Beyond the Report Card
Cultivating What Matters

LOOK INSIDE...
Listen to what local teens say needs our attention.
Learn what each of us can do to help kids thrive.

www.bihealthyyouth.org
**Growing Up on Bainbridge**

**Bainbridge Island is a great place to raise children.** Our community is known for its highly rated schools, beautiful parks, and safe streets. But behavioral survey data—and our children themselves—tell us that despite all we are doing well as a community, there still exist areas of concern that need our attention. **Many of our youth are struggling, and these troubling trends mandate a community-wide redirection.**

The Bainbridge Healthy Youth Alliance is dedicated to improving the relationships and experiences that help our kids thrive. This mailing is the first publication of regular qualitative and quantitative updates about what is going on with Bainbridge youth. **Read through the information we have provided and visit our website to learn more about what's happening—and how parents, educators, and community leaders are taking steps to make Bainbridge Island a place where the health and wellbeing of our young people are as important as their academic success.**

National statistics show our challenges aren't unique. Youth from communities with relative affluence, above-average parental education levels, and high academic expectations for children are often “at risk,” displaying higher levels of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse than their middle-income peers.¹

Bainbridge twelfth graders report significant rates of mental distress—a trend in UCLA’s American Freshman Survey, which shows that **the emotional health of incoming college freshmen is at its lowest point in three decades.**²

We know that mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and suicide ideation as well as behaviors that involve the overuse of alcohol and drugs interfere with a child’s development. These are not just normal teenage challenges. They often become lifelong challenges. The answers are not simple. In order to reverse current trends, we must increase the protective factors that help kids thrive and mitigate the risk factors that influence unhealthy outcomes.

You can make a difference. Please join us. Sign up at www.BIHealthyYouth.org to receive more information.

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**We’re in it Together**

The Bainbridge Island Healthy Youth Alliance is a collaborative partnership of organizational leaders, teens, parents, teachers, and individuals working together for positive youth development.

Our community cares about kids’ hopes and dreams, from cradle to career. We want to create a culture where every Island child has the ability to:

**Thrive:** Possess emotional and physical health.

**Connect:** Enjoy supportive relationships with peers, families, teachers, and other caring adults.

**Contribute:** Feel valued as members of our community.

**Learn:** Engage in meaningful social, emotional, intellectual, and physical discovery that spans home, school and out-of-school activities.

**Prepare:** Feel ready for fulfilling careers.

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Marina Cofer-Wildsmith and Anne Blair
Co-Chairs, Bainbridge Healthy Youth Alliance

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“Children learn more from what you are than what you teach.”

—W.E.B. DUBOIS
What Needs Our Attention?

The answer is in the numbers and in youth stories. Trends from twelfth graders in the last Healthy Youth Survey (2014) are echoed by personal accounts from our teens (read their words on our website www.BIHealthyYouth.org). Our kids are asking for our help. Each one of us can make a positive difference by supporting their health and wholeness. Working in alignment, we can reverse the trends illustrated below.

A downward trend in the percentage of twelfth graders who identify as having a “high” quality-of-life score. This composite score is based on responses to five questions and represents an individual’s perceived level of physical and mental health over time.

Increasing rates of twelfth graders reporting depressive symptoms.

An upward trend in the percentage of twelfth-grade students who made a plan to commit suicide in the last year.

Higher than state average rates of anxiety reported by our twelfth graders. This question was not asked in prior Healthy Youth Surveys.

Higher than state average rates of alcohol usage reported by Bainbridge Island twelfth graders.

Watch for new Healthy Youth Survey data available in 2017.

If you suspect your child needs help, contact www.askBYS.org.
Eight Pathways to Every Child’s Success

One way we are making a difference is by cultivating the conditions that help youth thrive. Children and adults discover heartfelt meaning and direction in life when they develop strong internal compasses. This guidance system is formed during childhood and adolescence, through relationships and life experiences—and continues to evolve throughout life. Learn more about the Compass Advantage in the Resources section of our website: www.BIHealthyYouth.org.
What Bainbridge Teens Want You to Know

12 things our teens suggest we start or keep doing to help them along successful paths to adulthood.

START OR KEEP
1. Loving me unconditionally and showing me that you care about and love me.
2. Teaching me things that will be useful in life—like taxes, budgets, and resumes.
3. Helping me to do things on my own and to learn how to handle issues as they arise.
4. Listening to me, challenging me, and supporting me.
5. Spending time with me: Having dinner together, going on weekend outings, and watching TV at night as a family.
6. Being supportive when I am stressed and giving me down time to work things out.
7. Asking if I need your help…I might.
8. Focusing on learning and not as much on grades.
9. Giving me structure, even though it’s annoying.
10. Celebrating me as an individual; accepting who I am and what I care about.
11. Keeping the emphasis on a good work ethic.
12. Trusting me and letting me try new things, even if it scares you.

12 things our teens ask that we stop doing to help them along successful paths to adulthood.

STOP
1. Expecting me to be so perfect.
2. Having super-high expectations that I can’t achieve.
3. Being mean to each other/blaming.
4. Not trusting me without a reason.
5. Being overly worried about everything.
6. Pretending you have never made a mistake.
7. Comparing me to my siblings or other kids.
8. Not letting me make decisions! (A little guidance/advice is always helpful, though.)
9. Being so involved in my schoolwork and always checking Skyward.
10. Treating school as a competition and not stressing the learning experience.
11. Giving me the silent treatment.
12. Treating me like one of your investment accounts.

