Editor’s Note: This edition of Street Talk focuses on youth and situations they – and you – might encounter more often because it’s summer vacation. The articles address specific circumstances, behaviors, and perhaps most importantly, resources to help you help kids and families… even after summer is over.

Summertime is fun for kids. School is out, no worries; the pressure is off, just long lazy days, relaxing. This is the stuff of childhood. What could be better? Just looking at the surface, this is a perfect story, but this perfect story isn’t so perfect if you scratch the surface just a little… or a lot. If you take the time to look beyond the criminal behavior, beyond the defiant youth, you may find a very different story, and one worth hearing.

For many families, summertime is incredibly stressful, much more so than during the school year. School is a positive organizing institution for children and families. It is one that often provides safety, before and after-school care, meals, positive adults, mentoring, recreational programs, enrichment and other services. Once school is out, gone are many of the support systems families rely on. Folks may not even realize how much they depend on schools.

• Most parents have to work, so during the summer, child-care issues become much more intense. Often this responsi-

With the added pressures on parents during the summertime, the whole family can become more stressed. As parents are stretched too thin, kids sometimes fall through the cracks. As kids fall through the cracks, parents become more stressed. And all this can be happening on top of an already overloaded family system. Sometimes the parents are also dealing with their own criminal issues or addictions to drugs or alcohol.

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Lots of kids feel as if no one listens to them, no one gets it, and no one cares. Surely the police don’t get it, don’t care and won’t listen. Right? But really, sometimes the police do listen. It’s all in the ear. If you listen with a certain kind of ear, you can actually hear better. If you have positive regard, even for the most difficult, disrespectful and worrisome kids; if your ear is trained to listen for the struggle behind the behavior; if you can open your heart just a bit and still stay safe, you can hear some amazing stories. And you just might be able to help.

Remember the support systems that go away when schools close? A police officer who talks to kids and families respectfully about their lives can turn out to be a pretty good and unexpected support. Having a list of resources for kids and parents is another way to support them. If you can give them one phone number to put them in touch with services, you might be able to make the difference for that youth. In St. Louis County, the Children’s Service Fund has supported many programs that are free to children and families that support mental health. The St.

Louis County Youth Connection Helpline at 1-877-928-2929 connects people with mental health and substance abuse programs. If there is a similar crisis line in your area, the phone number would be an important resource to have at the ready.

Sometimes you never know where the help you need is going to come from. Folks might not think of the police as an ally, but of course they can be. Troubled youth and families that are dealt with by the police in a firm, non-judgmental and respectful way might find that the police actually listened to them, that they actually got it, and that they cared. They might just be surprised when they realize the police really are there to serve and protect.

Eve Dyson, a Licensed Professional Counselor, is Director of Family Connections at Every Child’s Hope (ECH) in St. Louis. Family Connections are community-based programs and include Family Solutions for Kids, an intensive in-home intervention, and Outpatient Psychiatric Services, both of which are funded by St. Louis County Children’s Service Fund. Two additional programs under her direction are Foster Care Case Management and Family Reunification Services.
A crisis can happen any time of the day or night. We often think of a crisis situation as a sudden unexpected disaster, such as a car accident, natural disaster or other cataclysmic event. However, there are other types of crisis situations that are not often talked about, such as suicidal thoughts, homicidal thoughts, homelessness and/or substance abuse concerns.

When a crisis happens, most people don’t know what to do or where to turn for help. Law Enforcement is often the first to be called to assess the crisis situation, problem-solve and educate individuals through the crisis. Today, we are specifically seeing an increase in youth who are facing crisis situations in their community, school and home.

- In the community, youth are being exposed to social media at a young age and feel pressured to be a part of social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter. Being a part of social media websites can potentially put a youth at risk to be a target for cyber-bullying.

- In schools, teachers and counselors are working with youth at risks, who are struggling with bullying, substance abuse concerns, oppositional-defiant issues, homelessness, learning disabilities and suicidal or homicidal thoughts.

Youth also can start to experience behavioral problems in their home as a result of school problems, physical or emotional abuse, and/or delinquent behaviors. Parents often question how to help their child in crisis. They are often overwhelmed with numerous stressors and need assistance to find appropriate resources. Parents sometimes request that the child be placed out of the home for respite, and often call Law Enforcement to mediate the crisis. Law Enforcement and families benefit from assistance in finding other options to help youth maintain at-home placement or explore crisis placement options.

