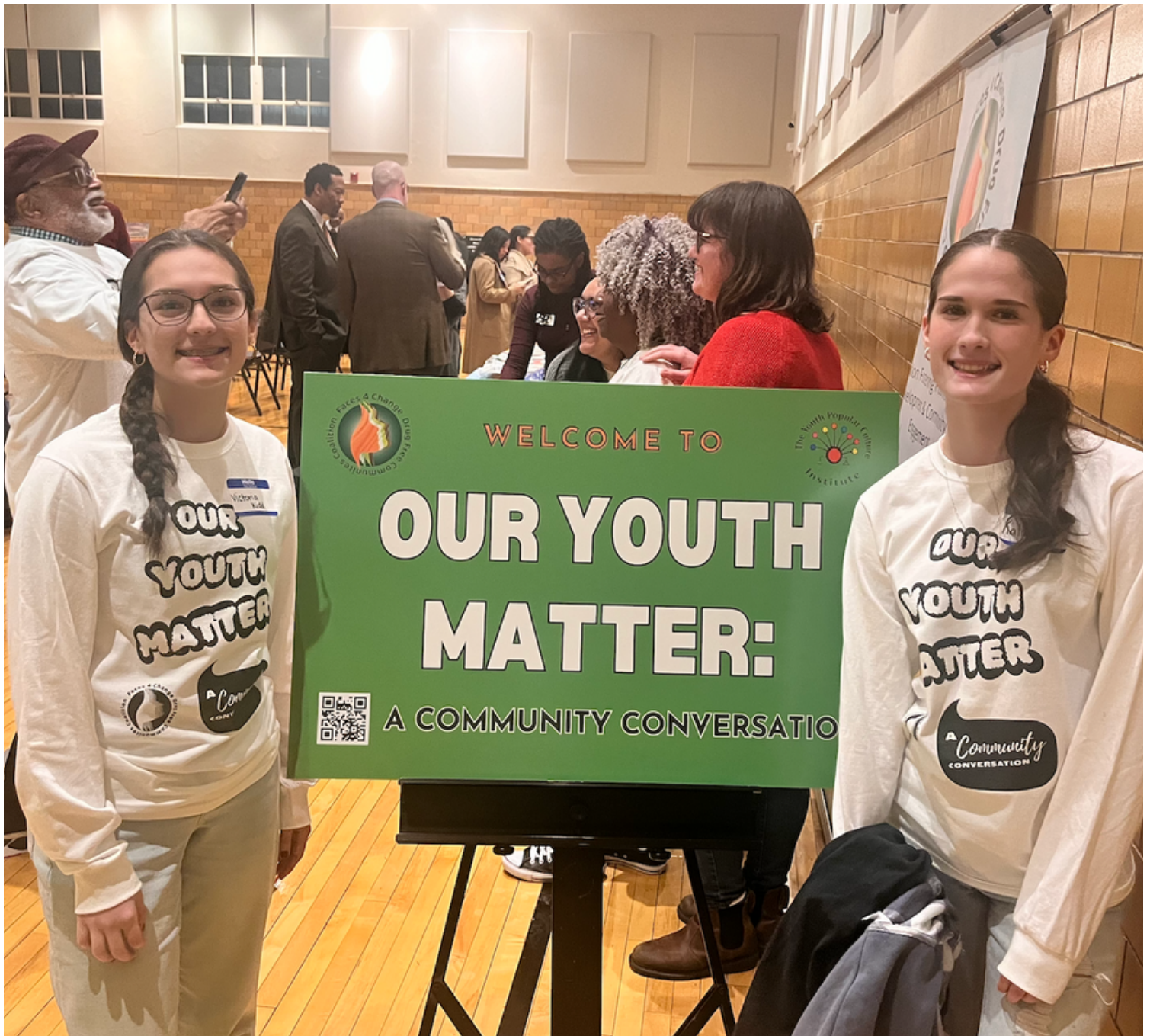


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SUMMARY

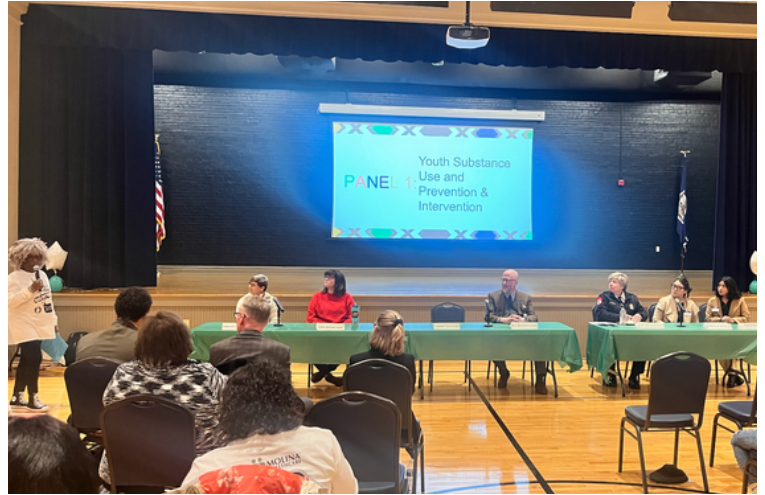
Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Faces 4 Change (F4C) is the signature initiative of the Youth Popular Culture Institute, Inc. (YPCI). We are a drug free community (DFC) and comprehensive addiction and recovery act (CARA) coalition. To further its goal of reducing substance abuse among youth and, over time, reducing substance abuse among adults by addressing the factors in a community that increase the risk of substance abuse and promoting the factors that minimize the risk of substance abuse, F4C hosted Our Youth Matter: A Community Conversation at the Lucy Simms Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia on December 13, 2023.

Opening with remarks from Harrisonburg Mayor Reed, the conversation was emceed by F4C Program Coordinator, Luke Morgan, and featured panelists with expert or personal knowledge about youth substance use and prevention. The panelists engaged with other community leaders, and adult and youth members of the community in an informative and enlightening conversation about the issues facing youth in our city and surrounding Rockingham County. Discussion topics were split between two panels. Panel 1 included a discussion about youth substance use and prevention and intervention. Panel 2 included a discussion about positive youth engagement, solutions for preventing youth substance use, and available resources. Numerous sponsors partnered with F4C for this important event, supporting an impactful night of community engagement, connection-building, and an informative and productive discussion.



