



Laraway Insider

Volume 2 Issue 3

October 2022

Special points of interest:

- Laraway's Early Beginnings
- Laraway Program and Services in 2023
- New Website and branding
- Staff Milestones
- Employees of the Month

Inside this issue:

Laraway Turns 50!	1
The Next 50 Years—Our Programs	2
New Website	3
Major Milestones and Anniversaries	3
Employees of the Month	4

Laraway Turns 50!



In 1972, Rumsey Jesser, a resident of Waterville, was called to action by a group of wayward students. Rumsey met a group of young people who expressed a dislike for the mainstream educational opportunities available at that time. It turned out, those students were each experiencing a variety of adversity which impacted their ability to succeed in the public school environment.

A kind invitation from Rumsey toward productive time, inspired the next 50 years of excellence in alternative education. According to an article from the Johnson State College newspaper, *Basement Medicine*, from April 1973, Rumsey Jesser, Board Member, said, "The purpose of Laraway School is to provide children between the ages of 11 and 18 with an alternative living and educational experience due to economic, social, emotional, or educational deprivation in the public schools" (Boyer, 1973).

The initial board of Laraway School, recruited two teachers to deliver the program to students. Sherry Distenfield and Charlotte Festa. The two women designed a curriculum that concentrated on literacy, math, and physical education. They offered a variety of other activities based on students interests and strengths. In the first class of students, they engaged in carpentry, typing, electricity, and auto-mechanics. They also provided instruction in subjects such as: consumer education, gardening, and food preparation. Additionally, field trips and guest speakers supplemented the educational experience. (Boyer, 1973).

The early days relied on strong community partnerships. The delivery of services was on the Johnson State College campus, in the domes. Lamoille County Mental Health partnered with Laraway to provide support to the students emotional wellness and to the foster parents hosting the youth (Boyer, 1973).

That first year, Laraway School served 11 students. In the years since, our organization has served thousands. We expanded on a concept created by concerned citizens to ensure students found opportunities to learn and develop skills to become independent and contributing community members. We now have more than 100 employees and serve over 150 youth and families annually across our agency programs. It's pretty remarkable what passionate people can do with a shared vision. In this case, the impact has improved thousands of lives and countless more in the future.

Boyer, S. (1973). *Laraway School: A New Alternative in Education*. *Basement Medicine*, 2(8), 3.

The Next 50 Years

Over the past 50 years, Laraway has seen a great deal of change. As an organization, we have developed three distinct departments whose programs and services are well respected and in demand.

Laraway School is a licensed Independent school by the Agency of Education. There is an equal focus on supporting students' education and mental health needs. Laraway School serves students K-12 who have experienced, or in some cases may still be exposed to various childhood adversities and trauma.

Students are predominantly on Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for concurrent social/emotional learning needs.

Laraway School incorporates adventure education, art, music, land lab, and vocational training into the curriculum offered. The staff focus on building trusting relationships with students based on consistency and compassion. Our trauma informed approach helps address the individual social, emotional, and academic needs of students. We establish positive connections to foster collaboration with our families, schools, and community partners.

Our goals and outcomes are based on the individual student needs and plans. Some examples include: helping a student transition back to their public school, gaining employment skills and experience, successfully completing graduation requirements, and increasing safety and self-regulation.



Backpack supports individual students in the public school environment. Our Tier 3 program pairs a Behavior Interventionist with a student to help them navigate the routine and expectations of the milieu. Our Tier 2 program, involves a Behavior Specialist, assigned to a school setting, responsible for supporting up to five different students throughout their day at times when they need intervention.

Backpack serves students in K-12 across a variety of schools in our local districts. Most Backpack students are on an IEP or 504 plan in order to receive our services. We have a diverse population of students and staff in Backpack.

Backpack uses Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and trauma-informed practices to design individual treatment plans for students complete with intervention strategies to help the child succeed. Collaboration with our families, schools, and community partners is essential when customizing individual plans of care. Backpack focuses on establishing therapeutic relationships between students and the staff based on credibility, consistency, and compassion.

Substitute Care is licensed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as a Child Placing Agency (CPA). This allows Laraway the opportunity to recruit and approve our own foster and respite care providers. We work with a variety of home providers across the northern part of the state. We tend to serve youth between the ages of 16-20 in our therapeutic foster care program.

Substitute Care also operates two licensed Residential Treatment Programs (RTP), Foote Brook and Capital Meadows. Each home is approved to serve up to four residents in the custody of DCF and range in age from 5-19 years. We have a diverse population of youth and staff connected to Substitute Care and we use an eclectic approach of several practices that promote stabilization, independence, and safety.



