



**Midcoast  
Youth  
Center**

Serving youth ages 5-24 in Sagadahoc County, Brunswick & Harpswell



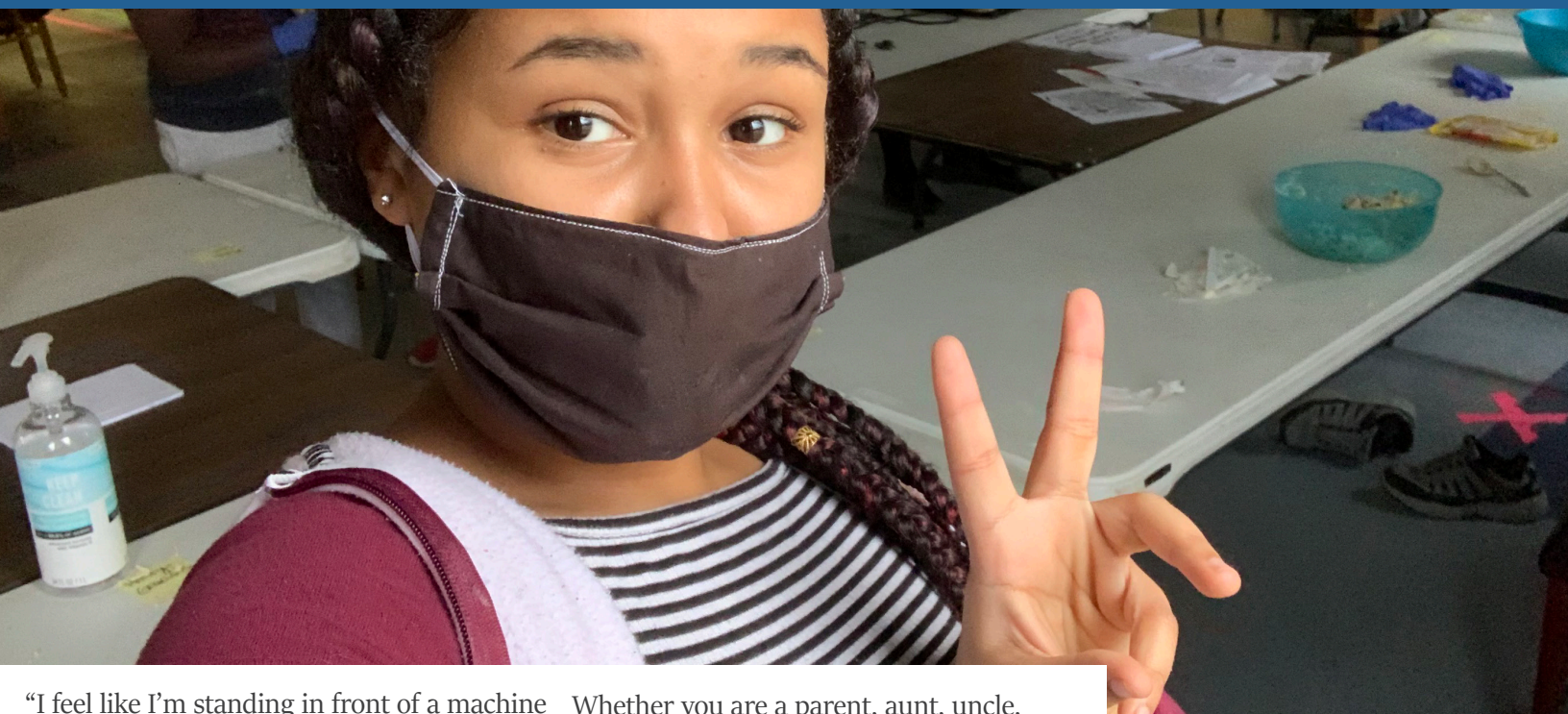
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"I feel like I'm standing in front of a machine that is hurling 100 tennis balls at me and there's no way that I can hit them all," I recently shared with a colleague. She, too, works with youth and replied, "I feel like I'm standing in front of a dam with too many holes for me to fill before it bursts." Ask any adult about their stress level right now, and I suspect they would share something similar. This leads me to ask, if we, as adults, are feeling this way, how are our youth feeling? We know that the answer is, "not great."

