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Hoosick Falls Youth Center and Community Coalition expanding reach to Troy

By Ian Benjamin, Troy/The Record

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HOOSICK FALLS >> Activities in the arts, an after-school program, and school vacation activities sponsored by the Hoosick Falls Youth Center and Community Coalition have all been aimed at providing services to the community in and around Hoosick Falls. A recent grant, however, will bring the community coalition's work to the much larger community of Troy.

The coalition received a two-year, \$150,000 grant to mentor and advise their partners in the city on how to involve and engage their community to prevent substance abuse among the city's youth. They were one of 19 community coalitions, and the only located in a rural area, to receive the Drug-Free Communities Mentoring Coalition Grant from the Office of National Drug Control Policy. "It's an honor that our efforts to create a safe and healthy community have been recognized, and that we've done such a good job within our own community that this national organization feels we can and should mentor a larger city in accomplishing the same goal," said Amanda Haar, chairperson of the HAYC3 Community Coalition.

Better known as HAYC3, the coalition comprises volunteers representing a variety of sectors of the community, including those from schools, the police force, religious sectors, social services, and parents. During monthly gatherings, they meet to discuss community-building events and to develop strategies on how to forge connections among the myriad of organizations that serve the Hoosick Falls area.

The coalition never intended to apply for the award, the highest honor CADCA offers, and only applied after encouragement from Angela Richardson, a public health advisor for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration.

"In the month of May alone, HAYC3 assisted 23 community organizations with events and programs," said Aelish Nealon, executive director of HAYC3. "It's that kind of pulling together to help one another succeed that is helping to unite the Hoosick community."

Nealon also noted that HAYC3 has worked to develop community-minded efforts, like the weekly Farmer's Market and Music in Hoosick program, which provide opportunities for community members to gather and support each other in healthy and productive ways.

Background information provided by Elizabeth Conkey with the Bennington Banner. Ian Benjamin can be contacted at 270-1287.

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