Now that summer vacation is here, parents, youth and local Law Enforcement need to know where to turn when a crisis arises. To assist youth at risk, support families, and educate community partners on how to help youth in crisis, St. Louis County and St. Charles County each created the “Youth Connection Helpline” which is accessed through Behavioral Health Response (BHR). The Helpline’s main goal is to decrease barriers when helping youth get connected to mental health/substance abuse services. Here’s more information for your use or to pass along to others.

### St. Louis County

#### Who meets criteria for the Youth Connection Helpline?
Any youth 19 or younger who resides in St. Louis County.

#### How can parents, youth or Law Enforcement reach the Helpline?
Call 1-877-928-2929 or 314-628-2929. Youth can also text for help at 4HLP to 31658.

#### What type of referrals will the Helpline provide?
As part of a network of providers funded by the Children’s Service Fund (CSF) of St. Louis County, the Helpline is a starting point to identify services offered by more than 50 agencies that help low-income and uninsured families. Several agencies in the network offer substance abuse treatment, psychological evaluations, in-home services, individual/family/group counseling and psychiatric medications. A description and contact information for all agencies can be found at CSF’s website [www.keepingkidsfirst.org](http://www.keepingkidsfirst.org).

### St. Charles County

#### Who meets criteria for the Youth Connection Helpline?
Any youth 18 or younger who resides in St. Charles County.

#### How can parents, youth or Law Enforcement reach the Helpline?
Call 1-855-642-0642 or 636-642-0642. Youth can also text for help at BSAFE to 31658.

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What type of referrals will the Helpline provide? As part of a network of providers funded by The Community and Children’s Resource Board (CCRB), the Helpline is a starting point to identify services offered by more than 20 agencies that help low-income and uninsured families. Several agencies in the network provide substance abuse treatment, individual/family/group counseling and psychiatric medications. For a list of all agencies, visit the CCRB website at www.stcharlescountykids.org.

In General
What can parents, youth and Law Enforcement expect when they call either of the Helplines? Both Helplines are available 24/7 and can be accessed by law enforcement, youth, parents or anyone who needs assistance for a youth. All calls are answered by a master’s level clinician.

What services can be provided by the Helplines? The clinician will complete a needs assessment and discuss available options. BHR has a Mobile Outreach Team (MOT), which means a counselor can meet the police at the youth’s home or in the community and complete a mental health evaluation. If there is a housing crisis, the crisis clinician can page Youth In Need (YIN), which is available 24/7 to place a homeless youth in a local shelter. Crisis clinicians also can support and educate police officers about community referrals and/or discuss hospitalization of the youth, if necessary.

Follow-up Programs
One benefit of the Youth Connection Helpline is its follow-up program. Within 48 business hours, a Follow-up Coordinator, who is also a master’s level clinician, will follow up with youth, families and community partners to see how referrals are working and if additional assistance is needed. The Coordinator continues to work with the youth, community partners and family until the youth is stable, connected to services and/or no longer needs assistance.

Maria Huebner joined BHR in 2005 as a Crisis Intervention Clinician, and has trained numerous Crisis Intervention Clinicians and police officers. She manages Follow-up Programs for both Youth Connection Helplines and oversees the National Suicide Lifeline/SAMHSA and Missouri Department of Mental Health Mobile Outreach Teams Follow-Up Programs.

LAW IN ACTION: McATEE AWARD RECIPIENTS

On May 22, Mental Health America of Eastern Missouri honored 38 police officers at the 27th McAtee Police Recognition Awards for their outstanding compassion when responding to an individual in psychiatric crisis. The award is named after the late Honorable John J. McAtee, a tireless advocate for persons with mental illness. His tenure as a judge strengthened his belief that individuals with mental illness deserve appropriate treatment services rather than automatic incarceration, where the illness might not be properly addressed.

Charlie Dooley, St. Louis County Executive, stopped by to congratulate the recipients. Steve McAtee spoke briefly about his father’s work and concern for persons with mental illness.

