

>> Thank you coming to the Healthy Minds podcast where we host conversations with people who are really good listeners.

And we asked them to share with us.

I'm Lucy Caldwell

I work for the Fairfax County Public Schools.

>> Today with us we have Chad Christian. As a prevention specialist, he works with the wellness health promotion and prevention team of the Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board.

Chad has worked in the prevention space for the last 3 years. He leads the way in mental health stigma reduction. Chad, we're so glad to have you here. .

Here we are we have now

agreed that students will be returning to school in person starting on February 16th, and they're going to be a slow return coming on back in

Nate been virtual for many many months now right.

And so how has this impacted sort of some of the work that you do at the csb having students to or online predominantly

has that impacted your kit off.

>> So it hasn't impacted as much as you think it's far students are concerned this will be the first real test with working with our young people these youth that many Grant initiatives but as far as our personal work.

It's been a complete shift we did all of our trainings

our fares and all that stuff, you know face to face

person to person we're kind of shifting over to a virtual world also just like the rest of the nation getting used to use these different platforms finding out different ways we can assimilate information to the community.

It's been a bit of a task nothing at this point it's a pretty smooth sailing ship.

>> What are some of the youth led initiatives that have taken place in years past.

>> So last year right in the middle of the pandemic we had the healthy minds matter they hosted a virtual walk to provide information on mental health advocacy.

Within the foster care system back to that Lake Braddock used a grant to post positive messaging throughout the school to offset negative messages.

And to promote positive thinking.

We had the cpd see the community preservation and Development corporation which hosted a 3 month course that taught lessons on mental health awareness in the community.

She can really get as creative as you want to with these projects is all about making sure that the youth

that the mission is a youth led at the youth getting their voices out there starting to create the change they want to see on their own terms, including that peer to peer connection.

>> So how long as these grants been available and how do people find out more about them if we have.

>> Students or student groups are interested so the initiative started back in 2010.

So if you want to learn more about how to actually apply for this grand can email me directly a csp prevention at Fairfax County dot gov.

About my personal email, this Chad period Christian to at Fairfax County dot gov isn't going to Fairfax County website.

And type you fed me rant right in the search bar and give you the whole proposal or how you can apply.

Some pretty simple process.

So count a little more about the initiative just so people know exactly what it is absolutely I want to know more about.

>> Where the money comes from how much money people get for these what are the use the money for.

>> So the youth to me Grant initiative is a great opportunity for Fairfax County used to become familiar with prevention work.

Specifically when it comes to reducing stigma around mental health.

The initiative itself has 3 goals is to empower youth to reduce the stigma of mental Health. In the communities of focus on suicide prevention educate youth on the facts regarding mental illness, including how to recognize it and how to seek help for themselves or others and also how to educate youth in ways they can promote their own and others mental health to the grant provides a platform and financial backing of up to a \$1000 for you to implement initiatives.

They create safe spaces to begin having healthy conversation around mental health.

Now this is a regional initiative to the suicide prevention action network.

Okay.

So that's the partnership.

>> When you talk about healthy conversations around mental health community samples that and for any of the parents or caregivers or anybody listening how did they start a healthy conversation about mental health.

>> Sure sure I think the first thing that we want to acknowledge that mental health even at this point is still a very heavily stigmatized conversation.

Yeah, some people are embarrassed by the mental health status or scared to talk about a Beanie hat mental health disorders they may be experiencing.

What this does is it breaks down those barriers and provide some normalcy in discussing mental health and advocacy part allows young people to begin having these conversations with each other with different moved bays the stigma presence.

So people have to suffer in silence, you can know exactly what you can go to find help you can talk to develop communities around your specific needs and will be something that the suffer in silence with.

>> How long have you been involved in mental health and Prevention.

>> Up and working in the mental health space since about 2012, I work in the prevention space for 3 years actually my 3 anniversary with Fairfax County was on the 8th of January congratulations.

I think.

>> So how did you get interested in mental health in prevention.

