



Fall & Winter 2023

School-Based Mentoring Offers a Great Volunteer Opportunity

There are many ways to volunteer in Youth Mentoring to support area youth. A very fun and rewarding option is to do school-based mentoring. School-based mentoring is when



Zach and Chase strike a pose after bonding over a game of basketball.

the mentor goes to the youth's school and volunteers their time mentoring the youth in their building. School-based mentoring can happen during the school day, during lunch/recess, or after school depending on the model the school feels works best at their building. Some schools have high-schoolers being mentors while other schools prefer adults from the community. Mentors spend one hour per week with their youth for the school year. School-based mentors and their youth do things like playing board games, chatting, playing ball, creating crafts, or whatever they choose to do together.



Area school districts needing mentors are: Allamakee, Decorah, Eastern Allamakee, Edgewood-Colesburg, Howard-Winneshiek, Maquoketa Valley, Postville, and West Delaware. For more information on how you can become involved, contact mentoring@helpingservices.org or go to www.helpingservices.org/youth-mentoring. ■

Helping Services Awarded New Federal Grant to Enhance and Expand Youth Mentoring

Helping Services has been awarded a new federal grant to support Youth Mentoring through the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. This new grant is called *Mentoring for Youth Affected by Opioid and Other Substance Misuse*, and the award amount is \$650,000 that will be available to utilize over the next three years (starting 10/1/2023).

This is very exciting news for our team, and it also means this grant will support at least two Mentoring Coordinators over the next three years in efforts to enhance and expand our work into parts of Clayton and southern Fayette counties. ■

Youth Mentoring enjoyed a day together at Prairie Fun Land in Prairie du Chien





Family Educators Have Your Back

Children are not born with little instruction booklets tied around their ankles! If they did, in typical child-like fashion, mine lost theirs right away! Never did I think for one minute 27 years ago when I became a mother, I would be providing information to families on how to best prepare their children for school, by starting at birth. Yet, here I am 20 years later, having worked with hundreds of amazing families across 4 counties and even some second-generation families. You name it and I have seen it, the best moments have been when a parent you used to serve, sees you on the street and says to you, "I couldn't have gotten through breastfeeding without your support" or "you helped me get through the terrible twos". As rewarding as parenting is, it is also a tough job with no days off. Well don't worry, **Family Educators have your back!**

We don't often think of preparing an infant to be ready for Kindergarten. As unrealistic as it might sound, many of you are already doing so, you just don't realize it. Every moment of your child's development is a step towards their independence and ultimately that first day of school. For example, a baby that can fall asleep on their own, or self-soothe, seem to sleep better and better infant sleep is associated with a calmer temperament and adaptability of the child (Source: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/self-soothing-baby>). A calm temperament and adaptability are key to successful interactions starting in toddlers and moves on to Kindergarten.

Often our children will exhibit behaviors that leave us flabbergasted and wondering 'how do I handle this' and 'what does my child want?'. There is so much mis-information out there on our smart phones, and what worked for one parent may not work for another. There are multiple answers for every question, but the best answers are often evidence-based.

The Family Education & Support Program has served families in Howard, Allamakee, Winneshiek and Clayton counties for almost 25 years. Our Family Educators are certified car seat safety technicians, breastfeeding educators, trained in CPR & First Aide, trained to provide developmental assessments to make sure your child is sitting when they should be and other events. We have medical certified scales to weigh your child in between doctor visits or if the doctor wants their weight closely monitored. Using the evidence-based Parents as Teachers curriculum, we can provide you with ideas of activities to do at home to enhance your child's development, helping to ensure they are right on track.

Every single parent has questions and concerns about their child. Our staff have worked with everyone from doctors and professors to very young parents still building their lives. Some have wanted information to help their child exceed their developmental milestones, while others seek help on why their baby won't sleep at night or how to successfully breastfeed once they return to work. Whether you are a first-time parent or juggling several kiddos, there are always questions with multiple answers, we can help you decide what works best for your family.

