

NAP Tax Credits
Are still available. See page 8

CONNECTIONS

Newsletter of the Together We Can Foundation — Smart Transitions

TWC Annual Fund Chair

Jim Spore is currently serving as Together We Can Foundation's Annual Fund Chair for 2022-23. Jim is the former



City Manager for Virginia Beach and the recently retired President and CEO of Reinvent Hampton Roads.

"Through their outstanding outcomes with youth at risk of disconnection, Together We Can Foundation is really making a difference in helping prepare Hampton Roads next generation workforce. TWC is a Guidestar Platinum organization with United Way certification. Now would be a great time to support their work with your donation. The QR code below will take you directly to their "Donate" page or you can log in to www.twcfoundation.org and click on the Donate button."

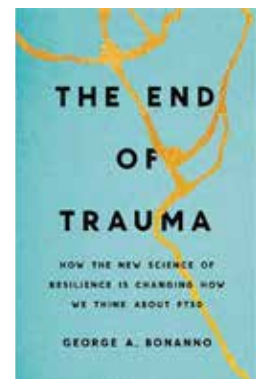


Trauma Informed Care and the Flexibility Mindset with Youth Populations

We hear a lot about PTSD in Hampton Roads. We hear about it because of our veteran populations, but we also hear about it from the agencies who care for youth with risk factors for disconnection.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health diagnosis, but what that diagnosis represents is poor or dysfunctional recovery trajectory from trauma.

In his book, *The End of Trauma: How the New Science of Resilience Is Changing How We Think About PTSD*, research professor, George A. Bonanno, notes that only about 20-25% of people who experience trauma, also experience a negative recovery trajectory or PTSD symptoms. That means that 75-80% of those



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GuideStar



United Way of South Hampton Roads



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Trauma Informed Care and the Flexibility Mindset with Disconnected Youth Populations continued from page 1



experiencing trauma recover from it quite naturally. This group seems to share certain characteristics that can be described as the building blocks of resilience.

A lot has been written about resilience in youth populations and how to foster it in the past 10 years. Unfortunately, little of it has been based on actual research and data. Using direct studies and the review of meta-studies, Bonanno has looked at that 75-80% of the population to determine what they have in common that might lead to their enhanced resilience.

What he found was a set of 3 characteristics he labeled “**The Flexibility Mindset.**” They include the following:

- A tendency toward optimism (“This is going to work out.”)
- Confidence in one’s coping skills (“I have tools to help me get through this or I am open to getting help and learning new coping strategies.”)
- A challenge orientation (“I rise to meet challenges.”)

These characteristics are common among people who experience severe trauma but who recover from it successfully. When faced with traumatic circumstances, people with a “Flexibility Mindset” tend to initiate what Bonanno calls a “Flexibility Sequence.” This sequence forms the healthy recovery trajectory that they experience. “**The Flexibility Sequence**” includes the following steps:

- They engage or get help engaging context sensitivity. They make efforts to distinguish between what happened during the initial traumatic event and what is happening now instead of lumping them together as the same experience.
- They review their own repertoire of strategies for coping with stress and trauma and are open to learning new strategies.
- They engage internal and external feedback monitoring to decide what strategies are working and which ones are failing or need to be changed up.

Essentially, this creates a map of resilience.

So what does this have to do with disconnected youth or with TWC’s Smart Transitions Program? Well, while mental and behavioral health challenges are not an issue we address directly though our Life-Work Success Skills training, those challenges are risk factors for disconnection and our teaching staff needs to be aware that the populations we serve may well have expe-



rienced trauma in their lives. But, more significantly than that, an important part of our process is to help youth become more self-aware and that self-awareness can include the coping skills that are so important to the Flexibility Mindset and Flexibility Sequence. Without a specific therapeutic intent, we can ask youth questions like “Have you ever experienced a challenge or significantly painful event in your life and, if so, what helped you get through it?”, or “Did that event teach you something about yourself or reveal a skill you did not know you had?”.

We are not set up to provide therapeutic care to the youth we serve, but in the preparation for adult life we can help encourage the aspects of the “Flexibility Mindset” and “Flexibility Sequence” that lead to real resilience.

Field Notes: James Reynolds

James Reynolds is a typical senior in high school: he attends classes, he participates in after school activities, and he has great relationships with his peers. However, what sets him apart is the degree to which he dedicates himself to each of these activities. James, a proud student at Bethel High School, has a clear and aware motivation to succeed. He is a student who immediately stood out to me as someone driven to accomplish all of his goals.