Chief Tim Fitch, St. Louis County Police, delivered the keynote address. In addition to praising the awardees, Fitch reminded everyone how police response to a mental health crisis has changed over the years. He recalled how, in the past, officers would respond, possibly arrest the subject if a crime had been committed, and most likely return over and over to the same situation. He acknowledged the awardees exemplify understanding, attitude and skills, and how these qualities result in responses that are more appropriate, and in the long run, more effective.

Fitch was joined by Jim McAtee, another son of John J. McAtee, to present the award to each officer as the specific details of the incident were read aloud. More than 170 attended, including departmental command staff, family members and representatives from several mental health organizations.

See page 5 for a listing of this year’s award recipients.
Marine
Sgt. Sheree Waterhouse
Missouri State Highway Patrol
Corporal Travis S. Croft

Olivette
Captain James Michael Roemer

Overland
Corporal Jon Yust
Officer Julie Carroll
Sgt. Theresa Cover

St. Charles Co. Sheriff’s Dept.
Corporal Michael Hoefle

St. Louis Co.
Officer Robert Rinck
Officer Chris Koester
Officer Chrystal Ruhmann
Officer Michael Gilyon
Officer Kevin Helldoerfer
Officer Timothy Harrison
Officer Mitch Ellis
Officer Joie Hollocher
Officer Ken Skala
Officer Tom VanDusen
Officer Bob Langan
Officer Eric J. Middendorf
Officer Nicholas Nazzoli
Officer Fareid Yaakub
Officer Robert Wadsack
Officer Adam Schuette
Officer Jared Lindeman
Officer Ryan Hanson
Officer Brandon Henry
Officer Alex Jenne
Officer Jody Franey
Officer Tracie Eldridge

St. Louis Metropolitan Police
Sgt. James Aslan
Officer John Posey
Officer Alan Hutchcraft

St. Peters
Officer Andrew Ramirez

United States Probation
Sr. Probation Officer John Ross
Probation Officer Quincy Fountain

Mental Health America of Eastern Missouri congratulates this year’s recipients and applauds their compassion and assistance in helping individuals during a mental health crisis.

A special Thank You to Behavioral Health Response for being our Presenting Sponsor of this year’s awards.

Click here to read the scenario for which each officer was recognized.
On a busy summer afternoon shift, an officer was dispatched to the report of several juveniles setting brush on fire in a clearing behind a subdivision. Upon arrival, the fire was found to have self-extinguished. The two 9-year-old boys who had set the fire were conveyed back to their residence and turned over to their parents. Whew . . . NRN

Two years later, one of those boys set a fire that destroyed a large wooden playground at a local park. The fire caused tens of thousands of dollars in damage and shut down the playground for over six months. Meanwhile, the juvenile was charged with Knowingly Burning or Exploding and referred to the Family Court. Rumors spread throughout the neighborhood and school, causing the boy to become ostracized and bitter. The boy’s single mother, who was already experiencing severe financial hardship, was now forced to pay for the damages. As the boy grew older, he continued to grow isolated and angry. At the age of 17 he was arrested for starting a fire in the bathroom of the local high school, convicted of Arson 1st Degree, and sentenced to several years in prison.

Was there a way to have intervened in that boy’s life on that summer afternoon?

Juvenile fire-setting is not a new phenomenon; however, it continues to be a problem across the country. An estimated 250,000 fires are set by juveniles each year, and it’s estimated that juveniles account for up to 50 percent of all arson arrests. Problem juvenile fire-setters are generally from 5 to 17 years of age and light fires because of emotional or mental disturbances. A crisis in the child’s life such as moving to a new area, divorce or death can trigger fire-setting behavior. Additionally, it is believed that 85 percent of children who start fires will continue to set fires if left untreated. As the child grows older, these fires often become larger and more destructive.

How YFPT can help
The Youth Fire Prevention Team (YFPT) is part of the Burns Recovered Support Group, Inc., and is a juvenile fire-setter intervention program. It provides primary prevention, early intervention, and/or treatment for children (and their families) who are involved in fire-setting.

The YFPT is staffed by representatives from fire departments, family courts, police departments, and professionally licensed counselors. Juveniles can be referred to the program by police officers, fire department personnel, school counselors, other parents, the Family Court, doctors, etc. Law enforcement officers would be best served if they get the parents’ permission to refer the child, especially when the juvenile is a suspect in a case. The program is voluntary unless mandated by the Family Court for juveniles who are found guilty of fire-related offenses. Regardless of whether the program is mandated, it is always free.

