



# **CLARKSTON AREA YOUTH ASSISTANCE**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025**

**Mission Statement:**  
To strengthen youth and families and to reduce the incidence of delinquency, abuse, and neglect through community involvement.

## Executive Team



**Jan Scislowicz**  
Chair



**Jackie Fromm**  
Advisor



**John Nicholson**  
Treasurer



**Kristina Martin**  
Secretary

## From the Chair Jan Scislowicz

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As Chair of Clarkston Area Youth Assistance (CAYA), it is both an honor and a privilege to reach out to you today. CAYA thrives because of the dedication and generosity of our sponsors, donors, staff, and volunteers who believe in building a stronger, more connected community.

Over the past year, CAYA has continued to make meaningful strides toward our mission of strengthening youth and families by preventing and reducing juvenile delinquency, neglect, and abuse through community involvement. As of June 2025, we were able to help 34 students attend day camp and overnight camp during the summer with donor and partnership support. Our skill building grants allowed 37 students to participate in a variety of sports, dance, robotics, and driver's training that would otherwise not have been possible for these families.

We have launched new initiatives such as our Podcasts that address vital topics that are relevant for today's families and a new Music Mashup after-school program for elementary school students. We have expanded our outreach by utilizing more social media resources. All these things are made possible thanks to our volunteers, sponsors, donors, staff, and supporters and we are so grateful for all these contributors.

CAYA welcomed 5 new board members this past school year. Their contributions have been impactful and will help us in the next year and beyond with much needed coverage of committees such as Fundraising and Public Relations.

Thank you for being an essential part of our community. Your ongoing involvement and belief in our mission inspire us every day. If you would like to learn more about our programs, volunteer opportunities, or ways to get involved, please do not hesitate to reach out.

**Website: [CAYA-mi.org](http://CAYA-mi.org)**

CAYA offers rewarding and fun experiences for volunteers, of which we are always in need. Please contact our office if you would like to learn more about ways in which you can volunteer. **Office: (248) 623-4313**

Together, we can continue to make a lasting impact.

With gratitude,  
Jan Scislowicz

## Board Members

Judy Ableser  
Tricia Delude  
Jamie Graves  
Judy Parnes  
Lauren Rinke  
Belinda Seal-Sweet  
Jennifer Sherby  
Dee Smith  
Kevin Underwood

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## Program Sponsors

Sixth Judicial Circuit  
Court Family Division

Clarkston Community  
Schools

Independence Township

Springfield Township

The City of the Village  
of Clarkston

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## Staff

Lauren Klos  
Caseworker

Sherry Snudden  
Office Manager

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## Oakland County Youth Assistance

Liz Csizmadia  
Chief

Anna Torres  
Supervisor



# Music Mashup

## Kevin Underwood, Chair

### Introducing Our Newest Program: Music Mashup

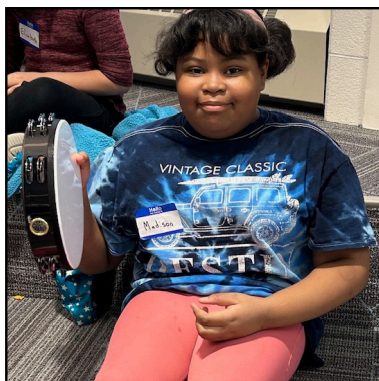
**Music Mashup** is an after-school program developed by volunteers at CAYA in partnership with Pine Knob Elementary School. The goal of this initiative is to engage children through rhythm, instruments, improvisation, listening, and teamwork. In its first year, 12 students enthusiastically explored a variety of percussion instruments, including djembes, tambourines, dunduns, triangles, buffalo drums, and shakers. Feedback from teachers, parents, and volunteers has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the value and impact of the program.

### Pilot Session Highlights

During our pilot session, we observed increasing enthusiasm and confidence among participants, especially those students who were new to music or typically more reserved. Building on this success, next year (2025/26) we will be accepting students in 2nd through 5th grade who have been identified by their teachers as most likely to benefit from this program.

### Program Expansion

The program is expanding in the 2025-2026 year to include North Sashabaw Elementary School and will begin in October.



