



A pitcher in last year's Youth Services' kickball tournament delivers a ball to the plate.

Kickball tourney for adults

BRATTLEBORO- Youth Services' Kickin' It Home kickball tournament on Saturday, September 28, at West River Park on Route 30, taps into nostalgia for a game that many people last played during grade school recess.

Kickball, which has seen resurgence as a sport for adults nationwide, is played by teams of 10 players or more, around a baseball diamond, and is not to be confused with dodge ball, according to tournament organizers, who are currently recruiting teams of all ages. All proceeds will help fund Youth Services' programs for runaway and homeless teens, a growing segment of youth in Windham County.

Each team can comprise 10 or more individuals and can be mixed gender or single sex. Groups of friends or work colleagues are encouraged to organize a team and sign up by email, in person, or by phone.

Registration is a minimum donation of \$200 per team and early registration is appreciated. There will be a prize awarded to the team that raises the most money. A Kickin' It Home trophy will be awarded to the team that wins the tournament and there will also be prizes for some unusual categories, such as best team uniform. Tickets for a 50/50 raffle will also be sold before and during the daylong event.

Youth Services provides short-term emergency housing and follow-up counseling for youth who threaten to run away, have run, or are pushed out of the home. In addition, a strong focus of the agency's case management services is on preventing and alleviating homelessness, with priority given to youth who are currently homeless, at high risk of homelessness, or living in unstable or unsafe housing.

Last year alone, Youth Services helped 75 youth with independent living skills support and counseling to teach them the skills necessary to live on their own. In order to be able to serve the growing demand for services for this segment of the population, additional funds are needed.

Registration for the tournament can be done by email at kickinithome@gmail.com or by calling (802) 380-5598. The tournament will take place rain or shine and food and snacks will be available for sale throughout the day.

For more information on Youth Services' Kickin' It Home tournament visit www.youthservicesinc.org.

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job, taking a Licensed Nursing Assistant course, attending Community College of Vermont and contemplating college at a four-year school, while at the same time serving as a resource for her peers.

Erikson came to Youth Services in 2011 to get help with housing. The Youth Services and Windham Windsor Housing Trust partnership made it possible for Erikson to rent a room at its Cobblestone building on Canal Street. She successfully completed her year lease and was able to move into an apartment of her own.

Vallender has been amazed by Erikson's resiliency, such as maintaining her employment at a nursing home, even when she was looking for permanent housing and had no transportation. Additionally, Erikson has demonstrated budgeting skills by saving money to buy a car and to pay off her bill at Community College of Vermont so she could resume her education.

According to Vallender, Erikson has many skills that display her self-control, self-discipline, positive decision making and ability to take responsibility for her actions.

"As Carolyn's life has stabilized, I have begun to see a leader developing," said Vallender. "As she has learned about various community resources and how to access them, she has begun to help other young adults."

Erikson has represented youth and our community at the statewide Youth In Transition Grant Executive Board as well as various local meetings about community development. She has been invited to join members of the Vermont Youth In Transition State Team in attending a national conference about excelling as a young adult leader.

Youth Services is providing a seven-week summer work program for low-income youth in the Bellows Falls area through Aug. 9. According to organizers, 13 youth have been selected to benefit from paid summer jobs in landscaping, service and agriculture as well as gain important life skills that will better prepare them for entering the workforce and living independently.

Bianca Barry, youth development

director for Youth Services, developed the project after noticing that employment and job development skills were two of the highest needs of the youth she serves. Participants work and learn at a variety of sites each morning, share a nutritious lunch together, and study life and academic skills afternoons at the Health Center at Bellows Falls, under the guidance and support of two adult supervisors and a Youth Services case manager.

While the youth learn skills they are making important contributions to the area. Some of the work will include a week of landscaping and trail maintenance for the town of Rockingham, conducting a food drive for the Greater Falls Warming Shelter, cleaning up in Saxtons River after its 4th of July celebrations and maintaining the gardens at Compass School, Kurn Hattin Homes and Westminster Center School.

For more information about Youth Services programs in the greater Bellows Falls area, contact Bianca Fernandez at 802-257-0361 or case managers Michelle Sacco or Elizabeth Hallett at Youth Services' Parks Place office at 802-275-7871.

Rachel Selsky of Brattleboro recently joined 18 other community members on Youth Services' board of directors. The board and staff are looking forward to tapping Selsky's background in strategic planning, benchmarking and results-based accountability, as well as her willingness to help with the many fundraising activities of the organization.

With a background in urban and regional planning, Selsky is in her fifth year of working remotely for Camoin Associates, a nationally recognized economic and community development consulting firm. The Albany, N.Y. native first became involved with Youth Services as a participant in the year-long "Get on Board Fellowship Program" through Marlboro Graduate School, which especially targets young professionals for board membership in area nonprofits.

For more information on Youth Services programs, call 802-257-0361 or visit www.youthservicesinc.org.



Carolyn Erikson



Rachel Selsky

Carolyn Erikson, 21, of Brattleboro has been awarded the Young Adult Leadership Award by the Vermont Youth In Transition State Team. The award, presented to Erikson and three others at the annual Young Adult Voice Movement Conference, recognizes young adults in the state of Vermont who exhibit exemplary leadership and initiative in their own lives and affect the lives of others around them.

Nominated by Alysa Vallender, her Youth Services case manager, Erikson has transitioned from needing housing, to renting her own apartment, working a steady