



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Category: \_\_\_\_\_

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ 

## **2022 VACo Award Entry:**

### ***‘Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece’ Youth-Centric Social Media Campaign***

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Chesterfield County Communications and Media, in partnership with the county’s Mental Health Support Services and Citizen Information and Resources, worked with the Youth Services Board (YCB), a group of high schoolers appointed by the county’s Board of Supervisors, to craft a highly successful mental health social media campaign – “Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece” – targeting teens and parents.

The purpose of the YCB is to advise the Board on issues relating to youth and provide opportunities for community input on youth issues in Chesterfield. After more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, the YCB members noticed many of their classmates were struggling with their mental health and wanted to find a way to gain more awareness around the topic. The goal of the campaign was to engage with more Chesterfield residents and talk about the importance of addressing their mental health.

The campaign achieved much success and was the first of its kind in the region. It had a profound impact on Chesterfield because it put into perspective the pulse of mental health for local children and parents and allowed YCB members to become mental health advocates for their fellow peers and give the county and region a platform to talk about it.

## **THE PROBLEM OR NEED FOR THE PROGRAM**

Chesterfield County is home to nearly 86,000 people under the age of 18 – roughly 23.5 percent of the estimated 364,548 residents who reside in the county, according to the latest U.S. Census estimates.

During the 2020-2021 school year, like thousands of students across the region and nation, Chesterfield's youth had to adjust to what's become the "new norm" during the pandemic through virtual learning, social distancing and overall limited interactions with friends and family.

Sadly, it came at a cost for several Chesterfield youth, as inquiries from parents and students about how to cope with depression and suicide spiked in the county when COVID-19 restrictions were implemented. Parents and school professionals identified concerns related to youth mood, behavior and relationships with peers and adults. Mental health professionals noticed an increase in both number of youth struggling with mental health concerns and the acuity of those concerns. This led to many people seeking information on how to recognize and respond to signs.

Each year, as part of their appointment to the Youth Citizen Board, the students identify a project within the county to work on that promotes youth issues in Chesterfield. For the 2020-2021 school year, the YCB decided to focus on generating awareness around the topic of mental health. The youth noted that while they had participated in lessons in school related to suicide awareness, they had not been exposed to messaging related to coping with or seeking help for mental health concerns that did not reach the level of suicidal thoughts. They also noted that while many people their age were comfortable talking about mental health, their parents were not. The goal of the youth-centric social media mental health awareness campaign was to reach a diverse group of students and parents, with the hope of engaging more Chesterfield residents to talk about the importance of addressing their mental health.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM**

The Chesterfield County Communications and Media and Mental Health Support Services departments worked with the Chesterfield Youth Citizens Board (YCB) throughout the 2020-2021 school year to develop and launch a youth-centric social media mental health campaign –

“Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece” – which ran from April 13 through May 7, 2021.

The campaign focused on several mental health topics effecting Chesterfield middle and high school-aged students, including identifying signs of depression, dealing with stress, self-care, and suicide awareness and prevention. It also provided tips and advice for parents of pre-teens and teenagers to help notice signs of stress and depression in their children.

The YCB members are appointed by the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors each year and include one junior and one senior from each county high school and up to eight at-large youths representing students not enrolled in Chesterfield County Public Schools, such as those attending home, private or governor’s schools. Additionally, there are opportunities for adults to volunteer to work with the youth members of the board.

The YCB term runs from September through May with monthly meetings during that time frame so work to develop this campaign started many months prior with the official launch coming at the end of the appointed term.

During the learning and development phase of the campaign (November-March), members of the Communications and Media and Mental Health Support Services teams attended the YCB’s monthly meetings to educate the youth on mental health first aid, mental health resources and how to create a successful social media campaign.

To help with the creation of the social media campaign, Communications and Media staff devised a detailed action plan for each monthly meeting for members of the YCB on best social media practices. As part of the curriculum, the Communications and Media Department placed a heavy emphasis on educating nearly 30 YCB members on how certain social media platforms reach and engage different audiences. The communications team also highlighted how to

develop engaging messages and graphics, how to measure success and how to handle difficult comments or responses from the public.

Once YCB members completed the curriculum portion, the YCB members worked to develop social media messages and graphics for the campaign. The students then worked with Communications and Media to ensure they matched the appropriate tone and voice to promote over Chesterfield's social media channels.

