



## Meriden Department of Health and Human Services Youth Services: 2024 Mini-Grant Summary Report

The Meriden Department of Health and Human Services' Youth Services office offered an opportunity for Meriden youth to apply for mini-grants for projects to make Meriden a better place to live, work, and play.

Youth, under the guidance of an adult advisor at a recognized organization that serves Meriden, had to submit an application stating the purpose of their project and write out a budget. This program put youth in a leadership position to make a difference in our community.

Different from prior years, this year the Youth Services office asked grantees to address at least one of the top health concerns among Meriden youth based on data collected from a [Youth Voices Count Survey](#) done by the [Meriden Healthy Youth Coalition](#). These topics included:

- Alcohol
- Marijuana
- Vaping
- Mental health
- Social media

Seven (7) projects were funded at \$1,000 each. Funding was provided through our [Youth Service Bureau 2023-2024 grant from the Department of Children and Families](#).

This report is a summary of this year's awardees projects; everyone had to complete a final report answering 3 questions: 1) What was the most rewarding part of your project, 2) What was the most challenging part of your project, and 3) What did you learn about your community or neighborhood from doing your project?



### BALL HEADZ, INC

TOPIC ADDRESSED: Mental Health

Ball Headz, Inc. completed the “Inhale Positivity, Exhale Negativity” project where youths and their adult ambassadors created a campaign to focus on the importance of mental health and stress management.

Over 200 youth participated in these activities from March – May that included producing and record a song and music video on youth mental health, creating print materials, and branded merchandise such as t-shirts, bracelets, stickers, and more with positive youth messaging.

A short video on how to “Inhale Positivity and Exhale Negativity” created by Ball Headz can be [found on their YouTube page.](#)

Thank you to the Youth Leader for coordinating this project: Amaliah Soto.



Amaliah preparing the Box and Star breathing stickers to be handed out at school.



**INHALE POSITIVITY  
EXHALE NEGATIVITY**



Justin with members of the Rhythmic Force Dance team gifting lockers



Justin with the display at the Meriden Public Library



Display at the Meriden Public Library



Amaliah and her friends created a reel for social media to demonstrate how to do the box breathing technique



SCAN QR CODE TO WATCH THIS VIDEO





## GIRLS INC.

TOPIC ADDRESSED: Vaping

Girls Inc. of Meriden's Leadership Group came together to work on their project, Evade the Vape, to educate students on the dangers of vaping. An event was held on May 29<sup>th</sup> at Girls Inc. where 30 participants attended a workshop where students learned about alternative ways to deal with stress and anxiety that does not include vaping.

Participants were given informational packets in addition to an anti-vape bag that included different fidget toys and other materials they can use to cope with anxiety without vaping.

Thank you to the Youth Leader for coordinating this project: Angelica De La Cruz.

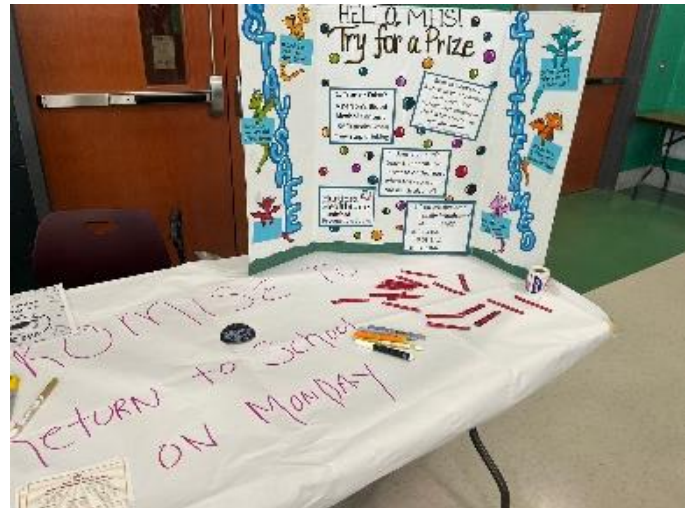


## MALONEY HIGH SCHOOL

TOPIC ADDRESSED: Alcohol

Maloney High School's Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) chapter created a Youth in Action group that focused on prevention around alcohol use and prom safety.

Over 45 students signed the "Prom Promise" which was to return to school the Monday after prom safely by not engaging in risky activities such as consuming alcohol after prom. The SADD chapter had a booth with a trivia game focusing on alcohol prevention and education.



Thank you to the Youth Leader for coordinating this project: Fatima Mir. She stated the most important part of this project was having the opportunity to educate others on substance use prevention and creating a support group within the school.



## PLATT HIGH SCHOOL

TOPIC ADDRESSED: Social Media

Students from the “Panther Den”, a mentor program, aiming to reach out to female students and creating a safe space to promote positive change within the school chose to focus on the dangers associated with social media.

Students learned about internet safety and how social media can negatively impact students’ mental health and well-being. Individuals who may have seen each other in the halls before but never actually spoke to one another formed friendships that carried throughout the year.

Thank you to the Youth Leader for working on this project: Angelica De La Cruz. Angelica hopes to continue this work within the Panther Den and expand on this mentor program the next school year.



## SOCIAL SABBY SOCIAL GROUPS

TOPIC ADDRESSED: Mental Health

Social Sabby is an organization committed to the development, inclusion and self-esteem building of special needs individuals in the Meriden Community. They primarily work with children K-12 by providing social recreational groups to continue to foster social skills. Recognizing that children with special needs are vulnerable to suffering from mental health challenges, they chose to host social groups to help children build connections with others to prevent social isolation.





## Meriden Department of Health and Human Services

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Groups were held weekly March through May at Maloney High School where children were able to work with mentors on building social skills and interacting with others.

Thank you to the Youth Leader for coordinating this project: Chris McDonald. Chris said through this experience, he learned there are a lot of kids that would benefit from social groups and there are peer mentors who are willing to facilitate these groups.



## THE MERIDEN PUBLIC LIBRARY

TOPIC ADDRESSED: Mental Health and Social Media

The Meriden Public Library's Teen Library Center completed their project, Put it Down, which focused on social media and how it impacts mental health.

The group hosted an event at the library on April 13 during April vacation where students were able to use the community rooms to play games, complete activity books and journal, and visit with therapy dogs to positively promote mental well-being and not use their phones.



A total of thirty-two (32) youth participated in this event and the youth leader said it was nice to not only see kids their age but even younger kids participate in games and activities. This was a great way to establish a sense of community with the youths in a positive way.

Thank you to the Youth Leader for coordinating this project: Frainiel Urena Garcia. Frainiel said it was nice to see kids their age come together as a community to have fun without their phones and actually talk to one another face-to-face.