PANELISTS

Panelists were stakeholders who were invited to participate based on their subject matter expertise or personal experience with youth substance use and positive youth engagement. They were asked questions by F4C Project Director, Dr. P. Thandi Hicks Harper, who served as the moderator. The Conversation provided a space for key decision makers across multiple sectors to sit down and converse with one another - a feat that occurs infrequently in a community of Harrisonburg's size. Below are lists of the panelists and the organizations they represent.



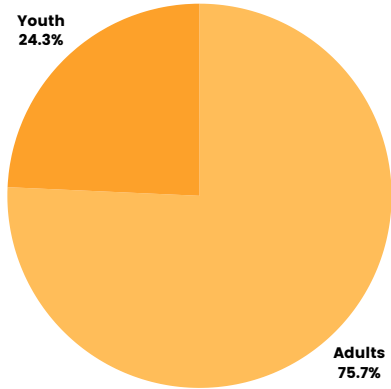
Panel 1: Youth Substance Use and Prevention & Intervention

1. Chief Kelly Warner - Harrisonburg Law Enforcement
2. Allen Stewart - New Season Treatment Center
3. Mo Bowler - Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board
4. Brenda Bechler - JMU Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services
5. Larry Rogers - Mental Health and Youth Development Area-Wide
6. Paola Avila - Harrisonburg High School Student Parent
7. Mairani Antonio Avila - Harrisonburg High School Student

Panel 2: Positive Youth Engagement, Solutions, and Resources

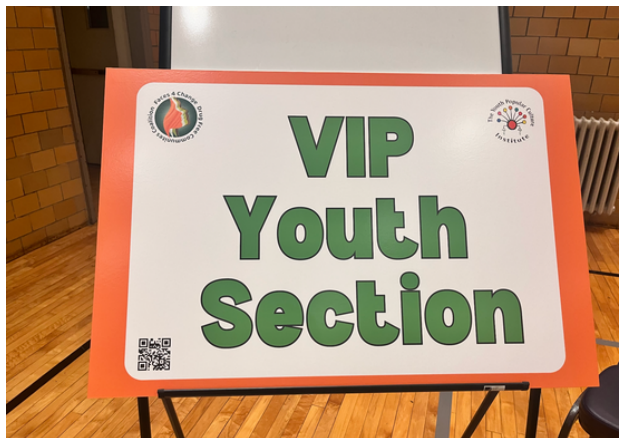
1. Dr. Basil Marin - Harrisonburg City Public Schools
2. Onesimo Baltazar Corona - Harrisonburg Sentara Community Care Center and Mobile Health Unit
3. Superintendent Dr. Michael Richards - Harrisonburg City Public Schools
4. Pastor Chris Johnson - Divine Unity Community Church
5. Sandra Quigg - Boys and Girls Clubs of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County
6. Jacob Nadler - James Madison University Graduate School

