



# Laraway Insider

Volume 2 Issue 5

December 2022

## Special points of interest:

- Capital Meadows Acquisition
- Holiday Card Project
- Annual Appeal
- Employees of the Month

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## Expanding Opportunities for Youth

"This is the best program I have been a part of. They allow me opportunities to be me and learn and grow." This is what one of our residents at the new Capital Meadows residential treatment program had to say.

Laraway was approached in June of 2022 by the Onion River Crossroads program about acquiring their residential facility and property. ORC, as they were commonly referred, made the difficult decision to close their doors after decades of quality service to young women within the system of care.



"Our first thought was Laraway," said Suzanne Smith, former Executive Director of Onion River Crossroads. "They have an outstanding reputation for their work with kids and families."

With a lot of due diligence and effort from both Laraway and ORC leadership, we were able to transfer the assets in August of 2022 and open with residents beginning in early September. The youths who were residing at ORC prior to the transition were able to be successfully placed within the Laraway therapeutic foster care network and avoided a major disruption through this transaction.

All of the staff remaining from ORC chose to transition to Laraway. One of those staff, Melanie Mitchell-Mansfield said, "The team assembled is exceptional. The vibe is amazing, we communicate and have each other's back. We are consistent with the kids and on the same page."

Venus Russell, one of those staff remarked, "The youth have the opportunities to be themselves and make choices. They feel empowered and are encouraged by our team."

Capital Meadows is one of two Residential Treatment Programs (RTP) operated at Laraway Youth & Family Services. RTP is a designation by the Department of Children & Families (DCF) to ensure programs are following best practices for safety, treatment, and care for residents. Our partners from the Residential Licensing and Special Investigations Unit (RLSI) have been supportive and helpful throughout this transition. They acknowledged, "Laraway has a long history with us of providing exceptional care to the young people in custody. Laraway has resources that will provide expanded opportunities to these youth at Capital Meadows."



## Capital Meadows Continued

One of the residents shared, "The staff are amazing! They are very nice and care about us. I know they genuinely want to help me. Since I have been here, I have got a job, play a sport, and am working on getting my driver's license. This program is great for helping us become more independent. Another resident felt, "I really like it here. I feel safe and feel the staff listen to my needs. It feels more like a home than it does a program."

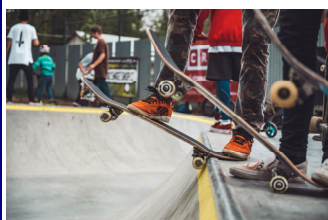
One of the unique program elements of Capital Meadows is it includes two horses on site. Alexa Frenselli is our equine manager and engages the residents in care taking and therapeutic riding. "As the Barn Manager, I have the privilege of watching the youth become confident and trusting in other beings and themselves. I see their face light up and their personalities come alive as soon as they arrive to the barn. I am so thankful for my role and the therapeutic value the horses provide our residents. I am always impressed with how the staff are able to work as a team. Working at Capital Meadows has felt like a second family."



We are finding ways to provide other clients at Laraway access to the therapeutic horse care. We recognize the benefits are tremendous and we now have the location and tools to offer this support to our youth. Alexa is enhancing her capabilities through a certification process that will include therapeutic riding. We are exploring ways to combine the care and riding with individual, group, and family therapy with our licensed clinicians.

## Laraway's Annual Appeal Campaign

We want to thank all of our generous and thoughtful donors. To date, we have received contributions from 61 individuals and businesses, including participation from our senior leadership and board of directors. We are very close to exceeding last year's campaign.



This year we have provided youth grants for skateboarding equipment, snowboarding equipment, and basketball shoes to promote healthy and productive leisure and recreation activities. We have used these funds to help a youth acquire replacement eye glasses, stay safe and warm with hats and gloves, and participate in family traditions to supplement Halloween costumes. We purchased luggage for our youth in foster care and residential placements, so they will never have to move or transition from one place to another in trash bags again.