We are seeing youth across the board struggle with the difficulties of distance learning, quarantines, limited access to activities, and friends who are disengaging, all while having to wear masks and physically distance from those they are naturally drawn to be near. The uncertainty of future events, like senior proms, graduations, and social gatherings that are central to a teen's life, creates additional stress.

Before the pandemic, Sagadahoc County had rates of teen depression, anxiety, and suicide ideation that were higher than the Maine state average. After almost a year of grappling with the pandemic, the risk seems even higher. Knowing the warning signs of suicide, and where to turn for help when they are recognized, is something that everyone can do to help mitigate this risk.

Whether you are a parent, aunt, uncle, teacher, coach, youth worker, volunteer community member or even "just" a neighbor, you can play a vital role in helping a young person connect to support. Inside, you'll find valuable information and resources provided by NAMI Maine. Learn more by visiting [namimaine.org](http://namimaine.org).

While the future is still unknown, it is important for us all to remember that we are not alone in these struggles. We can support one another, and our youth, by keeping inventory of what is in our control and letting go of what is not. We can be mindful of our daily schedules and those of our children. Is everyone getting adequate sleep? Taking technology breaks? Building more movement into these cold winter days? Staying connected to supports?

If you've read this far, my assignment for you right at this very moment is to stop and consider one thing you are grateful for. Write it down. Then, ask a young person in your life to do the same. As for me, I am grateful for each one of you, as you continue to walk beside me, my team, and the children we love so dearly.

Thank you!

*Jamie*

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MYC provides distance learning support, 21st Century Community Learning programs, scooting & skateboarding, art & music, weekly dinners, and support youth experiencing homelessness.

*MYC observes proper health & safety protocols including mandatory masks, hand washing, social distancing, and attendance limits.*



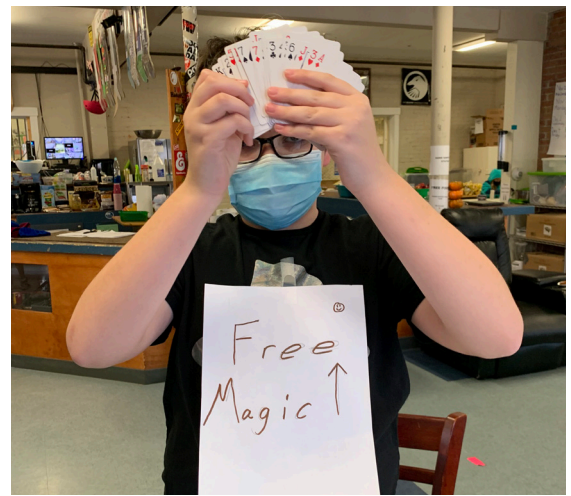
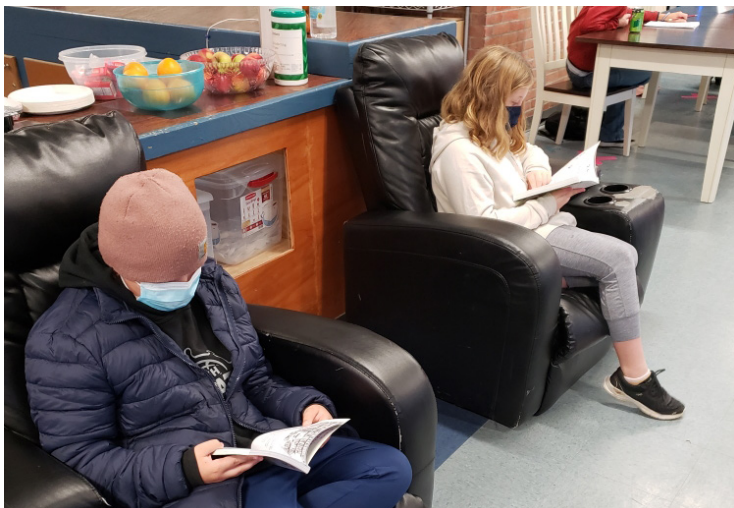
# 21st Century Community Learning Center