ATTENDEES

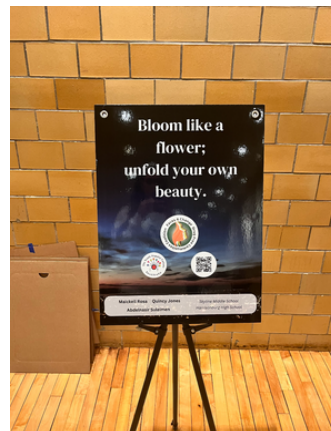


A total of seventy (70) community members attended the event. Nearly a quarter of the attendees were high-school or middle-school-aged youth (17). Among the adult attendees were numerous distinguished community leaders, including nonprofit directors, public school personnel, concerned parents, and subject matter experts.

Youth attendees were encouraged to sit in the reserved VIP Youth Section. All seventeen youth attendees sat in the Youth VIP Section and responded to various questions throughout the evening. Several schools throughout Harrisonburg and Rockingham County were represented among the youth attendees.



Several of the youth attendees also attended F4C's Youth Leadership Summit in June 2023. At the Youth Leadership Summit, one activity the youth participated in was the creation of posters with positive substance use prevention messages. Each of the four youth created posters below was displayed on its own easel behind the Youth VIP Section at the Community Conversation.



MODERATOR QUESTIONS

Throughout each panel, the moderator served to ask panelists questions, engage youth, and keep the conversation moving efficiently. See the moderator's list of questions below:

1. Where have you witnessed youth having opportunities to display their strengths and talents?

2. Share any opportunities where you see youth become the 'resource' to the community?

3. What are some of the activities in school that support positive peer relationships?

4. What are some of the activities in the community that support positive peer relationships?

5. What needs do you see in the school or community for developing a positive youth culture where teen talents are celebrated?

6. What are your thoughts about how the school and community need to collaborate to improve youth culture in our community?

7. If you were to imagine a situation within a school setting where resources and supports are available to provide positive and healthy relationships for students using substances or are in recovery. What would this culture look like? What are the needed resources?

8. If you were to imagine a situation within a community organization where resources and supports are available to provide positive and healthy relationships for students using substances or are in recovery. What would this culture look like? What are the needed resources?

9. What do families need to support their kids with healthy activities and relationships?

10. Is there anything you would like to share regarding your experience in working with adolescents using substances?

11. Is there anything within this conversation that we are missing that would be important to know when it comes to engaging youth using substances?

12. YOUTH: If you had a magic wand, and could wish for anything in your school or community, what would you wish for?

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

Each panel generated a lively discussion about its respective topic. While all of the information shared during the discussions is far too much to be captured in this report, key takeaways are highlighted below.

Key Takeaways

1. More education is needed in the area of youth substance use in Harrisonburg.

2. Youth-specific initiatives should be encouraged to provide positive and healthy alternatives to substance use. Food, music, and sports can help connect students with healthy relationships.