Never one to shy from realism, James was able to explain practically step-by-step how he intends to achieve his dreams. During his time as a member of the Life-Work Portfolio Class in January of 2023, James astounded me with his breadth of knowledge and willingness to share. Not a seminar went by where I couldn’t count on learning something new from James (for example, the danger of a Tesla catching on fire and the value to binary coding). When we would discuss future plans, James was open to extending his knowledge while also guided by a desire to serve others. His willingness to both take a deeper look into a field he was already preparing to enter and to explore novel paths served as a great example to others around him. His positive example extends far beyond the classroom, however.

A natural leader, James is also actively involved in leadership roles with the ROTC team at Bethel. His accolades were too numerous to simply list, and he came fully prepared with various certificates to place in his Smart Transitions Life-Work Portfolio. Many students show appreciation for their portfolios, but James showed a dedication to not only building it up but also preparing it for practical use. He shared the value of establishing connections during seminar discussions and showed enthusiasm towards building a collection of documents that can be used for internship interviews not far on the horizon. Understanding the value of establishing a life-work goal and a life-work plan to accomplish that goal is something some students realize over time and others recognize right away. Students like James, however, stand out because of their willingness to explore and to be open to all the future paths before them. Armed with a Life-Work Portfolio and an incredible dedication to his future, it isn’t a question to me of whether James achieves all of his goals—it’s simply a matter of when.



TWC/BRC Smart Transitions Program Instructor, Heather Fine

Making It Work—Our Teacher Partners: Anna-Lisa Wanack



One of the things we have learned over the years of presenting the Life-Work Portfolio Program is that engaged teachers can make a big difference in how successful a program is. Anna-Lisa Wanack is one of those engaged teachers.

Here at Together We Can Foundation, we're all big believers in the concept of branding yourself. We always ask our students to think of themselves as a 'brand' and therefore, imagine how they will be described to others. Will their brand be known for its patience? Creativity? Communication Skills? Or, maybe, all of the above? When it comes to being an adult and navigating careers, we all know that Branding is important, and your reputation matters. That said, my current students got a little 'slice-of-life' lesson in real-time this past week as I entered into Anna-Lisa Wanack's Marketing and Entrepreneurship class.

Anna-Lisa and I met when I first began at TWC, an entire decade ago! I had been at her school, I.C. Norcom, at the time and was meeting with teachers to showcase the benefits of our Life-Work Portfolio Course. Anna-Lisa thought it would be a good fit and brought me into her technology classes that year, and for a few more after.

When you work with as many teachers as I do every year, you can't help but notice various teaching styles. I always liked how energetic Anna-Lisa was everyday with her students, and how enthusiastic she was getting them to focus on their learning as well. It can be an uphill battle, but she made it look easy. When her military husband got orders to relocate, we lost her at Norcom, and Ohio gained a new teacher. For me personally, she and I remained Facebook friends, so I saw as time progressed that she had moved from Ohio, to Florida, then up to Maryland. I lost track on FB as sometimes happens but imagine my pleasant surprise when I was presenting to a group of teachers from Virginia Beach Advanced Tech Center, and Anna-Lisa walked in the door!

After my presentation we caught up immediately and I learned of her current endeavor—teaching the Marketing and entrepreneurship classes through the ATC. She has an ideal classroom location at the Lynnhaven Mall which helps give her students a hands-on experience. I couldn't wait to get back to her classes again and I was not disappointed. The impression she made on me years ago still holds up. She has her students incredibly excited about all that they're learning. Not only that, but she excels at showing her students how to connect what they learn to real life experience. During her introduction of me she spoke to her students of the importance of networking and making positive impressions on people, and how those can always come back to you down the line.

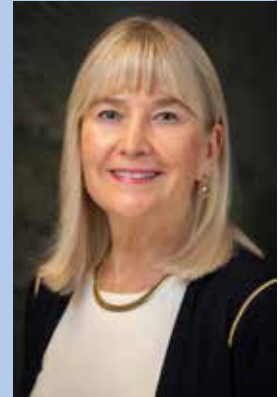
All of our students benefit when our teachers are 'singing the same tune' that we do. And it reinforces the realization that all of us adults are part of the same team; we're all trying to do right by our students and provide them with real-life, teachable moments. In the same ways that we strive to help our youth, we also are there to be a resource for the teachers and give them even more to draw from in their lessons. Anna-Lisa is just one of the many positive influences out there for our students and here at TWC, on behalf of entire staff, I just want to say, thank you! Your efforts do not go unnoticed by us.