## Family Education

### Jamie Graves, Chair

The Family Education Committee is responsible for identifying and implementing educational programs that promote family growth and youth development. Program topics are selected annually based on current community needs and trends.

### Parenting Under Stress Podcast Series

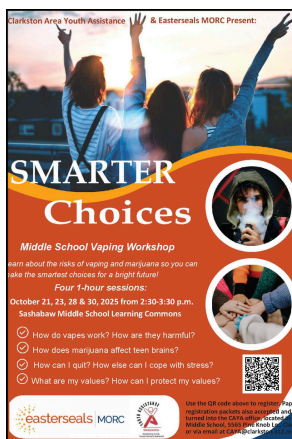
The Family Education Committee launched a six-episode **Parenting Under Stress** podcast series during the 2024–2025 school year. The series was developed in partnership with therapists from Ellie Mental Health in Clarkston and was designed to provide parents with practical strategies, stress-management tools, and support in navigating the challenges of raising children.

#### Key focus areas included:

- Practical stress-relief techniques and the importance of support systems.
- Balancing parental responsibilities with self-care and modeling healthy stress management.
- Effective time management strategies for families, including visual tools and routines.
- Shifting from behavior-based rewards to connection-based experiences to foster resilience.
- Strengthening blended family dynamics, communication skills, and shared values.
- Recognizing when professional assistance may be needed and encouraging healthy help-seeking behavior.



Supplemental resources were made available on the podcast website to accompany each episode. The series episodes have been downloaded **191** times.



### Smarter Choices

The Smarter Choices program was designed for 6th–7th grade students and provided age-appropriate education on the risks associated with substance use. The program was delivered across four sessions by Joan Baert from Easterseals MORC and 14 students participated.

### Looking Ahead

The Family Education Committee remains committed to providing high-quality educational programming that addresses the evolving needs of families within the community. Planning for the upcoming year will continue to emphasize relevant, accessible, and impactful programming.



## Youth Recognition Judy Parnes, Chair

**The 2025 Youth Recognition Ceremony, for the first time at Clarkston High School (CHS):** On the evening of April 24th, 72 students from Young Fives to Grade 12, were recognized and celebrated for growth in personal well-being and/or for demonstrating their concern for the well-being of others. Over 350 proud, appreciative family and community members attended, including 40 nominators. As guests took their seats, they were entertained by the CHS Clarinet Choir and CHS Marimba Quartet.

**Speaking at the Ceremony were** the MC, Cari Neubeck, Independence Township Clerk; the Keynote Speaker, Staci Puzio, Director of Student Growth, Well-being, and Community Partnerships; making Sponsor Remarks Sean R. Miller, Springfield Township Clerk. **Staci Puzio noted that the honorees' presence in this world matters deeply.** "...and your voice—each one of you—adds to a powerful chorus of hope." Sean Miller sincerely thanked CAYA sponsors, who understand that investing in our youth is investing in a better future for all of us. To the honorees, "You've already made an impact, and you not only inspire your peers, but every adult in the room."



**Each honoree's affirmation, based on nominator words, was read aloud for all to hear, as the honorees walked across the stage, receiving heartfelt congratulations from 18 dignitaries** representing Clarkston Community Schools (CCS), Independence Township, Springfield Township, City of the Village of Clarkston, CCS Board of Education, Oakland County Prosecutor's Office, and Oakland County Youth Assistance. Directly following the Ceremony, everyone was treated to a festive dessert reception.

**Finally, there is the rest of the Youth Recognition story, often unseen. BEFORE** the Ceremony, every attempt is made to follow-up on RSVPs, so honorees can feel seen, acknowledged, valued, and loved. **DURING** the Ceremony, a CCS photographer captured some of the special moments of the connections made between the dignitaries and the honorees—quiet moments filled with pride, empathy, warmth, and love. **AFTER** the Ceremony, honorees leave with a folder of personalized certificates provided by area dignitaries, a printed copy of their own affirmation suitable for framing, and lifelong positive memories to call upon for years to come. **It is always an evening of well-being for all who attend!**



# Pinwheels for Prevention

Judy Parnes, Chair

Pinwheels for Prevention is a proactive program to PREVENT child and adolescent adversity or maltreatment BEFORE it happens through strengthening the well-being of children, adolescents, and families. The main focus is on small acts of primary prevention and everyone has a role.