"When a community works together on something it cares about, change happens."
—VAL TOLLEFSON, MAYOR OF BAINBRIDGE ISLAND

Adapted from survey of Bainbridge Island teens on 4/23/16.
During my senior year at Bainbridge High School, I was accepted to the Association of Washington Student Leaders. Serving on the Executive Committee, I met students from all across the state. Compared to other schools, BHS is more like a college campus and is less focused on culture and compassion. Sometimes it seems like we only celebrate the 4.0 student going to an Ivy League school. I’m fortunate to have parents who don’t pressure me in that way.

I remember being a freshman and crying because I got a B on a test. My mom asked me: “Did you learn anything?” She taught me that that’s what was important. In comparison, a friend told me how one day she was taking a nap and her dad came into her room and started yelling at her for getting a B. I have another friend who always struggled in high school. Her parents were really hard on her—to the point that she shut down. She stopped doing her homework just to get back at them. Other parents won’t let their kid pick the college major that they’re most interested in, because the parents don’t approve.

I really love science and math. Going into senior year, I decided to take AP calculus—which is the hardest class at the high school. I was worried about what would happen if I got a mediocre grade in that class. My mom—who is a huge role model for me, and the first in her family to go to college—told me that in the future, the grade I got in that class wouldn’t matter. That what mattered was taking the class and learning the material. So I let go. I didn’t care about the grades. I really understood what I was studying and it was great to be in an atmosphere where I was learning for the sake of learning, not because I had to.

We need to talk to our youth about what makes them happy. It’s the person and their passion that really matters. It’s not the grades that they get. It’s unhealthy for us to put these expectations on our students: Get perfect grades, play a varsity sport, serve in a leadership position, do community service. It’s impossible to do all of those things without feeling depleted or anxious.

This striving to be perfect leads to a lot of unhappiness. Many of us are boiling pots that are about to explode. Depression, drug use, and binge drinking are elevated in our high school because of the pressure we put on students to succeed. A lot of students take gap years because they are so burnt out.

Students: Know that life goes on and that the grades you get in high school are not going to deem you successful or unsuccessful as a person. Explore what you’re passionate about and pursue the things you enjoy.

Parents: Help your child discover what they really love. Celebrate the actual person that your child is, and their mental and emotional qualities. Ease up on the hard-core expectations—because they aren’t going to help your son or daughter succeed.

Read more first-person accounts from Bainbridge Island youth at our website!
www.bihealthyyouth.org
Bainbridge Island cares about the well-being of its youth.
Ready to make a difference? Partner with us!

One of the most important jobs we have as a community is raising and educating the next generation of caring family members, innovative workers, ethical leaders, and engaged citizens. To succeed, we must embrace a shared community agenda, engage in system-wide planning, share information, and effectively apply our resources.

As an individual—whether you’re a parent, grandparent, or community member—there are many ways to make an impact. Visit our website to get started. We can’t do this important work unless we do it together.

Bainbridge Healthy Youth Alliance fosters partnerships with local organizations, nonprofits, government agencies, and businesses that care about children and teens and support our mission. Since our official launch in 2014, this growing alliance shares a vision of every Island child having the ability to thrive, connect, contribute, learn, and prepare for a fulfilling career.

While many community leaders and/or their organizations are also sponsors, there is no financial obligation to join the Alliance. For more information, contact Cezanne Allen, MD, at cezanne@BIHealthyYouth.org.

### Partner Organizations

- Bainbridge Artists Resource Network
- Bainbridge Community Foundation
- Bainbridge Dental
- Bainbridge High School Parent Teacher Student Organization
- Bainbridge Island Historical Museum
- Bainbridge Island Metro Parks and Rec District
- Bainbridge Island Police Department
- Bainbridge Island School District
- Bainbridge Schools Foundation
- Bainbridge Performing Arts
- Bainbridge Public Library
- Bainbridge Youth Services
- Boys and Girls Club
- The City of Bainbridge Island
- Hyla Wicklund Varsity Student Institute
- Island Cool
- Island School
- Islandwood
- Kids Discovery Museum
- St. Cecilia’s Catholic School
- Olympic Performance Group
- One Call for All
- Peacock Family Center
- Psychotherapy Guild
- Raising Resilience
- Roots of Action
- Rotary Club of Bainbridge Island
- Wicklund Dental

### What Can You Do?

- Read more about Bainbridge Healthy Youth Alliance at www.bihealthyyouth.org.
- Cultivate the Compass Advantage abilities in the youth you know—and in yourself!
- Sign up for our blog posts and learn how small actions can make a big difference.
- Make a donation in support of our work.
- Become a partner organization.
- Like our Facebook page and help spread the word!
- Attend a parenting education event through Raising Resilience.

### Resources

- Honest answers to anonymous questions: AskBYS.org
- Support island nonprofits working on behalf of kids and families. Watch for your Red Envelope.
- Are you supporting your child’s wellbeing? Take our quiz for parents at www.BIHealthyYouth.org!
CLIP AND STICK

How can you show unconditional love and support? Clip this list of suggestions and stick it where you can read it when you need a refresher.

- I’m glad you are you.
- You and I can disagree and I’ll still always love you.
- You’re lovable just the way you are.
- I love you, not your grades.
- I love your happy and your grumpy—your happy is just more fun.
- No, you didn’t keep our agreement, but that doesn’t mean I love you less. It means you try again.
- My love is with you no matter where, no matter what happens.
- Welcome home. Love seeing you at the end of the day.
- I love you and I have faith in your ability to solve this. I’ll support you but can’t do it for you.
- I love you but I don’t like the choice you made. Help me understand what happened.

Beyond the Report Card: Cultivating What Matters
Join the conversation as we explore how each one of us can help our youth thrive. Sign up at BIHealthyYouth.org and follow us on Facebook.