



WATAUGA COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY
INITIATIVE

November Newsletter

What's strong in you?

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WCCI 2020-2021

Upcoming Meetings

Meeting Dates for 2020-2021 year:

Until further notice, WCCI meetings are by Zoom beginning at 8:30 am on the second Thursday of each month. Meeting dates are below. The Zoom link and password are as follows:

<https://zoom.us/j/92959886225pwd=TkJaUGFMTUY2aG13K2ZQMmdmNjlFU>
T09

Meeting ID: 929 5988 6225

Passcode: 262131

WCCI meeting will be held from 8:30-10:30 am.

NO MEETINGS JUNE OR JULY

August 13

Sept 10

Oct 8

Nov 12

Dec 10

Jan 14

Feb 11

March 11

April 15 (April 8 is WCS spring break)

May 13



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WCCI WEDNESDAYS

Upcoming Schedule

WCCI will be hosting monthly conversations by Zoom about trauma and resiliency. These conversations will be with people impacted by ACEs, as well as agency staff and providers. They will be held every Wednesday on Zoom until further notice. They will begin at 12:00 noon.

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/93894662207?pwd=Wjc3eU9SL3JMOXJpQSs5UkxYaUd3UT09>
Meeting ID: 938 9466 2207
Passcode: 440689

| Date | Who is Joining | Topic |
|----------|---|---|
| Nov 4 | Angela McMann and Charlene Grasinger | WYN Mentoring: A Resource to Increase Resiliency |
| Nov. 11. | Susan Weinberg in conversation with Misty | " 'The Bad': One Family's Story of Meth in the Mountains" as featured in FROM THE FRONTLINES OF THE APPALACHIAN ADDICTION CRISIS (McFarland Books, 2020). |
| Nov. 18. | Chad Slagle | Foundations of Child Protective Services |
| Nov 25 | holiday | holiday |
| Dec. 2. | Marisa Cornell (Valerie, Mollie, Ashley, Mackenzie) | Mediation and Restorative Justice - LEAD, Youth programs, and Other Supports |
| Dec. 9. | Emily Harwood and McKenzie Hellman | APPHealthCare: Partnering with Businesses to Become Trauma-Informed |
| Dec. 16 | Todd Hendley | My Story: Impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences and Ways of Creating Resiliency |



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Marisa Cornell

Marisa Cornell is the Executive Director of the Mediation & Restorative Justice Center (MRJC), a Boone-based non-profit organization that serves 10 WNC counties with conflict resolution services and restorative justice oriented programs, such as Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), Drug Treatment Courts, and Sentencing Circles. She holds a B.S. in Psychology from the University of Florida, an M.A. in Counseling (Expressive Arts Therapy) and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership, both from Appalachian State University. Her extensive history of advocacy and community-building was developed over many years of social justice and human rights work. Developing organic, grassroots coalitions (like WCCI) is her favorite part of creating positive change! Marisa first became involved with pre-WCCI conference planning in 2017, and she is now part of the WCCI leadership team as a co-chair of the Events Committee. WCCI's mission and values have influenced Marisa's work at MRJC in many ways, particularly with the profound realization that being trauma-informed is what makes restorative justice truly restorative.



RESILIENCY SKILL

4 - 3 - 2 - 1

What is important is really concentrating on your senses. It doesn't matter if you repeat yourself or if you confuse how many times for each. All that matters is that you are truly seeing, hearing or feeling (touching) what you say you are perceiving. It is best to keep your head and body relatively still while doing this. The purpose is to relax your body and mind and remain focused on the here and now. You will get better and better with practice. Do you and say each as a sentence

Four things you see:

I see _____ I see _____ I see _____ I see _____

Four things you hear:

I hear _____ I hear _____ I hear _____ I hear _____

Four things you feel (that your body is touching right now):

I feel _____ I feel _____ I feel _____ I feel _____

(Repeat) Three things you see:

I see _____ I see _____ I see _____

Three things you hear:

I hear _____ I hear _____ I hear _____

Three things you feel (that your body is touching right now):

I feel _____ I feel _____ I feel _____

(Repeat) Two things you see:

(Repeat) One thing you see:



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

A couple weeks ago, a WCCI intern, Brittney Craven, sat down (virtually) with Jennifer Warren, the Executive Director of Western Youth Network located in Boone, NC. She spoke with us on keeping hope, the importance of universal screening and early intervention, as well as, prevention. Below is the transcript of the conversation:

Brittney: Hello! This is Brittney Craven and I am joined today by Jennifer Warren. Thank you so much for joining me. Would you mind introducing yourself and explaining your various roles in the community?

Jennifer: I'm Jennifer Warren and I'm the executive director of the Western Youth Network and I'm also on the leadership team of the WCCI, which is our trauma and resilience collaborative in Watauga County.

Brittney: Would you share with us a bit about your background in trauma work?