TWC Program Director, Harvest Bellante

Why Together We Can—Board Member, Donna Morris

Our Board members are leaders in helping to successfully launch youth into adult independence and work and provide the governance and strategic direction for the organization. Recently, our development director, Tom Marshall sat down with found TWC board member, Donna Morris. Donna is the Executive Vice President for Reinvent Hampton Roads which works to improve both the economic performance and the profile of the region over time. Previously, she has worked at the Hampton Roads Community Foundation, Hampton Roads Partnership, and Old Dominion University.



Tom: How did you get involved in working with disconnected youth?

Donna: Up Until 2008 Terri Jenkins was the head of the Virginia Beach Department of Human Services and was very aware of gaps in the system that needed attention. When she retired, she decided to do something about youth who were aging out of the foster care system, many ending up homeless or incarcerated. She founded Together We Can Foundation and I was hooked.

As a founding member of the board I started attending Youth Advisory Council meetings to learn more about the challenges these young people experienced, directly from them. At these meetings I heard 14-year-old foster kids talk about getting recruited into gangs or living out of a car. At the same time, I saw how incredibly talented and resilient these youth were. The stories were heart wrenching and reinforced the need to provide them with the hope, support, and opportunity they deserve.

Tom: How are you working now to make a difference to youth in the future?

Donna: I love the mission and results of the Together We Can Foundation and donate as much as I can. In my day-to-day work at Reinvent Hampton Roads, I'm focused on job creation and retention. In working with businesses in all sectors, opportunities exist for disconnected kids, giving them the chance to become gainfully employed. We must also address the reasons why 18-year-olds are leaving Hampton Roads. There is too much 'out migration'. A healthy workforce is at the top of everyone's list. I want to show disconnected youth that they have value and get them turned onto a career where they can make a living wage. The jobs are there, but we must connect them to those jobs and help them make that smart transition. Their success will inspire others.

Snapshot: Virginia Beach Marketing and Entrepreneurship Class

Together We Can Foundation Program Director, Harvest Bellante helped prepare students in Virginia Beach Public School's Marketing and Entrepreneurship Program with Life-Work Transition Plans, personal presentation portfolios and interview coaching.



Snapshot: Mary Miller

Mary Miller (*Photo Courtesy of Bob Harper*) was a class leader in the Life-Work Portfolio class at Kecoughtan High School in August 2020 and was featured on our November 2020 newsletter. According to Mary, "Harvest (program director, Harvest Bellante) really helped me prepare for interviews and helped me get into Project Search at Fort Eustis." At the Project Search graduation, she was offered a job! She now works daily from 7:30AM to 11:30AM at the Madison Child Development Center on Fort Eustis. With her earnings this year, she plans to go to Israel and see Alice Cooper in concert. Keep rockin', Mary!!

Donor (noun)

a person or entity who donates something, especially money to a fund or charity: from the Latin *donator*, from *donare* meaning to give.



The DollarBank Foundation recently awarded Together We Can Foundation's Smart Transitions Program \$7,500 to support our work preventing youth disconnection in Hampton Roads. Board member and DollarBank Vice President of Private Banking, Joanie Needham (far left) opened the door and introduced us to Vice President of Community Development, James Hinton Jr. and Community Development Specialist, Sara Delk (left). TWC Board President, Cindy Curtis (right) and TWC Development Director, Tom Marshall (far right) accepted the donation on behalf of the organization. DollarBank is committed to community engagement and making a difference in the lives of the next generation of those who will be living and banking in Hampton Roads.

Donor Spotlight—Regina Hilliard



Tom: How did you first hear about our organization?

Regina: I first heard about Together We Can from Terri Jenkins several years ago. She was on the board for this foundation and also served as director for the City of Virginia Beach Department of Human Services.

Tom: What made you decide to give your first gift?

Regina: Terri invited me to one of the Together We Can community awareness breakfasts where information was shared and testimonials given. I contributed immediately because I could see the value of the services provided and trusted that the funds were being appropriately administered.

Tom: Why do you give to Together We Can?

Regina: I tend to give to organizations that give children needed support and direction. This organization serves a niche (disconnected youth) that is so easily overlooked. Providing appropriate tools and resources can profoundly impact the lives of our youth as they transition to becoming independent adults.

Tom: What do you hope to accomplish through your philanthropy?

Regina: I hope to directly impact the lives of our youth and encourage them to become productive members of society. Donating to Together We Can is a great opportunity to help steer youth in positive directions. Helping them helps the community at large.

Tom: What do you wish everyone knew about this cause?

