



*Watauga Compassionate  
Community Initiative*

# June Newsletter

**PREVENTING TRAUMA.  
BUILDING RESILIENCY.**





# WCCI 2022-2023

## Upcoming Meetings

Until August, WCCI meetings are by Zoom on the second Thursday of each month. Starting in August, 2022, WCCI meetings will be held at Deerfield Church from 8:30-10:30 am.

The Zoom link and password are as follows:

<https://zoom.us/j/92959886225pwd=TkJaUGFMTUY2aG13K2ZQMmdmNjlFUT09>

Meeting ID: 929 5988 6225

Passcode: 262131

June 9, 2022

July 14, 2022

August 11, 2022

September 8, 2022

October 13, 2022

November 10, 2022

December 8, 2022

January 12, 2023

February 9, 2023

March 9, 2023

April 20, 2023

May 11, 2023

June 8, 2023



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# WCCI 2022-2023

## Current Community Needs

### Foster Parents

Our community is always in dire need of foster care parents and mentors. To be a foster parent or to learn more, contact Jessica Winebarger at the Department of Social Services (265-8100).

### WYN Mentors

To be a mentor in Watauga or to learn more, contact Angela McMann or Hannah Margolis at Western Youth Network (264-5174)

## NAMI Community Meetings

*NAMI High Country is looking for leaders of its support groups, education programs, and presentations. If you think you may be interested, contact Mike Tanner, [pres@namihighcountry.org](mailto:pres@namihighcountry.org).*

### *Public Information Meetings*

- *1st Monday (most months), 6:30 PM, on Zoom:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89693958646>.*

### *NAMI Family Support Group*

- *2nd Monday, 7 PM. Contact [pres@namihighcountry.org](mailto:pres@namihighcountry.org) for zoom link.*

### *NAMI Connection Recovery Support Groups, Zoom*

- *2nd & 4th Tuesdays of each month at 6 p.m. For link, contact Caleb Robleto [calebrobleto@gmail.com](mailto:calebrobleto@gmail.com).*



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Elizabeth Kerley-Dunbar

I grew up in Taylorsville, NC, and graduated from Alexander Central High School. I moved to Boone in 2006 to attend Appalachian State University. After several degree changes, I earned a Bachelor of Science in Sociology with a concentration in Family Development. I had wanted to be a teacher from a young age, and parting with that piece of my identity was a challenging transition for me. I discovered that I was fascinated by people and how they interacted. I wanted to find a career that allowed me to work with children and families, but not necessarily in a classroom setting. Thanks to support from my family, friends, and co-workers of 8 years at Boone Drug, I survived what I call my "post-undergrad identity crisis". I later discovered this was also a flare up of an anxiety disorder. I took several years off from school and had many conversations with trusted mentors, like Parent to Parent's Kaaren Hayes, and landed on Social Work for my master's degree. I graduated with a Master of Social Work degree with a concentration in Individuals and Families in 2015 from AppState. I also began going to therapy, which was the best thing I could ever have done for myself. I've had several great jobs since I graduated that have all changed and shaped who I am both as individual and Social

Worker. Currently, I am the School Mental Health Program Coordinator and the Assessment Support and Counseling (ASC) Center therapist at Ashe County High School. I am loving this opportunity to work in adolescent mental health, which has been a primary passion and growing focus within my career. Staying active in WCCI has been one way I keep my passion, focus, and learning alive. I am grateful for all the work that we've been able to accomplish and the plans we have for the future. My life does look different than what that wide-eyed 18 year old thought when she moved to Boone in 2006. I'll be forever grateful that it does, and for the people that helped create this path with me.





# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Kaaren Hayes



Kaaren's advocacy for children with special needs began in her days as an early child educator, when she became increasingly aware of both the challenges children with special needs and their families face and of the strength and resourcefulness of these same children and families. Kaaren has been with the Parent to Parent Family Support Network- High Country program since its inception in 1988, and she became the

program director in 1998. Working with many others through the years who also believe passionately in support for families of children with special needs, Kaaren has seen the program grow from its beginning stages of serving one county to its present capacity of serving seven counties across the High Country.

I am so proud to be a part of WCCI. In our divided world WCCI is working to bring us together and is reaching out in so many ways to help us all be caring, stronger and more resilient. How incredibly lucky we are to live in a community that believes that by working together we can make a difference and puts that conviction into practice on a daily basis.

Kaaren lives in Valle Crucis with Lowell, her artist husband, and is the proud mother of three children and grandmother of five. When she is not working, Kaaren enjoys spending time with her family and treasures their time together in the summer at the beach.





# RESILIENCE SKILL

## Leaves on a Stream

During the leaves on a stream exercise, you will visualize yourself resting near a stream. Whenever thoughts enter your mind, you will imagine placing them atop a leaf, and watching as they float away. Instead of seeing the world from “inside” your thoughts, you will take a step back and view them from afar. By doing so, you will gain perspective on your thoughts and feelings, reducing their power.

Find a quiet place, free of distractions.  
Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.  
Close your eyes or let your gaze soften.  
Begin taking slow, deep breaths.



### Visualize

Use all your senses to imagine you are resting by the side of a stream.

### Meditate

Your objective during this exercise is simply to focus on the stream. When distractions enter your mind, take a moment to notice them without judgment.

### Manage Your Thoughts

After taking a moment to observe a thought or feeling, return your attention to the stream. Place your thought upon a leaf. Place the leaf in the water and watch it float down the stream until it disappears.

### Practice

Continue visualizing the stream, simply observing and releasing any thoughts that enter your mind.