Laraway's New Look

As we celebrate 50 years of service, we are continuing to evolve and thought it was necessary to celebrate our 50th anniversary with a makeover. We are proud to introduce our new logo and website. The new logo represents Laraway's commitment to diversity, our dedication to constantly improve our craft, utilizing the creativity, passion, and innovation of our talented staff, while maintaining a professional atmosphere based on learning, growth, and personal development. Learn more about our services and employees by visiting our new website at www.laraway.org.



Home ▾ About ▾ Services ▾ Careers ▾ Get Involved ▾ Sign in

DONATE



SERVING CHILDREN
IS WHAT WE DO



Our organization is lucky to have these individuals and recognize the combined service and years of expertise.

Backpack:

Andy Marchand hit the 15-year mark at Laraway earlier this summer. Andy has supported students in our Backpack program for the entirety of his time at Laraway. Andy has worked in our schools as a Behavior Interventionist, case manager, and as of late, a Student Advocate. Andy uses his sense of humor and calm demeanor to help students navigate their difficulties.

Major Milestones and Anniversaries

Vinny Sabino has served the youth in Backpack for the past decade. Vinny is our other Student Advocate and does a masterful job of establishing relationships with students based on outdoor and active interests they share and valued by our school partners.

Lisa Burt-Parkhurst was recently promoted within the last year to our Director of Backpack. Lisa has worked in Backpack for the past 8 years. During that time she has been a Behavior Specialist, Consultant, and Program Manager. Prior to her transition to Backpack, Lisa spent her first 7 years with Substitute Care as a case manager in our therapeutic foster care program. Congratulations on your 15-year anniversary, Lisa!

Laraway School:

Amber Cheever celebrated 25-years of dedicated service to our agency this fall. Amber has had multiple roles in Laraway School during her tenure with us. Most recently Amber has been leading our Special Education team as the Special Education Coordinator. Early this fall, Amber was appointed as our interim School Director because of her experience, commitment, and leadership. Amber uses her degrees in mental health and education to craft her interventions and strategies with students and to guide and support staff at the school.



Substitute Care:

Antonia Messina hit her 10-year anniversary this fall. Antonia has served the Substitute Care program as the Crisis Coordinator and Case Manager for most of that time. Antonia uses a holistic approach to treatment with her clients and impresses healthy living strategies to aid in their recovery and healing.





275 Vermont Route 15 West
P. O. Box 621
Johnson, Vermont 05656

Phone: 802-635-2805
Fax: 802-635-3696

www.laraway.org



Employees of the Month Profiles

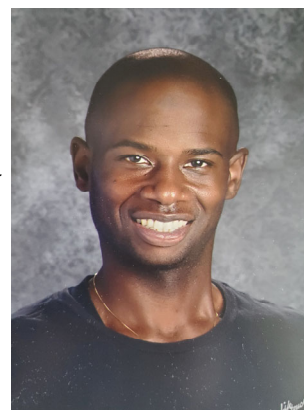
CONGRATULATIONS to our three staff this month who were nominated and selected by their peers to be our Employees of the Month in their programs for September.

Melinda Sundquist, Substitute Care. “Mindy” supports our youth as one of our Residential Home Supervisors at our new program, Capital Meadows. “Mindy is an example of leadership by serving others. The staff look to Mindy for direction. Her creative incentives, and consistency with boundaries, fosters better attitudes and helps promote a positive work environment at the house. Mindy values the integrity of purpose at Laraway, providing a safe place for youth to develop the skills they need to succeed.”



Ethan Whaley, Laraway School. Ethan accepted a new role this year as a Social Studies teacher for our middle and high school groups. One colleague said, “I have always admired how we work with kids. He puts the kids first, helping them learn to value themselves. His positivity and focus on the students is inspiring. This program would not be the same without him.”

Jared Saloomey, Backpack. Jared is one of our most experienced and skilled Behavior Interventionist in the Tier 3, Backpack program. His colleagues said, “Jared has such a calm and professional demeanor and that transfers to the student he is working with. He has a positive attitude and energy that is contagious. Jared is friendly with everyone and a great ambassador for Backpack.” Another peer in the program recognized, “Jared brings a calming influence that helps both staff and students.”



Please keep those nominations coming. Our November newsletter will recognize three more of your peers you nominated for October.

Backpack: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/N5G38KY>

Laraway School: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F86GNH5>

Substitute Care: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FLPWT5M>