New Services for Homeless, at-Risk Youth

By the Shepherd Bull

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Mason County Life
ervation services, they can get that, if they need foster care, they can get that. There's no wrong door."

The Street Youth Services program, as well as many of the other programs, includes a case management component, where youth get help securing permanent housing, finding jobs, getting an education or meeting some other type of need, whether medical, dental or mental health-related.

About 25 to 33 percent of the 114 young people the nonprofit worked with last year for these wrap-around services came from Mason County.

The $45,000 in funding that the nonprofit received from the state will go directly toward outreach for Street Youth Services in Mason County, including for the after-school recreational time.

"The outreach can happen anytime during the day, but we know young people on the street don't often have anything to do," Hanauer said. "A component of the outreach is to get them involved in the after-school activities that we have started to offer."

The after-school recreational time started on Aug. 2, but program organizers understand it will take time to build a reputation and following among Mason County youth.

Staff will provide recreational opportunities, such as basketball, badminton, board games and crafts during the recreational time and will also provide case management and information on services and referrals to local and regional services.

If needed, staff can provide transportation using a Community Youth Services vehicle or bus passes to help youth reach appointments and connect them to local resources.

Community Youth Services staff that work in the Transitional Age Youth Program can meet with young adults in therapy rooms at the nonprofit's new office space, pictured here, or out in the community where youth might feel more comfortable. The nonprofit offers a variety of other services.

By having an office in Shelton now, the nonprofit also hopes it will be able to branch out and reach youth in North Mason as well.

The nonprofit works with researchers from the University of Washington and Portland State University to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs and to receive training for staff on the brain development of 15- to 24-year-olds.

"We're learning a lot about this target population," Hanauer said. "They're not children and they're not adults. Their impulses are different, their actions are different and their brains are different."

Community Youth Services is planning an open house at its office, from 4-7 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 22, at the Mason Transit-Authority Transit-Community Center in Shelton, to share more about its programs.

For more information on Community Youth Services, visit communityyouthservices.org or contact Lynsi Polanco at 591-5121 or lpolanco@communityyouthservices.org.

To set up an appointment or seek help or services from Community Youth Services, call 943-0780.