



August 20, 2021

Thank you for completing your 2021 Community Star Individual Nominee Questionnaire!

Overview

Here is a copy of your answers for your records. All nominations will be reviewed and evaluated by members of NOSORH's Community Star Selection Committee. One Community Star will be selected per state. If you are selected as your state's Community Star, I will work with you to schedule an interview so that we can develop your outstanding story to share in our annual book of Community Stars released on Thursday, November 18, 2021.

If you have any questions, please reach out to NRHD Community Star Project Coordinator, Brea Corsaro at bcorsaro@powerofrural.org.

Your Information

Susan A Orban. LICSW

Director, Community Health & Wellness

South County Health

Narragansett, Rhode Island

wccc@washcokids.org

4017882347

Have Questions? Contact:
powerofrural.org | nosorh.org | bcorsaro@powerofrural.org



Organization or Project Website

<https://www.bodiesminds.org%20and%20https://www.washcokids.org>

Please describe in as much detail as possible, your role within your organization and the nature of your work in rural health?

For the last 20 years, I have served as Coordinator of the Washington County Coalition for Children, the region's child advocacy organization. We are a member organization that tracks data regarding the needs of children in our community and fosters collaborative problem solving/innovative solutions to address identified needs. The Washington County Coalition for Children's Mission is: To be a voice that advocates for the health and well-being of children and families in Washington County, serving as catalyst and facilitator in creating a culture where all children can thrive. The Coalition is comprised of more than 70 health and social service organizations, school districts, practitioners and individual members working together to achieve better outcomes for children in Washington County (in southern RI). Children's mental health is a priority for us and we have been creating and implementing upstream children's mental health interventions for over a decade. Current collaborative initiatives include the following:

- Feelin' Groovy Emotional Literacy Project (with area 2nd graders)
- Youth Mental Health First Aid (trainings for youth serving adults)
- Collaborative Office Rounds (behavioral health trainings for health/mental health providers)
- Chalk It Up Against Bullying (chalk art events) and Make Bullying a Myth (literature project)

- Integrated Mental Health Consultation in Pediatric Practices
- The Greatest 8™ (promoting mental wellness in children 0-8 years - <https://thegreatest8.org>)

Because of my long history facilitating collaboration and collective problem-solving in the region, in 2015, I was also charged with leading and developing Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds Washington County (HBHM), the area's new 'Health Equity Zone.' HBHM fosters the development and implementation of community-based, population health efforts to improve the overall health of Washington County. This requires addressing health disparities and socio-economic determinants of health; strengthening multi-sector organizational collaboration; and facilitating robust community engagement. HBHM has three main areas of focus ("action areas"): Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds, and Healthy Communities. HBHM's work seeks to go beyond the scope of any one organization or sector, collaboration is essential to facilitate dialogue, shepherd combined influence, foster joint decision-making, leverage and align resources, spark innovation, track progress, and muster and sustain wide scale community change. Our evolving and ever growing work engages partners across many sectors, including: local town governments, educational providers (from area childcare and preschool providers to the state university), hospitals, community health centers, behavioral health providers, social service organizations, churches, YMCA's, community action agency, grocery stores, regional coalitions, first responders, affordable housing resources, food pantries, recreation programs, businesses, veterans organizations, residents, and more.

The work of the Coalition and HBHM engages 9 towns and covers the 333 square miles of Washington County, including Block Island, located 9 miles

off the county's mainland. As in most rural areas, access to services is challenging, that is why collaboration is so vital. I work as a change agent and cheerleader, forging community partnerships and fostering the collaborative problem-solving process. The work can be messy and exhausting, but the results are truly amazing! As Helen Keller put it best, 'Alone we can do so little, but together we can so so much.'

What inspired you to choose your career?

I was inspired to become a child advocate when I was in elementary school and hospitalized with an appendicitis. My roommate was a 2 year old girl who had been left home alone and most of her body severely burned in a house fire. As my family surrounded me in my distress, she had no visitors. The contrast was striking and my heart ached for her. While I could not do much to help her, I vowed to do what I could to help other children. I became a social worker and for many years worked directly with children and families. The more I worked with individual children and families, the more I realized how change upstream, creating better conditions, opportunities, and systems of care was necessary. This community change work requires collaboration and collective problem-solving. My work shifted in this direction 25 years ago and no other work could be more fulfilling for me. I am privileged to have the opportunity to work with many cross sector partners and volunteers committed to improving the lives of children and families in Washington County.

What is the impact of your work in your community or the rural populations you serve?

The Washington County Coalition for Children and HBHM have brought a number of evidence-based programs and best practices to our county, including 5-2-1-0 (Childhood Obesity Prevention Program), Incredible Years,

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, CIT (Crisis Intervention Team), and Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) that are having a positive measurable impact on our community, including the roll out of Mental Health First Aid on the University of RI campus (1 of the first state universities in the nation to implement MHFA). But, the biggest impact of the work of these two collaboratives is the culture of partnership and collaboration that we have instilled. These collaboratives are taking on big hairy issues (like childhood obesity, mental health awareness and crisis response, suicide prevention, poverty, systemic racism, and health equity), setting bold audacious goals, and tackling them together.

The collaborative project I think is the biggest game changer is The Greatest 8, a collaborative project of the Coalition, University of RI, and Brown University. The Greatest 8™ is a novel parent education initiative designed to instill 8 core skills in young children for a lifetime of mental wellness. Given how busy and technology connected parents are these days, we recently launched a text messaging service (Text Greatest8 to 401-297-3020 to sign up) to provide weekly age-appropriate tips and activities to parents to help them teach the 8 skills to their children. In the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic, the need for mental health promotion in young children could not be greater. This tool can be particularly helpful to isolated parents in rural areas.

Have you accessed, benefited from, or worked directly with your State Office of Rural Health? If yes, please describe.

Absolutely. Our State Office of Rural Health provides on-going TA and support to us. They also connected us with initiatives like our in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine to obtain guidance and lessons learned. In addition, they have provided grants to us over the years to implement various initiatives.

6



Are you or your organization a HRSA, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy Grantee? If yes, which grant program? If yes, which one?

No

Have Questions? Contact:

powerofrural.org | nosorh.org | bcorsaro@powerofrural.org

