



CYN CONNECTION

APRIL 2025

INSIGHTS AND UPDATES ON *Supporting Families and Strengthening Communities*

A Note from Our Executive Director Gail Weil, LCSW, CADC



This spring, another session of Growing Resilient Teens is underway. The 10-week program, developed in partnership with Waukegan Public Schools and local farms, is designed for students who've experienced trauma and need a space to build coping skills, confidence, and healthy relationships.

Participants take part in group counseling, mindfulness practices, and outdoor activities that encourage personal growth in a supportive, low-pressure setting. It's a model that blends evidence-based therapy with the benefits of time in nature and peer connection.

This program reflects our ongoing commitment to closing gaps in access to mental health care—especially for youth in under-resourced communities. We're proud to offer something that's practical, meaningful, and built around the real needs of young people.

Thank you for continuing to support this work.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Gail'.

In this newsletter:

Growing Resilient Teens,
Family Therapy Tips, &
Board Member Recruitment
—Keep Reading!

Add to your calendar:

1. Earth Day, April 22
2. Día del Niño / Children's Day Celebration
at North Chicago Community High School
5:00–7:00 PM, April 30



Growth Happens Here A TEEN'S STORY

When I first started the Growing Resilient Teens program, I didn't really know what to expect. I thought it was going to be another group where they just ask you how you feel and tell you to calm down. I've done stuff like that before, and I never really said much.

But the farm was different. It was quiet and open, and it didn't feel like a school or a clinic. We'd walk around, take care of the animals, and then sit in a circle and talk—but no one made you say anything if you didn't want to. I remember one of the first days, someone else said something that sounded exactly like what I'd been thinking. That's when I realized I wasn't the only one who felt like this.

I used to get really angry. Like, shut-down-and-yell kind of angry. At home, my mom didn't know what to do with me, and I didn't know how to talk about what was really bothering me. I learned how to slow down and figure out what I'm feeling before it turns into something bigger. We practiced breathing, walking it off, even how to explain things in a way people can hear you.

I didn't know how to talk about it before.

Now I do.



A Different Kind of Therapy: Growing Resilient Teens at CYN

Each week this spring, students from Waukegan step off a school bus and onto a local farm—trading classrooms for open space, fresh air, and a different kind of support.

Growing Resilient Teens is a 6–10 week program from CYN Counseling Center, created in partnership with Waukegan Public Schools and local farms. It's designed for teens who've experienced trauma and need more than traditional talk therapy—they need space, structure, and tools that work in real life.

The program blends group counseling with mindfulness, restorative practices, and hands-on activities like caring for animals or walking trails. Each session focuses on building skills—managing emotions, communicating clearly, and building trust with others.

“By the third or fourth session, students who barely spoke at the beginning are opening up—sometimes to peers, sometimes to staff, but most importantly, to themselves,” says Teresa, the program coordinator.

If you'd like to support Growing Resilient Teens and other programs and therapies at CYN Counseling Center, visit cyngrayslake.org or call 847-548-6000.

Volunteer Appreciation MONTH

WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As we recognize Volunteer Appreciation Month, we want to extend our deepest thanks to the dedicated members of CYN's Board of Directors. Their leadership, time, and advocacy ensure that we can continue expanding access to mental health services across our community.

Our board members are volunteers in every sense of the word. They contribute not just time and expertise, but energy, perspective, and a true commitment to CYN's mission. Their support helps shape our strategy, strengthen our partnerships, and keep our work moving forward—especially as the demand for mental health care continues to grow.

If you're inspired by their example and want to learn more about serving on our board, we welcome the conversation. We're currently looking for new members with experience in areas such as fundraising, community outreach, marketing, and human resources.

Contact Gail Weil at gailw@cyngrayslake.org or learn more at cyngrayslake.org.

How Family Therapy Helps—And How to Get the Most from It

At CYN, we often hear from parents who feel stuck—caught in the middle of sibling arguments, teen withdrawal, or constant tension at home. Family therapy isn't about assigning blame; it's about learning new ways to communicate and problem-solve together.

Here are a few ways to make the most of it:

- ♡ Be open to the process. Even if it feels uncomfortable at first, consistency helps.
- ♡ Speak with, not about, each other. Sessions are a safe space to practice honest, respectful dialogue.
- ♡ Set small goals. Progress doesn't have to be dramatic to be meaningful.
- ♡ Let the therapist guide the flow. The goal is progress, not perfection.

Family therapy creates space for everyone to be heard—and helps families build tools that last long after the sessions end.

Want to learn more? Call us at 847-548-6000 or visit cyngrayslake.org.

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