## 4 PINWHEEL PROJECTS

### Community Kick-Off: TOGETHER FOR PREVENTION

The kick-off event was held on March 18, where 38 community members were in attendance. The main themes were:

**"If something feels too hard to start, it means your first step is not small enough."** (Dr. Becky Kennedy)

**"Small acts of primary prevention matter for all kids."**  
(Lauren Klos)

**"Sometimes we need to think small because prevention is not always about grand gestures—it is about those simple daily moments that strengthen a child's well-being."**  
(Staci Puzio)

**Inspiring last words about how much more powerful our impact can be when we consolidate our efforts.** (Dr. Shawn Ryan)



### April's Blue Pinwheel Gardens: A Clarkston Tradition

This year, 1,278 pinwheels were planted in 64 gardens of prevention throughout the community, each with a yard sign promoting well-being. The blue pinwheel gardens increase public awareness about helping to ensure safe, stable, nurturing environments and relationships that enable children and their families to thrive. Gardens also help to support CAYA primary prevention programs.



### CCS School Bookmark Projects:



- In collaboration between CCS, CIDL, and CAYA, elementary school libraries have a dedicated section for a total of 24 books that reinforce the Pinwheels elementary bookmark, "Blue Pinwheels remind me to be kind and welcoming"
- NEW THIS YEAR! Creating a partnership with CCS Secondary English Language Arts teachers to connect curriculum to the pinwheel bookmarks:
  - "Blue pinwheels remind me to be kind, welcoming and stand up for others."
  - "Your small act of kindness could make a big difference for someone else."
- Vinyl Kindness stickers were distributed to all middle school students.

## Camp & Skill Building Scholarships

28  
Skill Building  
Scholarships  
granted

9  
Pay To  
Participate  
& Club Fees

22  
Weeks of  
Day Camp  
granted

4  
Overnight  
Weeks at  
Camp  
Copneconic

4  
Overnight  
Weeks at  
Camp  
Ohiyesa

1  
Overnight  
Week at  
Camp  
Wonder

2  
Overnight  
Weeks at  
Camp  
Hayo-Went-Ha

2  
Overnight  
Weeks at  
Camp  
Nissokone

We would like to thank our community partnerships for making our Camp and Skill Building Scholarship Programs available for Clarkston area students to enjoy great experiences: Clarkston Community Schools, The City of the Village of Clarkston, Independence Township Parks & Recreation, Camp Copneconic, Camp Hayo-Went-Ha, Camp Ohiyesa, Camp Nissokone, Camp Wonder, Independence Township, David W. Elliott Memorial Foundation, All About Driving, Skull Island Camp, Clarkston Chiefs Football, and an anonymous donor. With their support, students were able to discover new skills and areas of interest including driver's training, voice and guitar lessons, dance, cheer, soccer, T-ball, Winter Guard, and football, as well as enjoy enriching camp experiences.

my thoughts about camp is it looks  
nice there the food is really good ~~then~~  
And all the activities were a lot of  
fun and getting to meet new people  
Will be going back again!!!  
thank you