>> So mental health was always something that I was in close proximity to come in growing up I have a bunch of family members to arrive.

Community activists organizers things of that nature and mental health is a big part of the conversation.

Also at the numbers were very close to me some some of which will raise me show with their own mental health disorders

so I was lucky in that coming up I was in heavily influenced by the stigma of mental health.

It was

conversation that we're very normal to have yeah.

So that's how began my kind of journey into the mental health space, but of course he went to college and learn more in a kind of spent in love with assisting people with identifying the help needed

and facilitating those positive conversations around the Mattel space.

>> I've seen a lot of changes in how we talk about mental health in the years that you've been involved.

>> Yes, yes, yes, the fact that we're even having a conversation about mental health is the biggest change from I remember a lot of communities that I worked in or even my own community.

Mental health wasn't something that was to be discussed.

Now that's changing.

We recognize that about one in 5 people will experience a mental health disorder in their lifetime here in the U.S..

But the median age of onset of some disorders like anxiety being about 11 years old this is a conversation that should be ignored, although it has been you know for years, the more healthy option in the best option would be to be stigmatized mental health

on and begin to have those conversations with them so that we can make sure that our communities healthy healthy and safe.

>> Are there any particular projects or experiences that you've had that really impacted the way you approach her job, something where maybe you saw stigma and then project

took place and it seemed to make an impact city thing come to mind like that.

>> Sure sure I think that you may have been present when we had our because a youth summit

and we had one particular group I can't remember the name now think it was the West African collaborative where a young lady.

I think she was 12 years old discussed how mental health was not to be discussed at all in her culture

with this grant she was able to facilitate a class

that not only taught her peers about mental health, but also hired someone to have conversations about mental health with her parents so a community that was against public discussion of mental health

was able to receive additional information on how mental health can affect you and the importance of the stigmatizing mental health and she was able to report that because of this initiative.

The community began the hill began to come together.

They were able to communicate on a deeper level.

So this program itself is creating to shipping in the area for entire communities.

>> I it really is and when you look at with this young lady did 12 years old.

What leader what a leader and that must be really interesting for you to run into students like that and see the difference.

>> It's the best part of it I think as adults we often tell our young people that they're the leaders in

you know they have the world in their palms.

But oftentimes when it comes to allowing them to leave we don't really let them do it right kind of tell them what they should be focusing on how they should run their initiatives view that many Grant kind of flips that

we do is we provide financial backing to young people platform in the support they may need to get those initiatives out and they feel be most effective for creating safe.

Communities most appears.

In doing so they begin to really own the vote they play in creating.

The states bases that they want to shifting the narrative is that they want to see in the future they don't have to wait until they're adults to start affecting change.

You have to wait now as their young people on a dull start affecting change.

They have the resources and the know how to do it now and it's great to be able to help facilitate

that change for young people with young people.

>> If you all seen at the csb how the pandemic has really had an impact on students and young people's mental health.

>> Sure sure.

I think the pandemic is affecting everybody I know I do a lot of mentorship and the young people that I mentor speak a lot about having those missed connections.

Yeah.

At a young person who's just graduated high school he was unable to have have a real graduation

all of those things that you work so hard to attain know his 4th grade II was unable to have that missing his friends missing sports that affects how they would to apply for college.

So the effect of the pandemic and a verb radar throughout the community, especially for young people of all ages.

>> As a mentor, what were some of the things that you said or did with him to help him through that.

>> I think a lot of times I would only focus on self-care on independence health care so they said they can do on their own to help manage how they're feeling.

So what idea was asked to sit him in getting to know what he really enjoyed doing.

His whole world evolved around going to school going to football practice in coming home and doing homework right.

So now these at home, we have to find things to do turned out the use a great painter, he loves to read.

So you gotta he has a huge Library of different novelties into now what kind of younger as you're eating everything, he's really is sci-fi yeah, I have my books and getting into that even start a film making.

So with this pandemic did do

was allowed him to start broadening his mind open in is much different possibilities and entertainment he didn't think were possible.

