Farewell Letter From the Editor

It is with mixed feelings that I announce my resignation as Youth Services Planning Coordinator with the Erie County Youth Bureau, effective at the close of business on March 17th, 2017. This is a position that I have held for about 4.5 years. I have witnessed much change and growth over this time, the overwhelming majority of which has been positive. I am proud of the work that has been accomplished on behalf of all of you, and most importantly the youth of Erie County.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize Ben Hilligas, who with his wife Sara has just welcomed a son named Theodore Benjamin on Feb. 25th, 2017. He deserves an enormous amount of credit and respect for his tireless work ethic and his passion for positive youth development throughout WNY. He has been a great influence on me during this time, both personally and professionally.

And of course, I would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to all of those with whom I have had the privilege of working with over this period. I truly value the relationships that have been formed with each of you, and I know that I will keep in touch with many of you in my new role as Family Services Manager with Habitat for Humanity-Buffalo. This is an organization with which I have worked for previously, an organization which I am extremely passionate about. You may contact me anytime in my new role, starting March 20th, 2017, at jkordrupel@habitatbuffalo.org.

Thank you again for all that you do on behalf of the youth of Erie County. I look forward to keeping in touch and crossing paths with many of you in the years to come. Cheers!

Meet Our AmeriCorps VISTA, Alex Coleman-Gridley

In January, the Erie County Youth Bureau welcomed a new member to its team. Alexander Coleman-Gridley will be serving the Youth Bureau through Serve New York AmeriCorps VISTA as Data & Systems Support Specialist for the next twelve months.

During his term of service, Alex will be taking on many projects and working with a wide range of people. Alex will work with all the subcommittees on the Youth Board to coordinate meetings and events. He will also work closely with the Afterschool Network, and hopes to ultimately develop a subcommittee focused on data gathering and analysis. Alex will be working with the many agencies served by the Youth Bureau to determine that they are serving the youth of Erie County as well as possible. He also aims to ultimately create a database of statistics on all the agencies funded by the Youth Bureau to allow access of information to become more streamlined and efficient.

Alex earned a Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Science from the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. He looks forward to learning more about public service and bringing his passion and motivation to the Youth Bureau.
ECYB Releases Youth/Community Needs Assessment Survey!

The Erie County Youth Bureau has recently released its Erie County Youth/Community Needs Assessment. The survey is aimed at youth in grades 5-12 as well as parents, teachers, clergy, those serving youth in any capacity, as well as anyone who works with youth or is generally concerned about the well-being of children within Erie County.

This brief 5-7 minute survey is intended to provide the Erie County Youth Bureau with data and community input that will help to guide and inform decision-making and the types of youth programs which will be prioritized in the near future.

The survey can be accessed electronically at the following link:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WD8PZZG

Those who complete the survey AND provide an email address by March 24th will be automatically entered into a drawing to win a gift card. Your email address will NOT be shared, but we may contact you in the future.

THANK YOU in advance for your participation, which will help countless Erie County youth to receive the best possible programming.

For inquiries, please contact the Erie County Youth Bureau at 716-923-4000 or email eriecountynyouthbureau@gmail.com.

The Growing Opiate Epidemic in WNY—How Kids Escaping Drugs is Helping

Today, it is nearly impossible to turn on the local news and not see a story pertaining to the growing opiate epidemic in Western New York. As indicated by statistics, countless people die every single day of an opioid-related overdose.

An alarming amount of people are becoming addicted to prescription pain killers and then progressing on to heroin. Heroin has become extremely dangerous in the last few years. This most recent batch in particular is concerning because it is being cut with synthetic fentanyl. Synthetic fentanyl is poisonous to the human body, even in very small amounts, thus putting the user at risk for an overdose or death.

Especially with young people, the vicious cycle of addiction is beginning with what they believed to be harmless use of alcohol and marijuana. Unfortunately, marijuana is more potent than ever before, and it frequently has other dangerous substances added to it.

Many young people progress from the recreational use of marijuana and alcohol to using prescription pills. These painkillers often cause a rapid physical addiction that brings with it unbearable withdrawal symptoms. Adolescents who abuse pain killers progress onto heroin because heroin is much more affordable than the pills, even though its use is still highly stigmatized. The strong correlation exists between painkillers and heroin because they are so similar in chemical structure. Too many young people fall so far into the depths of addiction before they recognize that they have a problem, that many of them lose their lives to this disease.

Editor’s Note: The Erie County Youth Bureau provides funding to the Face 2 Face Program; it is both a worthy and a valuable program that provides valuable and timely information to the public regarding substance abuse and/or addiction.
Upcoming Deadlines/Community Events:

- **Tuesday, March 14th**: 2017 Primetime RFP due 5:00pm @ 810 East Ferry Street, Buffalo, NY 14211

- **Friday, April 7th**: Erie County Youth Board Interviews for 2017 Primetime @ Erie 1 BOCES, 1:30pm – 7:30pm

- **Friday, April 14th**: 1st Quarter Payment Request due for 2017 YDP programs (Program Expenditure Reports);
  1st Quarter Youth Services Reporting Dashboard reports due for 2017 YDP

- **Tuesday, May 2nd**: 2017 YDP Request for Proposals released

- **Thursday, May 18th**: 2017 YDP RFP Informational Meeting @ Erie 1 BOCES, 10:30am – 12:00pm

- **Tuesday, May 30th**: 2017 YDP Request for Proposals due 5:00pm @ 810 East Ferry Street, Buffalo, NY 14211

We welcome submissions of community events at any time, so please consider sending us notices of upcoming events that you believe might be of interest to your colleagues. Thank you!