Regina: All youth need support, and this need doesn't magically go away when they turn 18. This organization is one way at-risk youth in our community can receive the support and direction they need to make good life choices.



Snapshot: Chesapeake Woman of the Year, Dr. Nancy Welch.

Together We Can Foundation Board Member and Director of the Chesapeake Health Department, Dr. Nancy Welch was awarded Woman of the Year in 2020 by the Womens Division Chamber of Commerce. But, due to a little pandemic we all remember not so fondly, she was too busy to celebrate the accomplishment until just recently at the Chesapeake Conference Center. She earned the award based on her tireless contributions to Public Health and the citizens of Chesapeake. Congratulations, Dr. Welch!



Practicum: Employability Basics

We often play role reversal games with our youth, asking them to imagine themselves as owners and employers looking to hire the best employees. They brainstorm the most attractive qualities they would want in an employee. Dr. Priscilla Spencer's Early Childhood Education class at the Norfolk Technical Center took this to a whole new competitive level and came up with more than 100 qualities an employer might be looking for in an ideal employee. Talk about a motivated group!

Virginia Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) Tax Credits

We currently have NAP Tax credits available for donations for the 2023 tax year. NAP eligible donations of \$500.00 (individual) or \$600.00 (business) or more create a direct tax deduction of 65% of Virginia State Taxes (in addition to the standard state and federal tax deductions). Depending on your income tax bracket and the amount of your donation, you could be looking at a tax refund for your donation (please check with your accountant or financial professional for specifics). If you are interested in NAP tax credits, email tmarshall@twcfoundation.org with the amount you would like to donate.

Community Sponsor: Virginia Beach Rotary



TWC Development Director, Tom Marshall, receiving a donation from Bert Poole of the Virginia Beach Rotary. The VB Rotary has been a consistent sponsor of TWC's efforts to prevent youth disconnection.

\$1000 Donation with NAP Credits	<p>20% Income Tax Bracket (Itemizing) \$1000.00 Contribution with NAP Credits Reduces your Virginia State Tax by 5.7% or \$57.50 NAP Credits reduce your Virginia State Tax by an additional 65% or \$650.00 Reduces your Federal Tax by 20% or \$200.00 So <u>it costs you \$92.50</u> to make a \$1000.00 contribution</p>
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\$1000 Donation without NAP Credits	<p>20% Income Tax Bracket (Itemizing) \$1000.00 Contribution without NAP Credits Reduces your Virginia State Tax by 5.7% or \$57.50 Reduces your Federal Tax by 20% or \$200.00 So <u>it costs you \$742.50</u> to make a \$1000.00 contribution</p>
	<p>39.5% Income Tax Bracket (Itemizing) \$1000.00 Contribution without NAP Credits Reduces your Virginia State Tax by 5.7% or \$57.50 Reduces your Federal Tax by 39.5% or \$395.00 So <u>it costs you \$547.50</u> to make a \$1000.00 contribution</p>

Individuals in the 20% Federal tax bracket will have an out of pocket cost of only \$92.50 on a \$1000 NAP credit contribution to TWC (vs. an out-of-pocket-cost of \$742.50 on a regular contribution).

Individuals or corporations in the 39.9% Federal tax bracket will have an actual gain of \$102.50 on a \$1,000 NAP credit contribution to TWC (vs. an out-of-pocket cost of \$547.50 on a regular contribution).



What do Benjamin Franklin, Farrah Fawcet and Cindy Curtis all share in common?



They all included a bequest to charity in their will!

Benjamin Franklin was so grateful to the city of Boston for his free public education and to the city of Philadelphia for his fortune that he left each of them \$1,000 pounds sterling to be held in trust for the support of apprentices and craftsmen. His legacy has inspired philanthropy for more than 225 years.

Farrah Fawcet's youthful energy enraptured Andy Warhol, inspiring him to paint two almost-identical portraits of her. Upon her death in 2009, Farrah bequeathed all of her art to University of Texas. One of the Warhol's is now on display at the Blanton Museum of Art.

While not as famous, Cindy Curtis, the current Together We Can board chair says, "I'm not going anywhere for a long time, but I want to make sure Together We Can exists long after I'm gone." Her future endowed fund is being created to fund her annual gift in perpetuity. TWC will administer the Fund, including any additional gifts made by Cindy or others to the Fund.

Thank you, Cindy Curtis for your bequest intention and for making such a transformational investment in the future!

If you are interested in making a bequest intention or planned gift to Together We Can, please contact Tom Marshall, Director of Development at 757-284-1722. He has years of experience in finance and gift planning.