How does the program work?
Once a child is referred, a member of the Burns Recovered Support Group will contact the parent within 48 hours and set up an appointment for an intake interview. The results of this interview will then lead to the next step of beginning an intervention program.

The YFPT is non-punitive and is designed to build up the juvenile’s confidence while also teaching him/her the consequences of fire-setting and how to make good choices. The content of the program is specifically geared towards the child’s age and includes content for individuals as old as 17. The normal time span for the program is one session a week for four weeks.

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For some youth, a non-traditional academic setting can be the difference between “dropping out” and “finding a path” to a meaningful education and career. This difference can be critical for a young person, especially if his/her home life includes abuse, neglect or little family history of advanced education. Here is information you might find useful for the family or a youth you encounter. The program is open to St. Louis County students in grades 10 through 12 who meet entrance requirements.

The Law Enforcement/Homeland Security program at North Technical High School is part of the technical education division of the Special School District of St. Louis County, and is fully accredited by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

This special program exists to prepare and guide students for a variety of careers in law enforcement. Our program motto is “shaping tomorrow’s leaders in law enforcement,” and I believe character development is a critical part of preparing our students for these careers.

The two-year program at North and South Tech high schools affords students the opportunity to:

- Use investigative techniques to solve crime scenarios and to mediate and resolve conflicts
- Engage in basic self-defense tactics and fitness training
- Operate a police vehicle and use other security-related training equipment
- Research and analyze current trends and issues relating to terrorism, biohazards and other crises
- Engage in catastrophic public emergency scenarios using high-tech security equipment
- Participate in our exclusive curriculum developed in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security

Graduating seniors leave with several certificates and certifications, including CPR and Emergency Dispatching.

The curriculum involves more than just classrooms and textbooks. Recently, students participated in real-life training drills when emergency crews from several surrounding fire districts responded to a mock tornado strike. The training drill was coordinated by Firefighting/EMS and Law Enforcement/Homeland Security instructors, along with local fire officials. As crews arrived on scene, they found victims trapped and injured. Students from the Fire/EMS and Law/Homeland Security classes played the part of injured victims. Emergency crews assessed the situation to determine the best solution for securing the scene, triaging patients and coordinating with paramedics for victim transport to the hospital.

Students in this program are passionate about their education and optimistic about their potential for successful careers, as evidenced by the mission statements developed by this year’s junior and senior students.

11th grade class
Our mission as a junior law enforcement class is to learn how to serve and protect our community and our country by all means. By the end of this class we will be able to do so with character and integrity. By the time we graduate, we will be more than ready to uphold the Constitution, and ready to be a valuable asset to any agency of acceptance.

12th grade class
We are the senior students of Homeland Security at North Technical High School. We are defined by our passion for justice, service, honesty, integrity, teamwork and fairness to all. We are dedicated to furthering our education in criminal justice and lifetime learning as a group. We are committed to learning how to protect the St. Louis Community and the borders of this great nation.

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Imagine you receive a call to respond to a local convenience store, seeking assistance for a 14-year-old youth who is afraid to go home. What do you do?

Your first reaction may be: “Is this a runaway?” “Is this youth trying to escape consequences for breaking rules at home?” “Did this youth get in trouble?”

Had the youth sought help at a neighborhood Safe Place, chances are you would never have gotten the call. Youth In Need (YIN) is the regional provider of Safe Place, a national program that educates young people about the dangers of running away and offers a network of “safe places,” or youth-friendly businesses in St. Louis City and County and St. Charles County during times of crisis. Public locations (both for-profit and nonprofit) serve as this network where youth can access immediate help in locations that are convenient and familiar. Some of the area’s Safe Places include Walgreens, QuikTrip convenience stores, Metro buses and trains, YMCAs, as well as many community fire stations, churches and banks.

How does Safe Place work?

When a young person is in need of a safe place, specially-trained businesses and youth-friendly organizations serve as temporary safe locations until YIN staff can assess the situation and offer counseling, support, a place to stay, transportation or other resources.

Currently, more than 450 businesses and 300 Metro St. Louis buses and trains, designated by the distinctive yellow and black diamond-shaped Safe Place sign, support children and teens by offering their businesses as designated “safe places.” These partners work closely with YIN to ensure all employees complete a brief, but thorough, training program.