by Rose McDonnell  
21st CCLC Program Director

Despite winter's gloomy and frigid arrival, MYC's afterschool program is just getting warmed up! We start our day with some form of exercise, whether it's yoga with Courtney from Bath's Ebb and Flow Yoga, a mindful 30-minute walk outside, or a rousing game of dodgeball. The research is clear—exercise is a crucial component for mental wellness, brain development, and overall health.

Next, we do a group game or challenge, geared towards team-building and connection, as socialization and belonging are more important now than ever. An example of this is our popular fort building competition. Students were challenged to work as a team to build a fort while thinking about structure, warmth, accessibility and of course, creativity! The winning team built an incredibly formidable structure, and even included cans of beans to display the potential of happy meals at home!

Along with exercise and team-building, our afterschool program also offers Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP education, a federally funded grant program that supports evidence-based nutrition education and obesity prevention interventions. Students in our afterschool program are learning to read nutrition labels, to look out for tricky ingredients, understand portion control and of course—how to cook! Students are gaining hands-on experience in a dynamic format while learning which



foods fuel us, which may harm us, and which foods should be eaten in moderation. Some examples of what students have made are hummus/veggie wraps and veggie cheese omelettes. As their official taste-tester, I can attest to the fact that the food they're preparing is delicious!

In addition to our SNAP education program, we also welcome the Sidekick Tobacco and Vaping Prevention Program to MYC. The Sidekick program provides youth with the skills and confidence to talk to their peers about tobacco use and vaping in a way that is compassionate, effective and supportive. After three classes, students are equipped to talk to peers struggling with tobacco and vaping use, which is incredibly important, as Maine's tobacco and vaping use is higher than the national average. One student exclaimed after taking the class, "Did you know the stuff that they use to clean toilets is in cigarettes?" Soon, all of the youth in our afterschool program will be Sidekicks in the community!

Among many other subjects like literacy, STEM, and art, MYC's afterschool program also engages students in social-emotional lessons provided by the Department of Education. We discuss important topics like, "What is the Difference Between Sadness and Depression?" and "Positive Body Images and Realistic Expectations." Having frank conversations with youth at this significant developmental stage of their lives is crucial to early intervention. These lessons aim to de-stigmatize mental health conditions and allow for a positive interaction between caring adults and peers. Maine leads the country in highest rates of anxiety and depression, so speaking honestly to youth about these topics early on is one of the most effective methods of early intervention.

Staying active, engaged and connected to peers are some of our top priorities for our youth as we navigate this unprecedented pandemic. We anticipate strong gains in academic improvement, as well, which will be evident through testing and teacher surveys at the end of the school year. Our youth are incredible people and it's an honor to watch them stretch, grow, fall down, and get back up.

# Pivot Points

by Donna Verhoeven, Youth Outreach Coordinator - Merrymeeting Support Collaborative for Homeless Youth

Educational disruption for children and unaccompanied youth protected under the umbrella of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act, is nothing new. Housing instability demands attention to the basic needs of survival, which are shelter and food, with education often falling to the bottom of the list.

The current global pandemic and national events have placed a tornado directly in the path of these children and youth, creating even more chaos. How will they weather this storm? I believe the key will be the pivot points of supports, both familiar and new, to these children and youth who are experiencing homelessness.

Our educational community, of which I am fortunate to be a part, has been one such familiar resource for this vulnerable population. They were quick to respond to anticipated needs of students facing unstable housing during a pandemic. Academic supports ensured access to communication regarding educational programming and directed those most vulnerable to additional resources within the community.