Branding was another key component to the campaign, where YCB members learned the importance of how a lone brand could create an identity to the campaign and bring it to life. The YCB members were tasked with developing their own brand – “Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece” – for the social media campaign that was transferable to all online posts associated with their messaging for mental health. The brand identity was used on all social media posts as well as a variety of other giveaway items ranging from sweatshirts to keychains to help promote the campaign and gain awareness.

Following months of preparation, the YCB social media campaign – “Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece” launched on April 13 with content running through May 7. The YCB created content was featured on the Chesterfield County Government Facebook and Instagram pages, the Chesterfield County Prevention Services Facebook page (now called Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services) and the Youth Services Instagram page.

In total, eight social media posts with accompanying graphics or videos were created by YCB members and included a wave of helpful and informational posts. Much of the social media messaging over the county's Facebook page was geared toward parental users, while much of the messaging for teens was streamed over the county's Twitter and Instagram accounts.

Additionally, during the campaign timeframe, YCB members served as “ambassadors” of the campaign, sharing resources related to mental health with their peers and community either on their own social media channels, sharing what the county was putting out or handing out printed resource cards and giveaways to promote the campaign.

In addition to all the work the communications team did with the YCB members to help them create their campaign, staff also did its own promotion of the campaign with the main focus being the YCB and their work to develop the mental health campaign. To do this, Communications and Media staff reached out to media outlets to promote the work of the YCB and coordinate interviews between local media and YCB members. The county’s Public Information Officer pitched the YCB’s work to create their campaign to regional media and used tenets of the social media campaign to gain interest from other media outlets that included local parenting blogs and magazines. The communications staff was in constant contact with the members of the YCB about these efforts so it could be used as a learning experience. This gave YCB members an opportunity to learn the importance of developing a promotable message that can be easily translatable to a diverse audience and that just because you develop a great campaign doesn’t mean people will know about it. You still need to promote it.

Some of the additional outreach Communications and Media did to promote the work of the YCB and the campaign included:

- A [media interview between a local TV station and two members of the YCB](#) to discuss the campaign and the challenges facing their peers.
- A [video](#) to highlight the TV interview and bring more awareness to the campaign.
- News release to launch the campaign
- [Op-Ed in the regional daily newspaper](#)
- [A feature in a regional family magazine](#)

- Social media to promote the Chesterfield County Prevention Services Facebook page, and the Youth Services Instagram page (@cfieldyouthservices) where information was being posted.

## **THE RESULTS/SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM**

Chesterfield County and the YCB members achieved its goal of gaining awareness around mental health and reaching a diverse group of students and parents.

Highlights of the campaign include:

- Eight YCB-crafted social media posts that were shared 32 times across multiple county social media platforms, including the Youth Services Instagram and Chesterfield County Government's main Facebook pages. The posts reached a total of 27,935 people – reflecting the actual number of people who viewed the content organically.
- 1,800 percent increase in webpage traffic to the Youth Citizen Board's homepage during the month-long initiative with 34 percent being 18-34 years old.
- Numerous external media and organization social media pages, including Richmond Magazine and the Children's Museum of Richmond sharing the YCB social media content to their sites.
- Members of the YCB worked with Communications and Media to write an Op-ed column – "Raising Awareness of Teen Mental Health" – which appeared in the May 4, 2021 edition of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, one of Virginia's largest newspapers with more than 70,000 weekday subscribers.
- NBC 12, one of metro Richmond's leading news stations, also completed a three-minute feature segment about the campaign – placing the stories and perspective of the teens and their social media campaign.

- In “Richmond Family Magazine’s” summer teen edition, the YCB Mental Health Campaign was one of four feature stories in the magazine, where available members were interviewed and several photos of the teens addressing the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors were submitted by the Communications and Media Department were published.

## SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

- News release
- Social media posts from both from YCB members and by Chesterfield County to promote the campaign
- YCB-created graphic/logo for the campaign
- Launch video created by Chesterfield County Communications and Media
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5q52xUeEQno>
- Local TV station story
  - <https://www.nbc12.com/video/2021/04/22/rva-parenting-new-campaign-chesterfield-support-teen-mental-health/>
  - <https://www.nbc12.com/2021/04/14/chesterfield-youth-group-launches-social-media-mental-health-awareness-campaign/>
- Op-Ed
  - [https://richmond.com/opinion/columnists/alexis-bodrick-jason-melendez-and-kendall-birmingham-column-raising-awareness-of-teen-mental-health-in/article\\_6bea02a0-98f0-59db-aefe-2ae272530135.html](https://richmond.com/opinion/columnists/alexis-bodrick-jason-melendez-and-kendall-birmingham-column-raising-awareness-of-teen-mental-health-in/article_6bea02a0-98f0-59db-aefe-2ae272530135.html)
- Magazine placement
  - <https://richmondfamilymagazine.com/rfm-community/chesterfield-youth-citizens-board-launches-mental-health-awareness-campaign/>