And also strengthening connections right so even though you can spend time with your friends face to face you can always call.

You can always text you can always have those video conferences.

So I think that did help him a lot of other people that I mentor tug on new ways to stay connected.

And now they haven't before deeper connections in the ever had so interesting to talk about the deeper connections.

>> Because it does seem doesn't that the pandemic is sort of separated.

Yeah, you talk to how often

and what the circumstances are getting together.

I love that look right isn't right.

>> With these new virtual platforms that kind of moves a lot of those days you can talk to people

that you never would have had the chance even interact with prior.

>> Or you may not have wanted to you know think about it from a student perspective.

I you know that person is in this group or that group then you know we don't talk but in the online world may be.

Maybe it wasn't too bad.

>> That was so bad and allows you to cultivate your own personal friend group to weigh feel safe, you feel comfortable.

We don't have to engage with those folks that you know may have been some stress.

But you're allowed to really engage with those folks that you are comfortable with and kind of strengthen those connections.

>> Right, I wonder if

the applicant's the projects that are going to be coming to you this year will be different based on the pandemic have you seen that yet.

>> Haven't seen any applications yet, but I'm assuming so I'm assuming some interest has an interest in seeing how creative the some people will be and we know how young people or anything else to definitely creative.

I know for

how many of these grants to give out.

So we get we have up to \$6,000 okay.

So we keep on giving grant that we need that threshold some people off a grant or a \$100 something apply \$4,000 wonderful so we don't have a specific amount in mind that \$6,000 to threshold.

>> OK have you publicize, I mean you're here today because this was an opportunity to get the word out yes Matty publicize this opportunity that young people.

What are the ages that they can start at how young can they be.

>> For these Grant opportunities so they can be pretty young a lot of the applicant, usually middle school to high school age, OK, they can be a little bit younger.

But as far as publicize again we do a lot of just personal outreach.

The visas to be the see you I want to be see eye to

but the csb has discussion boards in the have different post the post in there.

I've reached out personally to Fairfax County teachers counselors soon.

Sports leaders, everybody you can think of any kind of spread the word.

And of course podcast I mean people like you so bullish on us by the work, everybody we don't want any section of the community to misinformation to miss this opportunity absolutely.

>> Tell me more about what some of the students that you're working with and even csb trends that you all are seen.

Coming more about that

as far as

what's going on and what you know the schools we really haven't

in with students in person and you've had that opportunity to do that some

and what are you seeing and how do you think that adjustment

coming back in person before students.

>> I don't know I don't know

>> and with the social distancing and keep not going to hold somebody seems impossible right. Yeah.

I think is different.

>> So for some of the people that work with young people that I work with they can't wait to get back to school.

Yeah.

I'm not sure how they'll do with social distancing.

But they can't wait to get back to school and have those interpersonal connections we can do with their friends.

Mom, some of the people that I work with enjoy being at home, they enjoy the virtual landscape even considering going to college virtually now.

So it's kind of depends on the spectrum.

The one thing I have noticed about young people their incredibly resilient.

Yeah, incredibly resilient.

I think when the pandemic first started there was a huge uproar with how these kids got to deal with this can even make it.

Outside the school environment.

They're kind of Shawn's that they can

I think they were just a lot better than we have adults I think so too.

Yeah, you try to look at it from Island seating already.

>> Right in you know, we don't know and when you think about it a young person hasn't lived

that life they haven't had those experiences that

those last 2 or older have had and in high school or a grade frankly.

>> And they're already much more acclimated to virtual communication and we are as well that's right so we had to figure out they were already doing it through gaming through facetime whenever the platinum flat-pack former U.S. you already engage with one another virtually.

>> And a lot of young people I've talked to said it's not that different.

They were used to being alone anyway next thing in getting together virtually.

What are some of the platforms you mentioned the platforms

for some of the platforms that maybe even parents listening, there is caters listing might not know about where students are connecting and are they platforms that we would want to connect on.

>> Whether or not we want to connect.