The food was good  
The activities we did were fun  
thank you

-Camp Copneconic Overnight Campers





# Caseworker Report

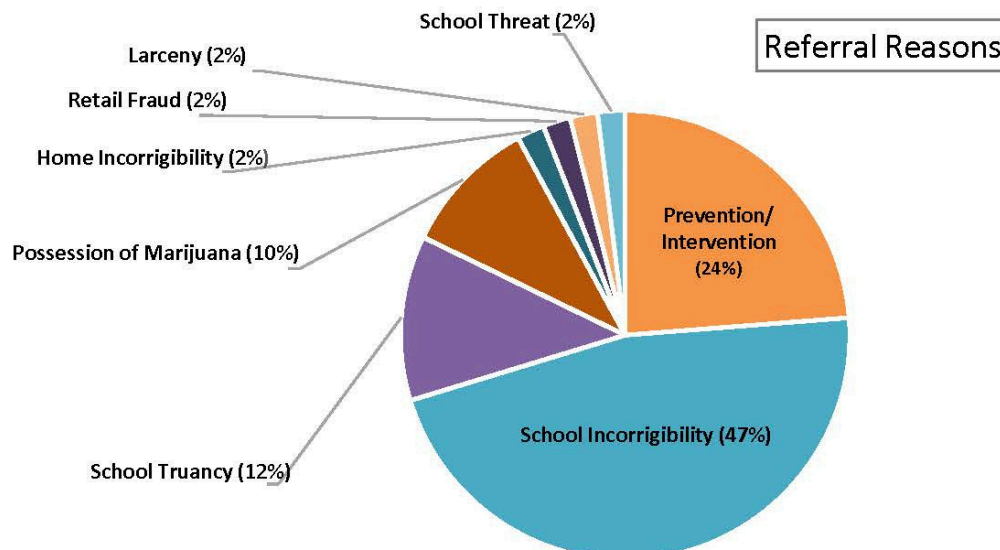
## Lauren Klos, LMSW

According to the Oxford Dictionary of English, “legacy” is defined as, “The long-lasting impact of particular events, actions, etc. that took place in the past, or of a person’s life.” When I think of the word “legacy” for CAYA, I think of the countless lives that our services have positively impacted since 1961. Of the 64 years since CAYA’s existence, my small slice of impact in Casework Services has been over the past decade.

I’ve been in the CAYA office for 10 years and this year, I’ve been pleasantly surprised to see some positive outcomes of past caseload youth. It has been such a joy to hear their success stories or to have them stop by and share how they are doing. Some of these young adults are now firefighters and EMS workers, paraprofessionals for children with special needs, law enforcement officers, construction workers, college students and graduates, and thriving as hard-working citizens in our community and beyond. When I worked with these students, they had their struggles, with good days and difficult ones (like all of us). It’s wonderful to see how they’ve pushed through, finding strength in the struggle, and now they are flourishing as young adults. I am truly delighted and thrilled to hear of their success stories, as well as honored and blessed to have been perhaps a small part of their journey in becoming thriving young adults.

### Top 10 Trends: July 2024 - June 2025

- 1. Substance use: marijuana and vaping**  
(CJHS had most referrals for substance use)
- 2. Parent support** – connection to resources, parenting strategies/ideas/resources (Parent Project class referrals), emergency needs
- 3. Completing accountability assignments**—community service (297.75 hours completed), vision boards, videos, research projects, court hearings, essays, apology letters, Ripple Effects lessons
- 4. Mental health needs**
- 5. Grief and loss**
- 6. Peer conflicts, bullying, harassment, fighting, violent behavior**
- 7. Family relationships, healthy relationships and friendships**
- 8. Decisions and goal-setting**
- 9. School attendance and engagement**
- 10. Advocacy support**





## Fiscal Year-End Totals Casework Services: July 2024 to June 2025

**106** total cases from July 2024 to June 2025:

**59** New Referrals, plus **47** Open Cases from previous fiscal year

**24** Information and Referral Consultations

**130 total families impacted by casework services**

**63%** of new referrals engaged in services

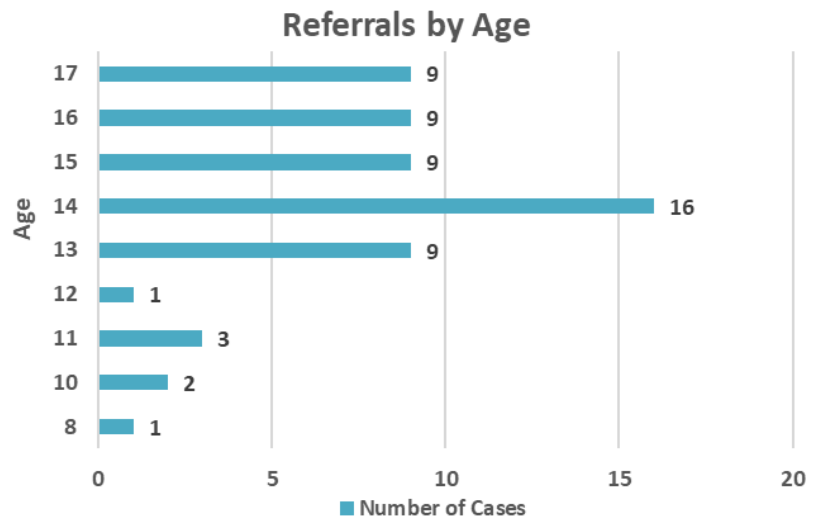
**8%** - some contact, but not fully engaged in services yet