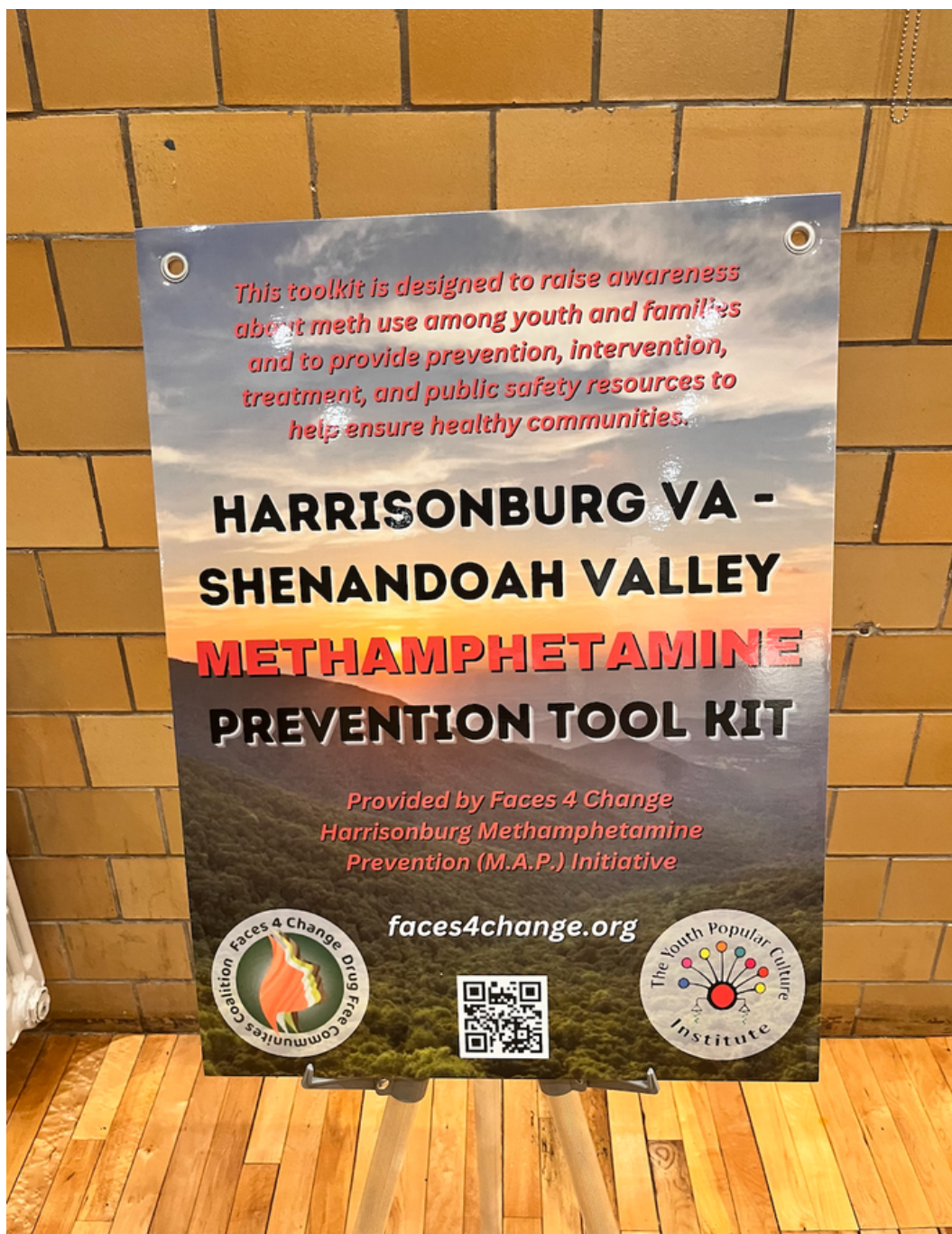
3. Community engagement, such as Community Policing, can be an important tool for reducing substance use and building trust.

4. Prevent or discourage the establishment of vape and tobacco stores in the community to reduce the image of social acceptability of these products.

5. Conduct anti-tobacco campaigns geared towards youth and their families, in different languages, to help build connections and limit use among youth.

METHAMPHETAMINE PREVENTION TOOLKIT ANNOUNCEMENT

After the two panel discussions, F4C announced its soon to be released Harrisonburg, VA - Shenandoah Valley Methamphetamine Prevention Tool Kit. This tool kit is designed to raise awareness about METH use among youth and families and to provide prevention, intervention, treatment, and public safety resources to help ensure healthy communities.



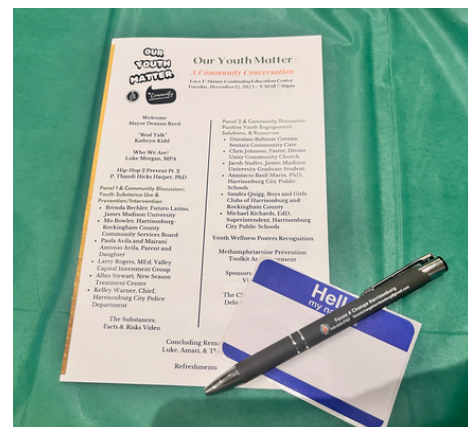
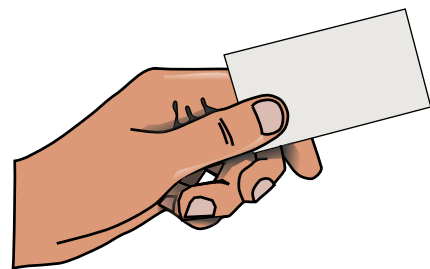
COMING SOON

FOSTERING CONTINUED CONNECTIONS

Beyond providing a space for an informative call-to-action discussion about the substance use challenges facing our community's youth and what resources and solutions can be brought to bear to engage youth positively,

the Community Conversation sought to serve as a forum for community leaders and residents to connect with each other and begin coordinating efforts to help youth live healthy lives.