Access to clear, concise, and consistent communication was essential to encouraging educational engagement. My project, being a community and educational resource for McKinney-Vento students, assists by providing working phones, access to medical and mental health needs, food, shelter, employment, educational planning, transportation, personal hygiene items, applications for Maine Care and SNAP benefits, and an opportunity to process individual concerns.

The true pivot point in this storm is still evolving, as youth struggle with engaging academically and personally. The stories told by many of the youth I engage with reflect loss, separation, uncertainty, and concerns on how to move forward.

Many have already shouldered the impacts that homelessness inflicts prior to this pandemic, and now a new element resides in the storm. The pressures of unstably housed children and youth in this pandemic present greater domestic strife, substance use, financial struggles, food and employment insecurity, and greater health needs. The pivot point will truly require recognition given to the hearts, minds, and health of our children and youth, as they transition from storm to fairer winds.

Despite wavering winds, most of my students have remained engaged in learning. This engagement has required many more resources, flexibility, and active listening to both validate their experiences and identify supportive paths. The key continues to be consistent, caring, and

helpful adults.

More than half of the high school seniors that I work with have postsecondary plans, while others are focusing on employment and stable adult housing. Some of my youth are moving towards a brighter future, taking driver's education, and participating in recreational opportunities.

I remain optimistic about the resiliency of youth, and about the compassion of people to rise together to the meet challenge.

***“The stories told by many of the youth I engage with reflect loss, separation, uncertainty, and concerns on how to move forward.”***

## Distance Learning Fun!



Ashken and Jamie take a quick break during distance learning to say “Hello!”

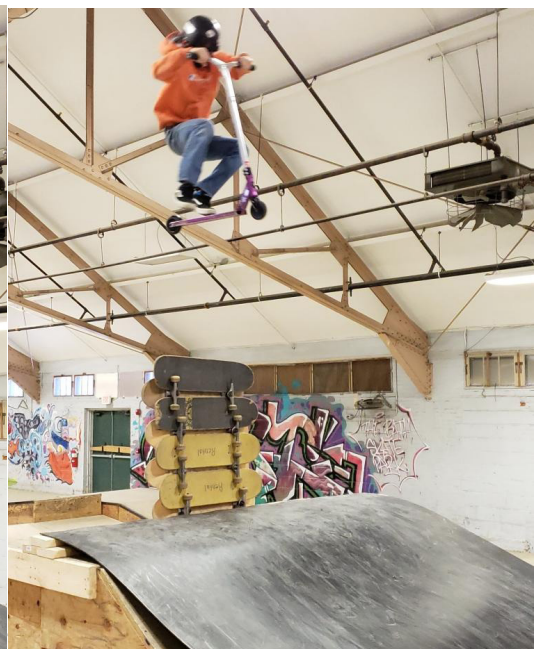


Justice celebrates being first to stack all pieces without them falling!



Mr. Quinn stops by for a visit and talks about the science of skateboarding.





# The Skatepark

by Bob Gray

Working at the Midcoast Youth Center and Skatepark continues to be a very exciting and rewarding experience. I've had the pleasure of supporting both high school and middle school students at MYC during distance learning days. There is great value in the opportunity for students to have face-to-face interactions with their peers and with the supportive adults here.

My co-worker and longtime friend Jeremy Harper has joined me in starting a group with some Youth Leaders here. We meet weekly to discuss topics around behavior, communication, and our role as leaders in our community. Such topics include conversations around healthy masculinity, what it means to "be a man," and our role in molding the environment around us. I look forward to continuing these discussions.

I am also very excited about potential changes to the skating area. After meeting with a committee of long-time Maine skaters and BMX riders, we were able to come up with exciting new additions. I expect the changes will generate more interest in MYC and continue to provide a healthy and positive passion for many.

Lastly, I am happy to continue our Half Pipes for Half Pints sessions for 5-10 year-olds every Saturday morning from 10:00 to noon. I join this beginner session to give pointers and lessons to the young riders. Stay tuned for additions to the skatepark, as well as our very own MYC skateboard and merch!