**7%** - started services, but did not finish

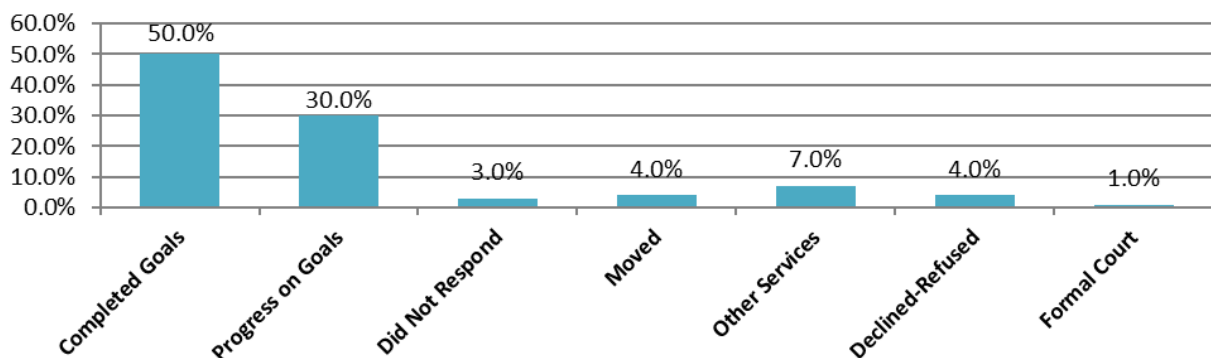
**22%** - did not engage in services

*Fiscal year-end totals for new referrals:*

REFERRAL SOURCE	TOTAL CASES
SCHOOL DISTRICT	44
POLICE	6
OC PROSECUTOR	4
PARENT	2
MDHHS/CPS	2
OC JUVENILE INTAKE DEPARTMENT	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>59</b>



### Closure Reasons (70 closures in 2024-2025)



# CAYA In Action!



**New Podcast! CAYA Conversations**  
PRODUCED BY CLARKSTON AREA YOUTH ASSISTANCE FAMILY ED COMMITTEE

**Our expert therapists from Ellie Mental Health - Clarkston bring their insights to the table, discussing vital topics that resonate with families today.**

**Episode One**  
ESSENTIAL STRESS-BUSTING TIPS FOR PARENTS  
Time is so very precious for parents, where practical stress relief tips, and highlight the importance of support systems. Learn how to balance personal needs with parenting demands, and healthy stress management, and set realistic expectations to reduce guilt.

**Episode Two**  
UNLOCKING THE SECRETS TO BALANCED FAMILY LIFE  
Time is so very precious for parents, where practical stress relief tips, and highlight the importance of support systems. Learn how to balance personal needs with parenting demands, and healthy stress management, and set realistic expectations to reduce guilt.

**Episode Three**  
PARENTING WITH CONNECTION-BASED REWARDS  
What if the key to your child's behavior isn't more rewards, but deeper connection? Discover the power of positive reinforcement in our latest episode, and how it shapes behavior and confidence.

**Episode Four**  
BUILDING BONDS IN A BLENDED FAMILY  
Time is so very precious for parents, where practical stress relief tips, and highlight the importance of support systems. Learn how to balance personal needs with parenting demands, and healthy stress management, and set realistic expectations to reduce guilt.