To facilitate these connections, the F4C team ensured that every adult attendee received a blank, cardstock business card, which the attendees filled out with their name, organization, phone number, and email address. Once the two panels ended, attendees were encouraged to mingle, greet others, and exchange their business card with a new connection they made during the evening.



ATTENDEE SURVEY RESULTS

Attendees were given a survey prior to their exit and asked to provide event feedback. Two different surveys were distributed - one for youth and one for adults. The youth survey included two statements, each of which the youth were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement on a 5-point Likert scale. The adult survey included four statements which were also each measured on a 5-point Likert scale.


Based on the survey results, attendees had an overwhelmingly positive perception of the event. Youth and adults alike strongly agreed or agreed with the statements included in the surveys. Results for each survey are included in Table 1 and Table 2.

Survey of Youth Attendees Results						
Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Average
I feel that the topics discussed today accurately reflect the problems I see in my school involving teens and substance use.	8	4	4	1	0	4.12
After today's conversation, I feel that there are many individuals and organizations in my community who care about substance use prevention.	5	8	5	0	0	4.00

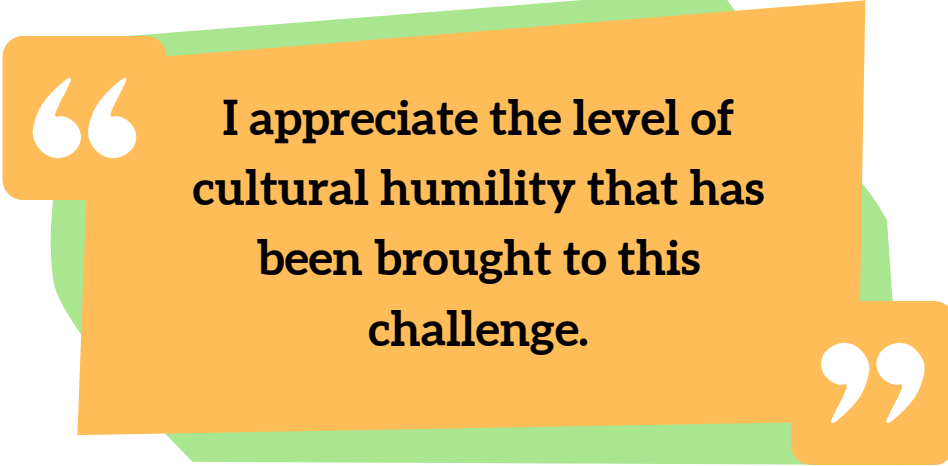

Survey of Adult Attendees Results						
Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Average
I learned something about the challenges our youth face regarding substance use.	8	0	0	0	1	4.56
The conversation accurately reflected and addressed the problems our community faces.	8	0	0	1	0	4.67
I learned something about resources or strategies for positive youth engagement.	7	1	0	0	1	4.44
I connected with someone in the community who works to combat youth substance use or to help ensure positive youth engagement and wellness.	4	3	1	1	0	4.11

The survey for adult attendees also asked respondents, “What did you like most about today's event and would you change anything to make future Community Conversations even better?” Once again, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive with suggestions for how the event could be improved to make it even more impactful.

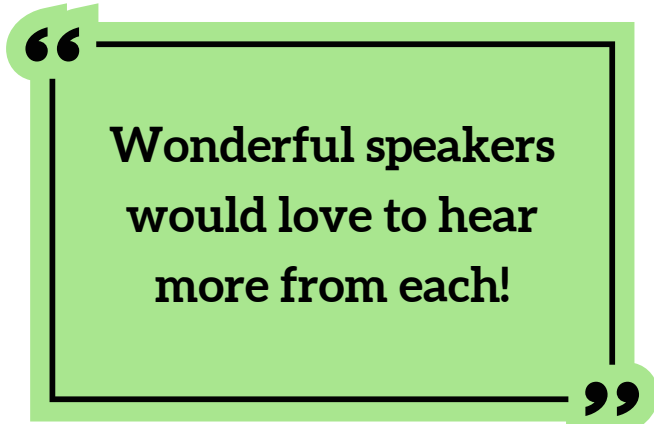

Check out the feedback we heard!