## NEWS RELEASE



For immediate release: April 14, 2021

Contact: J. Elias O'Neal | 804-768-7516 | [OnealJ@chesterfield.gov](mailto:OnealJ@chesterfield.gov)

Facebook: chesterfieldva | Twitter: @chesterfieldva | YouTube:

ChesterfieldCountyVA | Instagram: @chesterfieldvirginia | #Cfield

### **Chesterfield Youth Citizens Board Launches Social Media Mental Health Awareness Campaign For Teens, Parents**

*'Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece' campaign aims to help students and parents identify signs of mental distress in local teens*

**CHESTERFIELD COUNTY, VA** — The Chesterfield County Youth Citizens Board (YCB) is working with [Chesterfield County Prevention Services](#) to launch a youth-centric social media mental health campaign – “*Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece*” – starting April 13 through May 7.

The campaign focuses on several mental health topics effecting Chesterfield middle and high school-aged students, including identifying signs of depression, dealing with stress, self-care, and suicide awareness and prevention. It also provides tips and advice for parents of pre-teens and teenagers to help notice signs of stress and depression in their children.

As part of the initiative, visitors to the [Chesterfield County Prevention Services Facebook](#) page, and the [Youth Services Instagram page](#) (@cfildyouthservices) will find a wave of helpful and informational posts – all created by members of the youth board.

“Being isolated from friends and social activity has definitely taken a toll on everyone, which is what makes the message of the campaign so significant,” said YCB member and Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School junior Paige Walworth. “My biggest takeaway for anyone seeing the YCB campaign would be to know that you are not alone in any struggles that you face. Mental health struggles are not something you should be ashamed of, which is why working on this campaign with the Chesterfield YCB to help end the stigma surrounding mental health challenges has been such a worthwhile project.”

Established in 1978, the YCB is a group of local high school juniors and seniors appointed by the Chesterfield Board of Supervisors representing each high school in all

five of the county's magisterial districts, along with at-large youths representing students not enrolled in Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS). Its mission is to identify and advise the Board of Supervisors on issues relating to youth and provide opportunities for the community.

"YCB affords Chesterfield teens a unique opportunity to establish a forum to discuss and plan initiatives, and this year's initiative fits so well into the fabric of the 2020-2021 school year," said YCB member and James River High School junior Jason R. Melendez. "Chesterfield YCB is emblematic of students coming together and showing how Chesterfield residents of all ages can affect the actions of local government and make a change in the community."

Chesterfield County is home to nearly 83,000 people under the age of 18 – roughly 23.5 percent of the estimated 352,802 residents who reside in the county, according to the latest U.S. Census estimates.

Like thousands of students across the region and nation, Chesterfield's youth is adjusting to what's become the "new norm" during the pandemic through virtual learning, social distancing and overall limited interactions with friends and family.

Sadly, it has come at a cost for several Chesterfield youth, as inquiries from parents and students about how to cope with depression and suicide have spiked in the county since COVID-19 restrictions were implemented a year ago.

"We have seen a great increase in the number of parents and other adults in the community who are concerned about youth mental health and want to know how to recognize and respond to signs," said Melissa Ackley, Chesterfield County Prevention Services Manager.

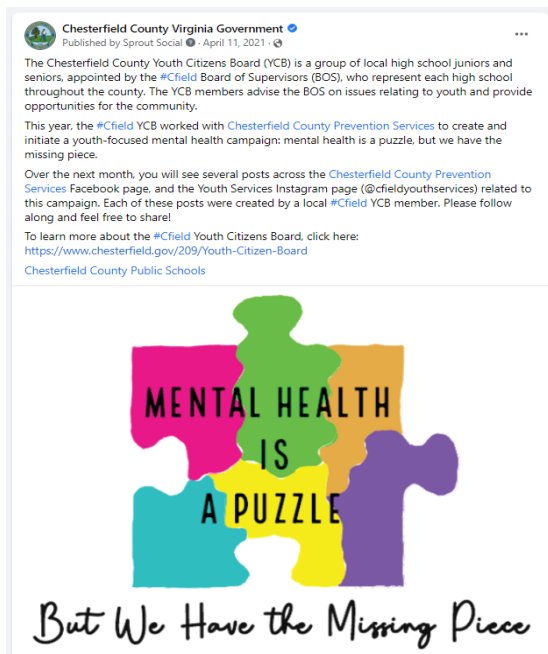
Members of the YCB hope their social media campaign will reach a diverse group of students and parents, with the hope of engaging more Chesterfield residents to talk more about the importance of addressing their mental health.