I think they'll be a personal decision but that which is a big one to tell us about what which is like a gaming platform, you can also tap public discussion.

Lot of amenities use this when they're playing video games they want to have our discussion groups can do via twitch you also have your face time a lot of gaming enough. X box playstation supporting someone can get huge communities together while you're playing and have conversations

funny enough, I got kids

what they do and they're playing video games.

I have communication with each other talk about school because their plane just something to kind of keep their minds busy whatever their reading whatever the into now allow their plane had these big discussion groups with to talk about everything else outside the game bother playing, wow.

>> You know it's interesting because we think about we used to worry about screen time and we used to worry about too many video games and things like that.

But now you know what what's

but we say that you know do we say oh, yeah we need more screen time so you can connect more.

>> Right right.

I think it's about creating a balance I think screen time at this point is necessary.

Yeah, I think we'll have to get back to a place where we're starting to recreate those into personal face to face connection that may have been lost this year in the comfortability was just having that one on one conversation.

But as of right now we're we're lucky that we had those screens to keep us connected.

>> It's funny because I've just noticed that when you get together in a larger group, the only time I've seen people in the past year was at the vaccination clinic, yeah, yeah, and I tell you what I was 6 Austin in every scene that there people you're you're used to being alone now it's going take a lot of energy isn't it to be back together in groups.

>> It is it is it is I come to the office about

once so weak now to send off an arc and for the revive program that we do.

So sometimes I just and the office for the entire day and even that which seems so normal before.

Yeah, it seems like a huge task now coming into the office engage with people that are going up and down the stairs moving about the building very limited movement, but whatever movement you're doing.

It seems like a huge thing now and it was just a normal part of the day before or if you're you know walking around the building and you see people you go the other way and go the other way don't know how to connect with them and step outside of the door to get the more spatial really know what to do

I'm kind of redefining the social contracts.

>> That was that's what I'm wondering about how do we do that and it's a parent or somebody is listening

kind of conversations where to find it patients like this we've never had to do this before yeah talk to our students about that.

I think it will be learning as you go.

>> I know the young people that I work with not shy about asking them with a comfortable with. Yeah, you know, I'm sometimes I'll meet with my young people have a socially distance session at a park

or will go outside and

have a conversation, you know it's 6 feet in between us just make sure that we're staying safe wearing a mask and all of that but having those conversations we're not scared to say are you comfortable with this meeting.

Do you mind if we wear a mask, I don't mean to offend you about wearing a mask, I don't think that you are sick.

I want to keep us all safe as being able to verbalize intentions.

I think will make things a lot smoother.

>> Yeah that's that's a great idea great suggestions were talking to Chad Christian who's a prevention specialist with the community services board

we're talking about grants that are available through the community services board for mental health anti stigma projects, this man,

he told us about a few of them

are there any others that sort of sticking to your mind that might give our listeners ideas on what they can share with their students for their children.

>> Sure sure sure.

So we've had group's head of creative community initiatives for their community and I think one thing that I want to want to make clear is that this these initiatives are confined to the school or any specific setting.

They can be implemented anywhere.

What do you mean, you know you can do it.

For your school you can go for a community center you can do it for your community you can do it wherever they are young people that you want to engage with now that we're doing on on

platforms.

Using those online resource of being able to spread a message as far as you can is a huge thing we're trying to push with these with these grants this year.

I don't people to feel like they're limited in how they can implement their their projects.

The only limitation is your imagination as long as you're working within the parameters of mental Health and suicide prevention.

You can go as big as you would like to go.

>> Yeah that's exciting.

I don't take up too much of your time, but usually what we talk about here is sort of and with some questions about yourself and first of all is there anything else you'd like to add to that you haven't shared yet

with her listeners.

>> Sure sure sure sites will share some of the dates for the grants.

Yes, yeah, yes, yes.

The actual.

Awards are being announced on the 12th of February.

So you have coming up is coming up is coming up so we had a proposal due date set for the 8th.

That's going to be a soft today will give up until the 10th for folks to come for folks to send in there.