In St. Louis and St. Charles counties, Safe Place is one of three ways youth 19 and younger can access help through the Youth Connection Helpline, which is an innovative partnership between YIN and Behavioral Health Response (BHR). Youth can “call, text or go” if they feel unsafe, are contemplating running away or have a personal problem any time day or night. Parents, school counselors and other concerned adults may contact the Helpline on behalf of youth as well.

What happens at a Safe Place?

YIN’s Street Outreach workers are “first responders,” arriving at businesses shortly after an employee calls the Helpline to request assistance. Typically, the teen who seeks help at a Safe Place site hasn’t been living on the streets. He was living with his family and was kicked out. Family conflict and severe economic hardship are the primary causes. Some have run away from homes where they were the victims of physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Others are running away from alcohol and drug abuse in the home. Some either ran away or were kicked out of the home due to pregnancy. Others are forced to leave home because of their sexual orientation.

Our staff helps youth communicate with family and return home, if appropriate. If not, the outreach team can help a young person find a safe and stable living situation. Staff provides tangible, basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, medical care and hygiene products, as well as transportation assistance, information, community resources and referrals to places of safety and support. Our staff advocate for youth, whose needs are complex and often overlooked by the rest of the community. GED programs, job training programs and long-term food pantries are among the additional service linkages offered.

What happens next?

The outreach team works with YIN’s Emergency Shelter and Transitional Living Program, and collaborates with other shelters, transitional and independent

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Firestarter Prevention
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The only requirement is that at least one parent must be present at each session. Both parents and the juvenile’s siblings may attend if they wish to do so.

The sessions include classroom exercises, videos, discussions, guest speakers, safety education and homework. Upon completion, the juvenile is awarded a certificate and makes a commitment to community service.

The program is an invaluable resource for children who are using fire-setting to act out anger, frustration and feelings of helplessness. Officers who encounter these troubled juveniles now have a way to stop these dangerous behaviors before they become much larger problems. It is as simple as asking the parent or guardian to refer the child and making a quick phone call. The YFPT can be reached at 314-997-2757 and is located at 11710 Administration Drive, Suite 2B, St. Louis, MO 63146.

Detective Keithley has been a police officer for almost 10 years and has been a CIT officer since 2007. He is currently assigned to St. Louis County Police Department’s Bomb & Arson unit.

Youth Law Enforcement
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Full-day & Half-day Programs
Full day program
- Take both academic classes and technical major at North Tech
- Graduate from North Tech
- Select from a wide range of academic courses which include honors and dual-enrollment classes

Half-day program
- Take academic classes at student’s regular high school
- Take technical major at North Tech
- Credits from North Tech transfer to student’s regular high school and become part of official transcripts

Anyone wanting more information can contact North Technical High School at 314-989-7600 from 7:00am to 4:00pm, M-F. North Tech is located at 1700 Derhake Road, Florissant, MO.

Clarence Hines, Law Enforcement/Homeland Security instructor at North Technical High School, is a retired Sergeant from the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department. In his 21 years of service to the department, assignments included Narcotics, S.W.A.T. and Intelligence units. Clarence also taught Criminal Investigation and Juvenile Justice at the police academy. He has a Bachelor’s degree in Behavioral Science from National Louis University and a Master’s in Theology from Covenant Seminary.

Safe Place
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housing programs, drop-in centers and health clinics to coordinate services.

YIN serves youth regardless of income or residency. The program is free to all participants.

Youth In Need is an eastern Missouri regional agency serving more than 23,000 children, teens and families each year in six counties with residential group homes, homeless street outreach, education, counseling and support groups, foster care case management and infant, child and family development programs.

Our mission
Believing in the power of potential, Youth In Need’s mission is to provide nurturing environments and educational opportunities so children, youth and families will find safety and hope, achieve their goals, and build a positive future.

For more information
Visit www.youthinneed.org or contact Karen Sieve at 636-757-9345 or ksieve@youthinneed.org.

Karen Sieve oversees YIN’s Safe Place program. She is responsible for recruiting and training local business owners to use their business as Safe Place sites, fostering community education, and conducting presentations for businesses, schools and community groups. Her activities highlight the critical role the community plays in ensuring all children have a “safe place” in their lives.