"YCB's Mental Health Awareness Initiative is important because mental health and substance abuse is often seen as a taboo topic, which prevents people from seeking help or talking about their experiences," said YCB member and Cosby High School junior Mahlet Nebiyu. "Our hope for this social media project is to provide resources, raise awareness, and reduce the stigma around these topics. Being on the board is a fulfilling experience that makes me feel like I am actively creating change in my community."

To learn more about the Chesterfield Youth Citizens Board, visit:  
<https://www.chesterfield.gov/209/Youth-Citizen-Board>.

**###**

## Screenshots of some of the 'Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece' Social Media Posts






## Facing Mental Health Struggles?

Don't be afraid to reach out for help. You are not alone.

#BREAKTHESTIGMA  
#YOUARENOTALONE

 Mental Health is a puzzle, but we have the missing piece.

cfieldyouthservices • Following

cfieldyouthservices This year has been hard on everyone and many people have experienced an increase in stress and anxiety. No matter how severe, know that your struggles are valid and there is strength in seeking help.

#YouAreNotAlone #MasterTheMind #BreakTheStigma

Here are some resources:  
National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
National Suicide Prevention Text Line: Text CONNECT to 741-741  
The Trevor Project Hotline (LGBTQ youth): 1-866-488-7386  
Children's Mental Health Resource Center: [mentalhealth4kids.org](http://mentalhealth4kids.org).

44w

campbellrp\_msw Thank you for sharing these resources and recognizing the importance of seeking help if your struggling!

43w 1 like Reply


Liked by chesterfieldcountypolice and 9 others

APRIL 13, 2021

Add a comment...

Post

# MENTAL HEALTH TIPS



cfieldyouthservices • Following

cfieldyouthservices Have you done something for your mental health today? If so, comment below what you did and tips that can potentially help others.

#MasterTheMind #BreakTheStigma #YouAreNotAlone

42w

r.e.a.l\_girlz Great message!!

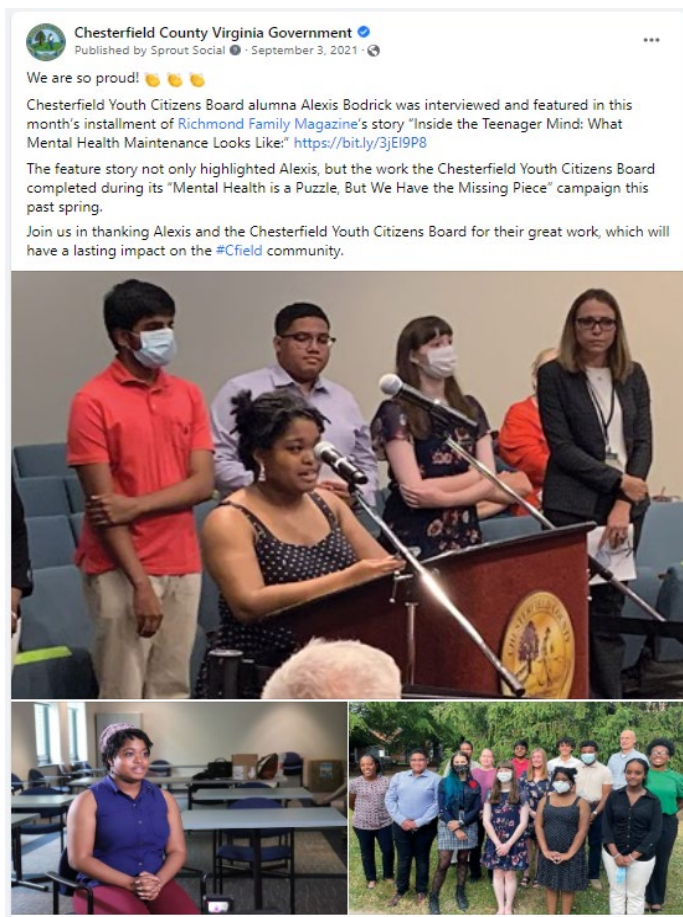
41w Reply

53 views

APRIL 27, 2021

Add a comment...

Post



**Graphic created by a member of the YCB to brand the 'Mental Health Is A Puzzle, But We Have The Missing Piece' social media campaign**