This free, confidential service is available to all families in the Howard, Allamakee, Winneshiek and Clayton area with children age three and under. There are no hoops to jump through, we work around your schedule. Our primary focus is to ensure every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy, safe and successful. After all, who doesn't want the best for their child? ■

Article written by Barb Fjelstul, Director of Family Education & Support Program. For more information about enrolling in the program, please contact Barb at: bfjelstul@helpingservices.org or 563-387-1720

Focus on Stacking and Building: Using Small Muscles and Discovering Shapes

Our Family Educators partner with libraries throughout Allamakee, Clayton, Howard, and Winneshiek Counties and offer an organized time and place where families can interact with one another, form support networks, share common experiences, and discover new ideas for addressing the day-to-day challenges of parenting. They can also play an important role in building parents' involvement in their children's education. In other words, Group Connections are a great way for families to build their circles of support while having fun at the same time! ■



Pictured here is **Ms. Heather**, one of our Family Educators, leading a Group Connection at the Robey Memorial Library in Waukon, Iowa. During this group the children listened and interacted during Storytime, danced out some wiggles with Zumbini dance music, and concluded with free play opportunities that allowed parents to ask questions and network with each other.

Message from the Director



As we continue to celebrate the 50th anniversary at Helping Services this year, I am reminded of the ebbs and flows of how funding can dramatically impact our programs and services. You will read in this newsletter the exciting news that Helping Services has been awarded a federal grant to enhance and expand our Youth Mentoring program. As a complement to the local support you provide, this grant will allow us to grow the team and provide life-long impactful programming for more youth in need.

Unfortunately, the flip side of this is our funding allocation to provide comprehensive services to victims of domestic abuse continues to decline as a result of funding available at the federal and state level. We are grateful for your continued local support to ensure we can keep supporting staff and clients at needed levels for this important program regardless of decisions made at the state or federal level.

The mission of Helping Services for Youth & Families—helping support healthier and safer families and communities—allows us to be flexible and adaptable. This has served the organization well over the past 50 years, and will continue to lead us into the future. We will continue to leverage our pillars of prevention, advocacy and education to guide our moves.

We will continue to be a driving force for the betterment of families and youth in northeast Iowa, but need your help. Please take a moment to share our mission with someone you know, and consider a gift to support our mission. Thank you on behalf of our incredible team.

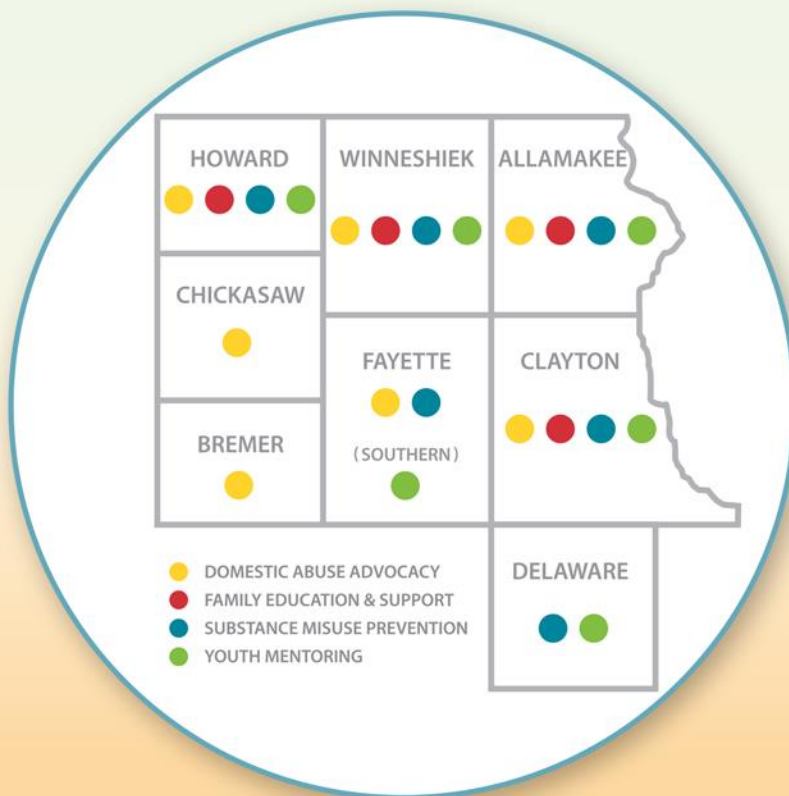
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Board Members at Helping Services can serve up to three consecutive two year terms.