## MEAL TRAIN

Our meal train continues to provide nutritious meals to local youth 3 nights a week. Community members, restaurants, churches & groups sign up for an available date on our calendar and then provide a meal for about 20 youth. Many of our youth are with us throughout the afternoon & evening hours; having regular meals means that no one goes hungry! Thank you!

To sign up for a Meal date: visit [midcoastyouth.org/meals](https://midcoastyouth.org/meals)





# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: QUINN FEENEY

## How Much I Love the Skate Park

by Quinn Feeney

I am Quinn and I am in fourth grade. I discovered the skatepark when my mom and I moved to Bath this year. In July, I started going to the Bath Skate Park and Midcoast Youth Center.

Midcoast Youth Center is a help to the community. They provide food and dinners for those who need or want it. They also have a safe place for teens to hang out and they are also a skate park. I love to skate there. You can scooter, skateboard, or BMX bike there. So fun! I never knew until I started going there that I like scooting and BMX biking. Now I am eager to go there after school.

The staff does remote learning at the Youth Center and teaches kids. There is a pool table and other games. They sell food and drinks and other gear for your skateboard or scooter such as trucks, wheels, helmets, and decks, and even rental scooters.

Kids are allowed to use MYC tools to work on their skateboard and scooter. You can use your bike in the building, too, if there is room, and there is also a pump track outside! There are so many nice people that go there. Bobby, Jamie and Jer work there and are very kind to kids. All the kids are friendly, and I have met some kids there who are really nice and encouraging.

I'm Quinn and I love the skate park!



Sponsored by



A hearty thank you to Brackett's Market for sponsoring our Student Spotlight! We are very grateful for the hard work of this locally-owned grocery store that we love so much! Day in and day out, they are there and have been there throughout the pandemic. Please be sure to thank them for their support of our local youth and all that they do!

<http://www.brackettsmarket.com/>

## "15to30" Challenge

Midcoast Youth Center is pleased to announce that we met our goal of raising \$15,000 to be matched by a generous local supporter. You helped make our "15to30" Campaign an incredible success, making the larger total around \$45,000!

These critical funds helped make up for losses due to the cancellation of our two largest fundraisers.



## MIDCOAST YOUTH CENTER NEWS

Issue No. 2  
Winter 2021

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Executive Director/Founder

**Donna Verhoeven**  
Youth Outreach Coordinator

**Bob “Bobby” Gray**  
Youth Programs Coordinator

**Rose McDonnell**  
21st CCLC Program Director

**Jeremy Harper**  
21st CCLC Program Coordinator

**MYC TRUSTEES:**  
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Larry Bartlett, Vice President  
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Karen Curley, Secretary  
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**Lorry Fleming**  
**Laurie Bisson**

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Meal Train Coordinator



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Visit [midcoastyouth.org](https://midcoastyouth.org) to:

- Become an Annual Partner
- Sign up for our Meal Train

We are a 501(c)(3) organization

## OUR WINTER FUNDRAISER IS HERE!

Anyone registering to make a \$25 donation to the Midcoast Youth Center is automatically entered to win a beautiful prize from our generous partner, Springer’s Jewelers in Bath. At the same time, you can brighten the winter days by playing our LOVE SONG SCRAMBLE game, where the titles of 25 well known love songs wait to be unscrambled. From the Beatles to Sinatra, these songs will take you back, or maybe remind you of your first true love!



These fundraisers are critical to keeping MYC’s doors open and our staff well trained. Supporting our most vulnerable youth – and all youth in the community by offering after-school programming and a safe venue – is what we do, and we thank you so much for being a part of that!

**TO PLAY:**  
visit our web site: [midcoastyouth.org](https://midcoastyouth.org) or  
text **LOVEMATTERS** to **41444**

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Text **LOVEMATTERS** to **41444** to donate  
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