The annual appeal funds raised every year are unrestricted. They provide us the flexibility to help our youth and families where the support is needed. We have covered the cost of a utility bill for a family during the holidays and the cost for an electrician to repair a broken heating unit. We have also provided gift cards for groceries and gas to help families get basic needs met.



We intend to add playground features and other outdoor equipment this spring for our youth to encourage appropriate and safe movement and exercise. There are still several youth yet to apply for their Laraway Youth Grant and we will help supplement summer field trips and activities for the kids.

If you would like to contribute to the Laraway Annual Appeal Campaign there is still time to do so. You can donate on our new website at [www.laraway.org](http://www.laraway.org), or mail a check to Laraway Youth & Family Services, P.O. Box 621, Johnson, Vermont 05656, attention; Dave McAllister. All gifts are appreciated!



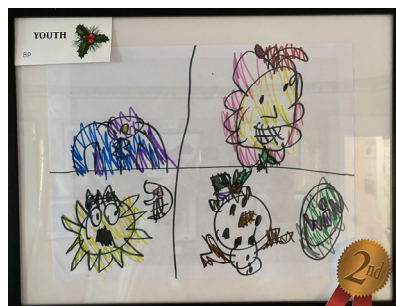
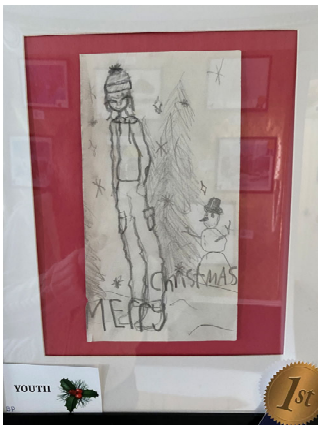
## Laraway's Holiday Card Project

Each November, students and staff across the Laraway programs share their creative and artistic talents by submitting entries into our Holiday Card Project. The submissions are entered into a contest judged by the Admin team at Laraway and prizes are awarded to the top three designs in each department. These winners become cards used by Laraway staff throughout the year to send thank you notes to donors, acknowledgements, and more. Every entry receives a stack of their design and gift to share with those closest to them.

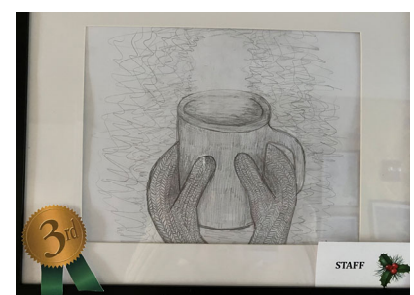
These are the winners from our Laraway School student submissions:



There are the winners from our Backpack client submissions:



These are the winners from our Staff submissions:







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## 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 December.



**Alexa Frensilli, Substitute Care.** Alexa has a unique role with Substitute Care. She works directly with youth as a Residential Support Staff but also facilitates our equine programming at Capital Meadows and oversees the care for the horses. "Alexa is always willing to come in early, stay late, and help out wherever the youth need her. She is a great role model for the clients. She has an excellent work ethic and amazing attitude."

**Lisa Rock, Laraway School.** Lisa is our Food Services Coordinator and has been with Laraway for 15 years. "Lisa is always happy and friendly to the staff and students. She provides healthy and tasty meals which is important to our students' basic needs. Lisa provides a nice balance of full bellies and warm hearts. Lisa is always helpful and accommodating. She is available to support the entire agency with food related needs. Lisa did an amazing job coordinating our Everyone Eats program."



**Cassidy Farnham, Backpack.** Cassidy joined the Backpack team earlier in 2022 as a Behavior Interventionist. "Cassidy demonstrates unconditional positive regard and empathy for her student. She always shows up with a positive attitude and outlook each day, despite the challenges ahead. Cassidy models the nurturing and kindness aspects of a therapeutic relationship that is crucial in facilitating clinical needs for kids. Cassidy will answer the call, whatever the situation to provide support to a colleague or student."

Please keep those nominations coming. Our January newsletter will recognize three more of your peers you nominated for that month.

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

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

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