Learn more at helpingservices.org

2022–2023 ANNUAL STATISTICS

Allamakee, Bremer, Chickasaw,
Clayton, Delaware, Fayette,
Howard, & Winneshiek
Counties

FY22 • 7/1/22–6/30/23

Family Education & Support

(Allamakee, Clayton, Howard, and Winneshiek Counties)

- 140+** Families served (including families served at WIC, car seat checks, and prepared childbirth class)
- 180+** Children served
- 313** Visits
- 62** Play groups
- 41** Community Partner Meetings
- 3** Prevent Child Abuse Month Events
- 157** Participants
- 10** Community events participated in
- 325** Staff training hours

Substance Misuse Prevention Program

(Allamakee, Clayton, Delaware, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek Counties)

- 89** Youth served in Youth Mentoring
- 995** Youth participants at substance use prevention presentations
- 85** Youth participants in Curriculum Based Support Groups
- 758** Adult participants at substance use prevention presentation
- 48** Adult participants at problem gambling prevention presentations
- 117** Participants in Your Life Iowa presentations
- 103** Servers who attended TIPS training for alcohol retailers
- 7** Businesses that adopted nicotine free workplace policies
- 310** Parents reached with educational materials
- 150** Quit kits distributed
- 86** Community Events—people reached with coalition info/education
- 36** Provider Training Attendees

Curriculum Based Support Groups Counselor Evaluation:

"Our school and students enjoyed working with Helping Services staff. I enjoyed that the staff allowed the students to understand areas of support that exist. It helps them feel seen and accepted."

Volunteers

- 184** High school students who participated in youth leadership groups
- 191** Community members who participated in community coalitions
- 93** Mentors
- 21** Mentors For a Day
- 34** Youth Mentoring Steering Committee Members
- 6** Volunteers Assisting the 24/7 Resource Line
- 11** Board Members
- 300+** Holiday Lights event Volunteers

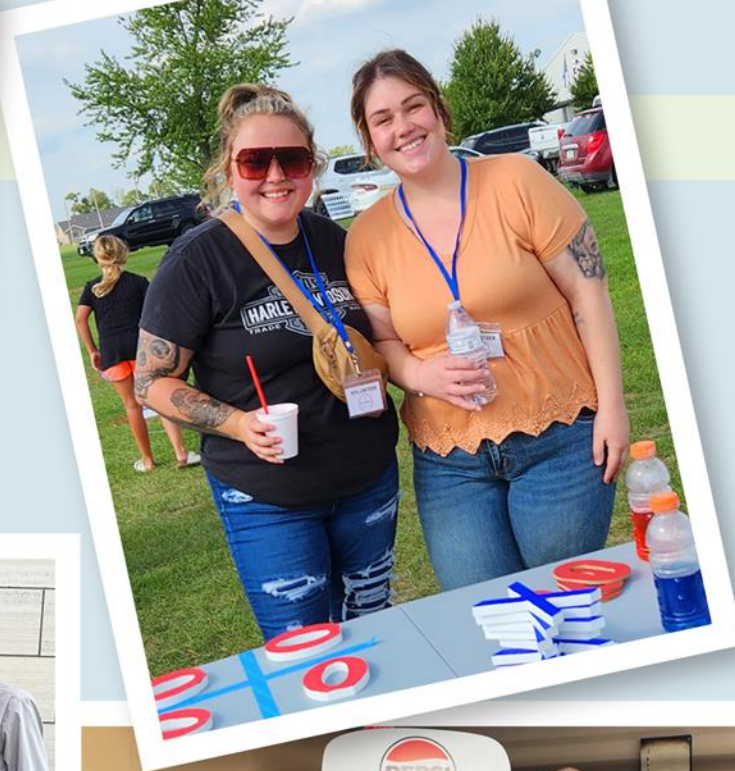
Domestic Abuse Recourse Center

(Allamakee, Bremer, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek Counties)

