From the Chair

It’s been a great year to be a part of Thrive. The coalition has helped encourage our community to see things from a larger perspective. It has encouraged partnerships and collaborative work for the issues that often matter most to our community. It has inspired many people to get involved in their area of influence and provided opportunities for community members to get involved in new areas.

Thrive is able to bring together a variety of perspectives as we seek to make a healthy difference in the Mat-Su. I am continually inspired by the many people that are working together to make positive changes. Thrive often encourages coalition members to become involved with system changes that can improve health outcomes, yet also encourages everyday acts of kindness that truly have a significant impact within our community. Thrive inspires many of us to keep moving forward toward a brighter future.

Aaron Clements
Coalition Chair, Thrive Mat-Su

Thrive’s mission is to lead a data-driven, coordinated community response to prevent and reduce youth substance use. We envision a community that supports healthy choices regarding substance use — a community where individuals thrive.
Thrive Mat-Su uses the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) as its planning process for preventing substance use and misuse.

"A lot of coalitions talk about doing things but nothing ever happens. Thrive makes a plan and then just gets it done."
Crystalyn Lemieux, Thrive member
About Us

Thrive utilizes a data-driven, strengths-based approach to prevent and reduce youth substance use.

47% of youth feel the matter to people in their community.

Substances We Track
- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Marijuana
- Prescription Drugs

Indicators We Follow
- Past 30-Day Use
- Perception of Harm
- Perception of Peer Disapproval
- Perception of Parental Disapproval
- Peer Climate & Connectedness in School
- Caring Adults in Youth’s Life
- Volunteering

52% of Mat-Su youth volunteer at school or in the community.

Data Sources
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- School Connectedness Survey
- Community Health Needs Assessment
- Community Readiness Survey

60% of youth think their teachers really care about them and give them encouragement.
83% of high school students say their parents consider it wrong to drink.

86% of high school students feel comfortable seeking help from at least one adult besides their parents.

74% of Mat-Su teens don't drink alcohol.

41% of high school students think using marijuana is a moderate or great risk.

79% of high school students think using prescription pain medicine without a prescription is a moderate to great risk.

45% of high school students say their friends think it's wrong to use marijuana.

6% of high school students smoke cigarettes.

56% of youth participate in organized after-school activities one or more days per week.

Source: 2017 Alaska YRBS
Helping Youth Thrive

Thrive seeks to prevent youth substance use by strengthening youth assets like social connectedness and support. Research shows that youth who are connected to their school and community and who feel supported by caring adults are less likely to use drugs and alcohol.
**Expand Positive Relationships**

Increase the amount of time youth spend in healthy group activities with supportive adults and peers who reinforce good decisions and build resilience, with an emphasis on building positive peer-to-peer and youth-adult relationships.

**Strengthen Positive Cultural Norms**

Promote healthy social norms that already exist regarding underage alcohol consumption, while increasing awareness for both youth and adults of the risks of underage drinking, and limiting access to alcohol.

**Support Safe Spaces & Activities**

Grow the number, variety and accessibility of programs and activities that allow youth to spend time in safe, supported spaces.
Engaging Youth

Youth Retreat

The Thrive Mat-Su Youth Retreat, held in July, allowed students in grades 6-12 a chance to develop leadership skills, connect with their peers and acquire tools to address issues facing teens today.

Be [You]

Thrive Mat-Su engaged students across the Mat-Su Borough School District in Be [You], a positive messaging campaign aimed at preventing and reducing underage drinking by celebrating the fact that 78% of Alaska teens do not drink alcohol.
Increasing Awareness, Reducing Access

Safely storing and disposing of unused medications helps prevent prescription drug misuse and reduces youth access.

**Distributed** more than 1,000 drug disposal bags and hundreds of pill pods at health fairs and community events across the Mat-Su Borough.

**Promoted** Drug Take Back events in Palmer, Wasilla & Talkeetna, which netted a combined total of 1,199 pounds of unused medications in 2018.

More than 35,000 MEA customers received reminders about **Drug Take Back** events with their bills in October and April. The two-sided bill stuffer featured this infographic about the risks of prescription drug misuse and the importance of safe disposal and storage of unused medications.

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*Working to support our community, parents and students*

- Talk to your kids about the dangers of taking medications not prescribed to them. 4 out of 5 heroin addicts start with abuse of prescription painkillers.
- We care about our children and their future. They need us to support them, talk and play with them every day, believe in them, and love and encourage them.
- **FREE BIODEGRADABLE BAG**
  - Ask us how to get your FREE Biodegradable Bag today! Simply put your unused medication in the bag, and the ingredients inside will deactivate your prescription medication.
- Would you notice if some of your prescription medication was missing? Remember these 3 easy steps for safety:
  1. Securely Store
  2. Properly Dispose
  3. Don’t Share.

[United Way and Thrive Mat-Su logos]

[unitedwaymatsu.org thivematsu.org]
## Investing in Prevention

### Safe, Supportive Spaces for Youth
- Boys & Girls Club, Mat–Su
- Parenting classes at Sunshine Community Health Center
- Moving Youth in Foster Care, Onward & Upward
- Friendship Park in Palmer
- Night Courts, MyHouse
- Community Block Parties
- Big Brothers Big Sisters

$101,312

### Expanding Positive Peer and Adult Relationships
- Parenting classes & summer camp, Sunshine Community Health Center
- Thrive Mat–Su Youth Retreat
- Mat–Su Youth Court Leadership Conference
- Palmer High School Leadership Training
- Summer School Program at Burchell High School
- CoDI
- Pioneer Peak Elementary School Behavioral Support Program

$36,433

### Building Capacity
- CARF/MRT Training for True North
- Youth Thrive Training
- Afterschool Conference
- Train the Trainer, Fallen Up Ministries
- Project Hope, MyHouse
- Alaska Public Health Summit training
- Positive Culture Framework Training

$57,206

### Community Engagement
- 2018 Prevention Summit
- Be [You] Promotion & Engagement
- Drug Take Back Event
- Narcan Training
- Community Café on Opioids
- Mat–Su Get Connected Expo
- Mat–Su Valley Resource Guide
- Great American Smokeout, Breathe Free Mat–Su
- Drug Disposal Bags & Pill Pods
- Be [You] Scholarships

$19,380
Making a Difference, One Project at a Time

Thrive Mat-Su is proud to support community programs and projects that align with our strategic goals. Here are just a few of the efforts we helped fund in 2018.

Playground equipment at First Baptist Church, Palmer’s Friendship Park

2018 Alaska Prevention Summit, in collaboration with community partners

Narcan training for MyHouse and Fallen Up Ministries

A comprehensive Marijuana Report, commissioned by Thrive Mat-Su and utilized by the State of Alaska Division of Behavioral Health

Onward & Upward's Adventure Academy for Youth in Foster Care

Onward & Upward's Resiliency Retreat for OCS staff
Join us for our meetings:
Third Tuesday each month | 12 – 2 p.m.
Boys & Girls Club, Mat-Su
3700 E Bogard Road
Wasilla, AK 99654

For more information, contact us at (907)745-5827
or email impact@unitedwaymatsu.org.