

# W/B HIDTA Treatment and Prevention Spotlight

Prince William Community  
Service Board, City of  
Manassas



Prince William Community Services Board supports youth and their families within the City of Manassas who have been identified as at-risk for substance use and/or delinquent behavior. The Prince William County Prevention Program focuses on five distinct goals:

1. Strengthen positive family interactions and relationships
2. Confront belief systems that promote violence while building social and conflict resolution skills
3. Increase and improve school attendance and involvement
4. Promote citizenship through community activities
5. Provide education for drug and alcohol abuse and their negative effects

The program has been in operation for almost three decades. Funding from the Washington-Baltimore HIDTA has been instrumental to opening, building, and evolving the program. The program serves youth from 7th grade until the age of 21. Originally the program launched for high schoolers and would work with youth for at least 3 years, but this evolved into bringing youth into the program during middle school and working with youth for longer. This long-term focus stands out as a strength of the program, allowing staff to build strong relationships with each youth in the program.

These relationships serve as a critical foundation to the program and have helped to build strong community support. Brian Coe, Prevention Therapist III, M.A. who has been with the program since inception, stated that, “The clients I had way back when, now refer their kids to us. They might not have understood at the time what we did for them, but now they do, and they want that for their kids.” The overwhelming feeling the prevention program and its staff have been able to provide youth is that “we are around no matter what.” Ways staff have been successful with relationship building include helping with whatever comes up – writing letters of recommendation, attending court with a youth, making sure families’ basic needs are met, providing a safe space for discussions, and creating opportunities for youth that their families could not afford otherwise. The program offers all of its services for free. Youth will come back as adults to be involved and to get advice. The relationships the staff have been able to meaningfully cultivate over the years with youth, families, and community partners has created a long-running prevention program.

Another key to their success is a strong network of collaborative partnerships, including juvenile court services, Manassas Police Department, the school district and school staff such as social workers, counselors, school resource officers, and principals, community centers, and social services. Partnership agencies actively come to meetings to give their input.

The program receives a ton of community support. Most youth entering the program have heard of it already, and it is very rare that a family declines services due to the strong positive reputation of the program. "When we meet with youth and their families, we sit with them and come from a place of just wanting to know them. At the end of the day, we show up," Rose Cortijo, Prevention Therapist III, M.A. at the program, emphasized.



**Recent Georgetown South Community fundraiser supported by Brian Coe and Rosie Cortijo**



**HIDTA prevention took part in the County's Juneteenth Holiday Celebration**

The staff have a plethora of stories highlighting their efforts, support, and care for the youth and families they work with, from helping a girl graduate high school early to attend nursing school, to seeing and meeting the level of need within a home. They serve as critical advocates in their community.

Several other programs run under the main prevention program, including Team Quest which provides monthly activities and experiences youth would not have otherwise such as visiting college campuses or participating in community service, Badges for Baseball which involves law enforcement mentors teaching valuable life lessons, and a newer program for girls called "I'm Great" which will be launching this year.

As a testament to the program's continued growth, a recent fundraiser raised \$40k to buy a new van, as one vehicle was no longer sufficient for the number of youth participating. The program will continue to advocate and build strong relationships with the community and its families and youth.