- 406** College students attended presentations focused on dating violence prevention
- 1,043** Middle School and High School students attended presentations focused on dating violence prevention
- 212** New Victims Served
- 1,783** Total Resource Line calls and chats
- 41** Transportation Trips
- 9** Hotel night stays covered
- 33** Individuals served in the Transitional Housing Program

Mentoring is easy! Visit helpingservices.org to learn more...





Thank you to the Decorah High School students for selecting Helping Services as the recipient of their spring Easter cookie sales! A special thank you to the student group Teens Against Alcohol and Tobacco Use for organizing the cookie sale.



The team enjoyed a lunch in June celebrating *Kathy Schwartzhoff's 30-year anniversary* at Helping Services. Kathy continues to be instrumental in developing and growing Youth Mentoring at Helping Services



Staff have participated in monthly *Walk for Wellness* activities this year to stay connected across our various offices in northeast Iowa. The group in June had a great time at Backbone State Park walking, rock climbing, and stumbling on a deer trail instead of the walking trail!

Top Right: Helping Services' team members Sam Jennerjohn and Kayla Kraemer represented the agency at the annual *Back the Blue National Night Out* event in Delaware County.

Nicotine-Free Parks & Trails Update



Many communities across Northeast Iowa and throughout the state have adopted nicotine-free parks & trails. Below is a list of communities that have supported this initiative.

ALLAMAKEE COUNTY

Postville: 100% nicotine free parks & trails (exclusion of the campground)

DELAWARE COUNTY

Colesburg: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Delaware: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Delhi: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Edgewood: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Hopkinton: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Manchester: Aquatic Center and Beckman Sports Complex are 100% nicotine free.

Other restricted park areas and facilities are listed in their policy.

FAYETTE COUNTY

Clermont: 100% nicotine free parks and trails (exclusion of the campground)

Fayette: 100% nicotine free parks and trails (exclusion of the campground)

Oelwein: 100% nicotine free parks and trails (exclusion of campground and fishing areas)

St. Lucas: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Wadena: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

West Union: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

HOWARD COUNTY

Cresco: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Lime Springs: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Protivin: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Riceville: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

WINNESHIEK COUNTY

Calmar: 100% nicotine free trails

Decorah: 100% nicotine free parks and trails (exclusion of the camping and fishing areas)

Ossian: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Ridgeway: 100% nicotine free parks and trails

Winneshiek County: 100% nicotine free parks & trails (exclusion of the camping and fishing areas)

There are a variety of benefits to nicotine-free parks & trails. Those benefits include a positive impact on the health of the public through limiting opportunities for exposure to secondhand smoke, a positive impact on the environment, and promoting a healthy community by setting a positive example for youth by promoting a healthy tobacco-free lifestyle.

Checklist for Nicotine-Free

Park and Recreation Boards, City Council's, Conservation Boards, and Board of Supervisors can create nicotine free policy.

- Prohibit all types of tobacco, nicotine, and ESD products (i.e. not only cigarettes; includes all tobacco, ESDs, and nicotine products not approved by the FDA for cessation)
- 100% tobacco/nicotine free; applies at all times

No Cost Resources

- Sample policies and assistance with creating a policy unique to your community
- No cost signage for all parks and trails Metal 12"x 12"
- Promotion of the policy change through a press release and social media

For more information about how our team can help, please contact [Ashley Havenstrite](#), Tobacco Prevention Coordinator, at 563-387-1720 or prevention@helpingservices.org.