Jennifer: I got a master's degree in counseling and graduated in 2013 from Appalachian State University. Even before that, we at Western Youth Network work with children who are under resourced, who have experienced a lot of adversity, and so I think I have known it from a couple different levels. Then in 2009 somebody kind of mentioned ACEs to me and said "have you heard about this? Here's an article" and I remember being very intrigued by it at the time. Then in 2015, I saw that Asheville, which is a city pretty close to Boone, was going to have a conference in ACEs and resilience. I just thought "this has to happen, this speaks to me, I have to go to this". That was a game changer. In fact, Dr. Anda, who was one of the first ones who did the ACE study, was a speaker at the conference. So I got really well steeped in ACEs and resilience and brought all that information back to Watauga County and from there in a conversation with Denise Presnell, one of our other leaders, our whole trauma and resilience initiative was born.

Brittney: Can you tell us a little bit more about your work with the Western Youth Network and what that entails?

Jennifer: So when I started there in 2002, I was the director of our mentoring program and so we are like a big brother big sister organization except we're not affiliated with that national brand. We match students with caring adult mentors, which of course, in the resilience world we know having a safe stable nurturing caregiver is one of the best things we can possibly do for children to mitigate all that toxic stress response.

Jennifer: I operated that mentoring program for a number of years and then became Executive Director, at which time I started overseeing our board of directors since we are a nonprofit agency, as well as, the other programs at our agency. We also do a trauma-informed after-school program. That's a time for us to keep the kids safe and supervised in the after school time, help them with their homework, and then also introduce some of those other resilient skills like mindfulness, meditation, physical activity and proper nutrition. We also have a community health component to what we do. We know that kids can only be as strong as our environment allows them to be and so this community health initiative really starts to look at the environment within our high country community and say, "okay, you know what's going on here. What are the community conditions that we need to change that could potentially keep ACEs happening that we can stop? What policy changes can we make?" and those kind of like high-level things. I oversee all those programs with the help of the most amazing staff and board. A lot of my role too, is in fundraising and budgeting and just making sure that we have the financial capacity we need to make all of these amazing programs happen for kids

Brittney: I love to hear that you're kind of taking a two generational approach in preventing ACEs rather than a retroactive one so that's wonderful. What is your favorite aspect of trauma work?

Jennifer: I think it's the hope. We've talked a lot about how in WCCI, our collaborative here, how we shouldn't speak of trauma without speaking of resilience. I think that there's such hopefulness in that, particularly when you're working with kids. I believe the earlier we intervene the better and I think science backs that up and so I feel like there's just so much hope in what we do. The hope is in the healing and the possibility of healing but I think the really powerful thing, too, is that for that person you might unlock something. They may have always gone through life thinking something was wrong with them or that they did something wrong. When they start to learn about how their body is having a perfectly normal response to the stress and trauma that they've experienced, all of a sudden, that's like a weight lifted from them and they can breathe again and maybe that's the thing that unlocks the power that allows them to move on. I see that there's so much hope in that and if we can do this cycle-breaking work. We can change generations to come. I feel like I need to spread to others because it's truly a thing that's going to heal us and change everything. If we can really start out by building a resilient population then I think we'd be surprised at how healthy we could be in our society

Brittney: You just touched on educating people that change is possible but what else would you want people to know about trauma or trauma work?

Jennifer: It's important to know just how prominent it is. I think that beared out in the first ACEs study in the early 90s and it's still true today. There is no "us and them" there's no "oh that happens to certain types of people" or certain genders, races or anything like that. It's so pervasive and so beginning to normalize that. Dr Nadine Burke Harris, I think in the epilogue of her book *The Deepest Well*, she talks about how she wants to do a billboard campaign one day called *The Faces of Aces* and have celebrities and people speaking out to normalize ACEs. Something else that I want people to know is that it's us and we're not alone and it's not something we're walking through alone.

Brittney: So switching from more of trauma questions to resilience questions, what does resilience mean to you?

Jennifer: I think it used to mean to me that somebody had this innate ability to bounce back from hard things. What I think of it now is maybe more of a set of skills that we can all learn. We have an amazing program here called *Reconnect for Resilience* and we've all learned lots of strategies in terms of how to actually help our brains and bodies come down from a state of elevation. I would describe it now as just a set of skills that we can all access if we know the information.

Brittney: Is there anything else you want to share with us?

Jennifer: With being at the Western Youth Network I really want people to value early screening like universal screening and early intervention with our children and for anybody who's listening that has the power to take care of families, there's a solution to this problem and there are people out there like the CDC and SAMHSA who have these solutions written down. All we have to do is follow these methods and give people living wages, affordable and accessible child care, great quality therapy, and access to healthy food. Once we bring these supports around, I think we'd be amazed at how much change could happen. With the early screening and intervention and all of those supports for families that I just mentioned, change is possible and that's what I want us to all remember, is that this is not something that we can't solve. As a nation we're pretty good at solving public health crises so this is no different, we just have to jump on it.

Brittney: Yes, so our final question, how can we learn more about the work that you do and the resources that you're connected with?

Jennifer: Yes. Well, westernyouthnetwork.org is the website for my organization and you can also search for WCCI. The WCCI, our collaborative, we're starting Wednesday Conversations and you can see videos of people who are talking about the work that they're doing in our community. Those two websites will be great places to start.

Special thanks to Jennifer Warren for her work in trauma, as well as, her time working with WCCI! Join us again on October 23rd, for our conversation with Candis Walker.