**The moderately-styled
informality of the
conference helped everyone
to engage and connect.**



**I appreciate the level of
cultural humility that has
been brought to this
challenge.**



**Wonderful speakers
would love to hear
more from each!**



APPENDIX: PROGRAM

**OUR
YOUTH
MATTER**



Our Youth Matter

A Community Conversation

Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center
Tuesday, December 12, 2023 – 5:30 til 7:30pm

Welcome
Mayor Deanna Reed

“Real Talk”
Kathryn Kidd

Who We Are?
Luke Morgan, MPA

Hip-Hop 2 Prevent Pt. 2
P. Thandi Hicks Harper, PhD

Panel 1 & Community Discussion: Youth Substance Use & Prevention/Intervention

- Brenda Bechler, Futuro Latino, James Madison University
- Mo Bowler, Harrisonburg-Rockingham County Community Services Board
- Paola Avila and Mairani Antonio Avila, Parent and Daughter
- Larry Rogers, MEd, Valley Capital Investment Group
- Allan Stewart, New Season Treatment Center
- Kelley Warner, Chief, Harrisonburg City Police Department

The Substances:
Facts & Risks Video

Panel 2 & Community Discussion: Positive Youth Engagement, Solutions, & Resources

- Onesimo Baltazar Corona, Sentara Community Care
- Chris Johnson, Pastor, Divine Unity Community Church
- Jacob Nadler, James Madison University Graduate Student
- Anastacio Basil Marin, PhD, Harrisonburg City Public Schools
- Sandra Quigg, Boys and Girls Clubs of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County
- Michael Richards, EdD, Superintendent, Harrisonburg City Public Schools

Youth Wellness Posters Recognition

Methamphetamine Prevention
Toolkit Announcement

Sponsors & Collaborators
Victoria Kidd

The Charge & Networking
Debi Kipps-Vaughn, PhD

Evaluation
Nate Riddle

Concluding Remarks
Luke, Amari, & Thandi

Refreshments

“Our Youth Matter” Planning Team:

Mo Bowler - HRCSB
 Onesimo Baltazar Corona - Sentara Hospital
 Chrissy Donald - YPCI & Faces 4 Change DFC/CARA
 Justin Garrido - Futuro Latino DFC
 P. Thandi Hicks Harper - YPCI & Faces 4 Change DFC/CARA
 Amari Elijah Lewis, JMU & Faces 4 Change DFC/CARA
 Deborah Kipps-Vaughan - JMU
 Luke Morgan - YPCI & Faces 4 Change DFC/CARA
 Victoria Riddle - YPCI & Faces 4 Change DFC/CARA
 Christine Spilman - Harrisonburg High School

“Our Youth Matter” Sponsors & Collaborators:

Boys and Girls Club of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County
 Futuro Latino DFC
 Harrisonburg High School
 Harrisonburg Radio Group
 Harrisonburg-Rockingham County Community Service Board
 Harrisonburg-Rockingham County Parks & Recreation
 James Madison University
 Molina HealthCare
 Open Doors Shelter & Support The City of Harrisonburg
 The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 Youth Popular Culture Institute, Inc.

Youth Popular Culture Institute, Inc - Faces 4 Change Harrisonburg Drug Free Communities & Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act Executive Team:

Jennifer Hicks-Wilson, BS - Coalition Chair/Business Official
 P. Thandi Hicks Harper, PhD - Project Director/Principal Investigator
 Victoria Riddle, BS - Digital Media and Marketing Coordinator
 Luke Morgan, MPA - Executive Assistant/Project Coordinator
 Chrissy Donald, M.S.Ed. - Special Events Coordinator
 Amari Elijah Lewis - Youth Coordinator

Volunteers:

Emily Davis
 Eva Didot
 Sarah Hamad Hussein
 Nate Riddle
 Julia Unger
 Ursula Vogt

SPONSORS & COLLABORATORS

SPECIAL SHOUTOUT TO HARRISONBURG PARKS & RECREATION!



WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF OUR PROGRAMS!

A special Shout Out to our F4C Digital Media and Marketing Coordinator, Victoria Riddle, for the report layout and success of the promotion.