Workplace Gambling Toolkit

Do you know someone whose gambling is becoming a problem? It's estimated that about 1 in 4 adult Iowans have been negatively impacted by the gambling of others. After all, about 14% of adult Iowans are experiencing problems related to their gambling. For individuals participating in fantasy sports and sports betting, the risk increases to 23% (*Your Life Iowa*, 2023).

The Helping Services Prevention Team is addressing some of these concerns by looking at gambling in the workplace. They have been tasked with reaching out to agencies and local businesses to determine if they have a current workplace gambling policy and then assisting in developing or strengthening that policy. They have a gambling in the workplace toolkit available to anyone interested in learning more about preventing gambling in the workplace, learning more about how gambling can affect individuals and their careers, tips to keep gambling from getting out of control, along with a workplace gambling policy template that can be modified to fit any agency or business.

If your agency or business would be interested in learning more about this toolkit or would like to learn more about gambling in the workplace, please reach out to Helping Services at (563) 387-1720 or prevention@helpingservices.org. Visit yourlifeiowa.org for more information or to complete a gambling screening questionnaire.



Prevention team members Ashley Havenstrite and Jon Vagts participate in the Fayette County Public Health Fair to bring awareness to topics such as tobacco prevention and opioid misuse and risks.



Helping Services hosted a Human Trafficking/Domestic Abuse presentation on July 19th at the Alta Vista Community Center hosted by Alta Vista Public Library. As part of the presentation, the attendees were able to participate in the "In Her Shoes" activity incorporating the stories of real-life abuse survivors. The attendees came with questions and tied into current events and the release of the movie *The Sound of Freedom* about child sex trafficking.

Volunteering with the Resource Center

The Helping Services' Domestic Abuse Resource Center team is continuously seeking volunteers to assist survivors and our advocate team in a variety of ways. Volunteers have the flexibility to create their own schedules and our team remains flexible in order to meet the volunteers' needs. We greatly appreciate our volunteers' time and commitment to the vital work we provide!

The Domestic Abuse Resource Center team covers seven counties that include: Allamakee, Bremer, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek. Volunteers work closely with the Volunteer Coordinator to provide unique volunteer opportunities for individuals such as answering the 24/7 Resource line, community outreach, events, supply drives, creating community content, and more.

If volunteering with the Resource Center interests you, we will assist you by completing the mandatory 20-hour online victim counselor training that is provided by the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV). To take the first step, please call our **24/7 Resource Line at 800-383-2988** to get connected with our Volunteer Coordinator. ■

Two Prevention team members, Jenny Rose and Leah Hemesath, attended the National Prevention Network Conference in Alabama thanks to funding from the Department of Iowa Health and Human Services



Matt and Gideon work on skills to develop eye-hand coordination.

Focus on Group Connections: Building Circles of Support

Group Connections make up one component of our Parents as Teachers curriculum. These groups have intentionally planned, developmentally appropriate activities that allow opportunities to share parenting issues and child development topics with parents and caregivers.

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HELPING SERVICES for Youth & Families

PO Box 372 • Decorah, IA 52101

Update your contact info at info@helpingservices.org



Attendees enjoy the opening night Walk-Through last year at Holiday Lights. *Photos courtesy of Nick Chill Photography*

HOLIDAY *Lights* 2023

Holiday Lights Continues to Shine into Year 19!

Holiday Lights returns for its 19th season with the annual Walk Through Night scheduled for **Wednesday, November 22**. Enjoy the one-time only for the year where visitors can walk through the lights. Complimentary soup and hot chocolate will be available while supplies last. Holiday Lights will be open every night from **November 23 through December 25** for drive through traffic from 5 PM – 9 PM. Watch for special appearances from Santa as well. For up to date information regarding Holiday Lights please visit helpingservices.org/HolidayLights or call our office at **563-387-1720**.

*Unable to attend Holiday Lights?
Consider a gift online by scanning this QR code.*