Proposals OK February 10th everybody who 10th at the latest

I will be selecting on the 10th 1110th and will be making the community aware to receive the grants by the 12th.

The project period will begin February 15th.

And we'll go all the way through July 30th, so yeah, which window to

begin to implement your project report on the progress getting report on them to make sure that everybody is able to it's benefits of your hard work.

>> Yeah, absolutely and you can tell your mentees to tell their friends to yeah, but in the work, yeah.

That

yeah, you know it's about staying busy and doing projects she care about finding your passion and maybe that's one of the things that has come out of the pandemic for people

to expand

their lot knowledge about different issues and expand what their interests are better than me.

>> With all this time that we have to kind of figure things out it's very important to look within yourself and kind of decide what makes you happy right.

I know for something for myself this with the pandemic did for me and allowed me to really put things in perspective.

We spend more time working on those relationships that may not have devoted as much time as I would like to try to prove mom strengthening those interpersonal connections and we work on self-care.

>> Yeah, it's it's nice that you share that I think one of the things that's done for me is just I really appreciate my home and I appreciate my family, yeah, and my close friends and

even my cats.

I just they make me happy sure in so
you know it has been stressful in many many ways just listening to the hard stories
and you know secondary trauma problem and for a lot of us
have you know, it's it's been a it's been a bit of a battle,
yeah, actually for many of us
and looking forward to a brighter things ahead and even a day like today where it's sunny skies,
pure blue just received a beautiful day right.

So tell me.

What is the oldest thing you have in your freezer
the oldest thing that I have in my freezer
how about thing out he's not listening to this.

>> So I'm really into smoothies Saab out all kinds of different frozen fruits at the start of the
pandemic

you know I feel they're still there still that we have some new stuff you know, but that those
original packages of probably still there somewhere.

>> Okay it didn't go bad quickly should be okay after year.

Which are most unusual talent.

>> My most unusual talent.

I'm not sure if I have an unusual talent.

In college, I wrote did it poetry
us to do a lot of fighting now.

I don't publicize it as much as I used to, but I guess an unusual talent.

That's interesting bridge to publicize it.

All over I said different different blogs

there's a lot of and I competitions and things like that and college yeah that was a huge part of
my college experience I don't again too much now the but I guess that would be my unusual
talent.

>> I'm going through poetry phase, myself
and did some poetry slams yeah, and
yeah, but it's really personal my poetry.

Yeah, when I come across as a pretty cheerful person, but my poetry is too narrow.

Tough stuff that I've seen.

You know just working.

So many years and police world shores on us,

you know 20 some years and then not the mental health world in here.

Fcps which is little bit.

Calmer right, yeah, still owes just too tough.

I got to figure out.

What if I'm going to reason that poetry or not you should talk to you about that later
and then finally, what is the best thing about working from home for you over the past year.

I think the best thing about working from home is being able to cultivate a space we just
completely comfortable.

I think you're working in the office they're all kind of social contract that you have to abide by just by walking into that space but when you're at home, you can just be as comfortable as you want to really create a space where you can be the most efficient at your work.

According to your own terms.

Yes, I really enjoy that I was able to create a work area and we updated some furniture and some art that makes us feel calm and comfortable and happy

I think working from home and just in a general better mood that I was ever in a negative mood. But I just you know you happier at home more comfortable comfortable at home.

>> So Chad I really appreciate you being here today, I can't really remember if you could share your e-mail address again,

sure everybody listening in will also put it in writing so that will accompany this podcast so anybody who's interested in

going after one of these grants in next week or 2.

Please do so

so you and your children, your family can make a difference in mental health in combating the stigma that often goes along with mental health.

>> Yes, ma'am I want to say thank you for having me the e-mail bcsp prevention at FX County dot gov and also provide my personal email, which chair period, Christian to at Fairfax County of.

>> Well, thank you so much Chad thank you and listeners to you have a topic.

>> You'd like to healthy minds podcast or explore please let us know send your suggestions to healthy minds at CVS.