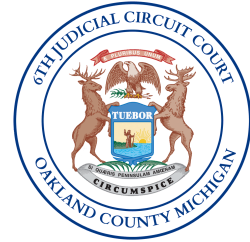
**Episode Five**  
TRANSFORMING SIBLING DYNAMICS  
Unlock the keys to powerful sibling relationships with therapist Samantha Thadston. Discover how to manage sibling personalities, reduce rivalry, and turn conflict into growth. Learn to guide, support, and foster healthy sibling dynamics, and foster lasting respect.

**Episode Six**  
THE RIGHT TIME FOR HELP: NAVIGATING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS AS A FAMILY  
Wondering when it's time to seek professional help for you or your child? In this episode of CAYA Conversations, therapist Traci Brown offers clear, compassionate guidance on recognizing early signs, finding the right support, and maintaining help-seeking in your home. Learn how to avoid healthy habits, reduce stigma, and take confident steps toward continued well-being for yourself and your family.

Scan QR Code for Podcast Webpage  
<https://cayaconversations.buzzsprout.com>  
or find us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify & Podcast Index



# CAYA SPONSORS



## Thank You

to our sponsors, volunteers, and community partners. We appreciate your kindness, compassion, and donations that you have contributed.



**Clarkston Area**

Strengthening Families  
Through Community Involvement



## Thank you to the Following Generous Contributors and In-Kind Partners

Olivia Abrams  
Edward Abrams  
All About Driving  
Amazing Athletes  
Anonymous Donor  
Janet Austin  
Camp Copneconic  
Camp Hayo-Went-Ha  
Camp Nissokone  
Camp Ohiyesa  
Camp Wonder  
Clarkston Area Optimist Club  
Clarkston Chiefs Football  
Clarkston Independence District Library  
Clarkston News  
Clarkston Principals, Administration & Staff  
Crain Communications

David W. Elliott Memorial Foundation  
Easterseals MORC  
Friends of Clarkston Independence District Library  
Independence Township  
Independence Truck Repair  
Terri King Salon  
Mark & Nancy Roeder  
Oakland County Board of Commissioners  
Oakland County Youth Assistance  
Real Estate One  
Skull Island Camp  
Dave Smith Play All Media.net  
Andrea Smith-Knieper  
Starbucks  
Vibe Credit Union  
Waterfall Jewelers  
WhoaZone

## Pinwheels for Prevention Donors:

Judy Ableser  
Karey Bassett  
Big Oak Books  
Bowman Chevrolet  
Brioni Café & Deli  
Calvary Evan. Lutheran Church  
Clarkston Area Optimist Club  
Clarkston Area Chamber of Commerce  
Clarkston Family Dental  
Clarkston Family Farm  
Clarkston Independence District Library  
Clarkston United Methodist Church  
Jeffrey Decker  
Essence on Main Mercantile  
Ellie Mental Health-Clarkston

The Fed Community  
5th Tavern Clarkston  
Melissa Bridgman's A World of Difference Class  
Kathy Foular  
The Gateway  
HealthQuest Physical Therapy  
Honcho  
Inscribe Books  
Karmanos Cancer Institute  
Sydney Kieler  
Frank Liimatta  
Lowrie's Landscape  
M-15 Medical Center  
MLC Building  
Mike McIntyre  
Steve & Leah McLean

Rochelle McLetchie  
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Nancy Moon  
Morgan Milzow & Ford Realtors  
Morgan's Auto Service  
Neiman's Family Market  
North End Market Candle Bar  
Oxford Bank-Clarkston Branch  
Sherry Snudden  
Social Medium  
Kathleen Stawara  
Michael Stefaniak  
Brandon Still  
Union General  
Vibe Credit Union  
Washington Management  
Waterfall Jewelers  
Waterford Bank N.A.  
Lewis E. Wint & Son Funeral Home

Clarkston Area Youth Assistance is a volunteer-driven community organization. It is one of 26 Youth Assistance programs in Oakland County. Oakland County Youth Assistance is administered under the auspices of the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court Family Division. Principal funding is provided through the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. Each local Youth Assistance office operates with the sponsorship and financial support of its local school district and municipalities. Volunteers work with the Caseworker to plan and sponsor local prevention programs for youth and their families. More financial information is available in the office.