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Sold-Out Session on Thursday to Discuss How Adults Can Help Youth Build Resilience

More than 200 educators, physicians, advocates, and community members will be participating in a sold-out, four-hour session on **Thursday, February 8**, to dig deeper into how trauma and adverse childhood experiences impact the health, well-being, and success of Monroe County youth — and what they can do to help youth be more resilient.

Data and analysis from the most recent Monroe County Youth Risk Behavior Survey will help set the stage for discussion from 8 a.m. to noon in the Memorial Art Gallery ballroom. This survey provides an understanding of the prevalence of trauma in local youth and how the accumulation of adverse life experiences (ACEs) directly increases the risk for poor grades and concerns related to mental health, substance use, violence, and suicidal thoughts or actions.

Understanding where the risk lies leads to new and important directions to intervene at the earliest stages by building resilience. In a groundbreaking step, new measures were included in this analysis that allows educators, community members, and all child-serving providers to hold themselves accountable for reaching the most vulnerable youth through asset development and collective action.

National research has demonstrated that experiencing or witnessing traumatic events before age 18 can create dangerous levels of stress, which impacts healthy brain development if there is no intervention or support. As these youth get older, exposure to trauma can increase the likelihood they will engage in risky behaviors and have more incidents of poor mental and physical health outcomes in later years. An accumulation of these adverse childhood experiences compounds these risks.

According to the survey, 64 percent of students in Monroe County reported experiencing one or more traumatic events. Based on national data, the accepted standard for targeted intervention and supports is for youth with two or more instances of trauma. Nearly 40 percent of Monroe County youth are in this category.

“In the face of these data, it is necessary to remember that there is hope,” says Amy Scheel-Jones, chief of planning for the Monroe County Office of Mental Health. “Research has consistently shown that resilience trumps ACEs. By focusing on how we, as adults, are building resiliency in youth we will minimize risks and help all youth grow to thrive — even in the face of trauma.”

Youth who have experienced two or more adversities and feel that they don’t matter in their community are three times more likely to consider suicide than others their age who do feel they matter. “This is work for all us,” says Scheel-Jones. “We can all help youth understand that they matter to us, that we care, and that they are valuable beyond measure. The exceptional interest in this discussion alone demonstrates this commitment”.

To drive home the importance of action, the event will feature the new documentary *Resilience: the Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope*. This evocative documentary explores three real-world examples of the positive impact of trauma-responsive care and resilience building. Through the lens of a primary care physician, a school, and a community services organization, discussion participants will see that this work is possible, vital, and changes lives.

A panel discussion will offer local examples of positive work already begun in Monroe County. Panelists will include: Dr. Lesli Meyers and Lynn Carragher of Brockport Central School District; Jennifer Perry of Hillside Family of Agencies; and Dr. Laura J. Shipley of Panorama Pediatric Group. They will share their successes and challenges, as well as practical steps to be more responsive to all young people, while particularly helping those who have experienced or witnessed traumatic events.

“What is truly exciting about this event is that we have the opportunity to build upon the existing work already underway in the community,” says Dr. Elizabeth Meeker, director of training and practice Transformation at Coordinated Care Services, Inc. “When we can align and coordinate services across sectors with the science behind trauma and resilience, the potential power of our collective intervention only increases.”

All participants will be invited to explore the relevance of the youth survey data to their own work, and determine what direct actions could take to help youth become more resilient. Emphasis will be placed on breaking down silos and allowing adults from all sectors to connect in this effort to accelerate impact on our youth’s health and well-being, as well as social and academic success.

Event sponsors include Coordinated Care Services, Inc.; Consortium on Trauma, Illness and Grief in Schools; Monroe County Office of Mental Health; the Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson Foundation; and Rochester Area Community Foundation.

Trauma-Informed Care is an approach that explicitly acknowledges the impact of trauma on those served as well as on the workforce providing services and integrates that understanding into all aspects of service delivery. Employing this approach helps to create a culture that promotes recovery, healing, and resilience and actively avoid re-traumatization.

The Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Network has been convening local trauma experts since 2014. It is a small group comprised of providers, researchers, and advocates to raise awareness and provide support for agencies working to reduce the stresses of traumatic experiences in the community. The TIC Network, led by two funders — The Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson Foundation and Rochester Area Community Foundation — is also exploring ways to further support this work, particularly through research and evaluation. The TIC Network had strong representation in the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative Trauma Resource Team.

Coordinated Care Services, Inc. (CCSI) is a nonprofit management services organization with 25 years of experience partnering with customers in the behavioral health and human services field. CCSI provides training, research, and evaluation expertise, particularly in the area of trauma-informed care.

The Consortium on Trauma, Illness, and Grief in Schools (TIG) is a countywide effort that prepares school districts to have appropriate mental health support in place when staff must respond to events involving trauma, violence, illness and death. This collaboration with the Monroe County Office of Mental Health and the surrounding school districts was piloted in 2001 with six school districts and 20 school staff. Today, there are more than 500 TIG-trained staff in every Monroe County school district as well as some private schools and three districts in neighboring counties.

Rochester Area Community Foundation serves an eight-county region that includes Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Yates, and Wayne counties. Last year, the Community Foundation distributed nearly \$30 million in grants and scholarships from more than 1,300 charitable funds created by individuals, families, businesses and organizations. Discretionary grantmaking focuses on creating a more equitable community and strengthening the vitality of our region. Since 1972, the Community Foundation has distributed more than \$426 million in grants and scholarships.

The Wilson Foundation was created in 1963 by Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson out of a deep sense of commitment to the Rochester community. Over its 50-year history, the foundation has been committed to social and community initiatives in Rochester and throughout the nation, particularly through research and advocacy work focusing on the role families play in the homelessness system. Its mission is to improve quality of life through initiating and supporting projects that measurably demonstrate a means of creating a sense of belonging within the family and the community.