

Testimonials

If any member, former member, parent or individual would like to tell us how Youth & Recreation Services has affected you, please email Rick Gorman at rgorman@nayouth.com.

Here's what a few people had to say:

Stephen Crowley
Youth Center employee

This was Stephen's speech when he was honored at our 2016 Knight to Shine event: What does the Youth Center mean to me? This speech wasn't easy to write. So many memories come to mind when I start to think about the Youth Center. When I sat down to write this speech it brought a smile to my face thinking of all of the wonderful memories that I have of this place and about what it means for me to say that the Youth Center will be a part of my life forever. Through my years of working at the Youth Center it became less and less of a job and more and more like a family. We joked around, got mad at one another and had fun. My first summer working there, I had just finished my sophomore year of high school. That was one of the best summers I have ever had. I was nervous and shy at times but when I started to work I let the real me come out. I didn't care what the other staff thought of me or if I embarrassed myself in front of the kids who I was watching over. Rick always tells us that no matter what kind of day we're having we have to make sure those kids get the best day they can possibly have. I took this to heart and made it my goal for those kids to have the best 4 hours they could have. I was offered a job starting that school year to join the Youth Center's staff during the fall and I continued through the rest of the year. This is where I have to really take a moment to thank Rick and the staff. Because they gave me something I never thought I would get working at the Youth Center. I made the best friends of my life that year. The Youth Center brought together some of the best people you could ever ask for, people who I know will be lifelong friends of mine. As the year continued so did the friendships, and these people became more like my brothers. When I first started I was the one of the younger staff members and I looked up to the older staff to help me along the way. I was awarded staff member of the year which meant a lot to me as a new staff member. My hard work all year had paid off. The next year, as a senior, I was a bit older and I wasn't the young one at work anymore. I felt a sense of leadership beginning to grow, which was one of many abilities that I had gained here. We had more corner office meetings that year than I had ever had. For everyone who doesn't know what a corner office meeting is, it is when the boss feels like he needs to have a one on one talk with you. You never know what it's going to be about, it could be a joking talk or a serious one. It could be personal or have nothing to do with anything. Many of mine were personal talks, some joking ones, and a lot of conversations about my work at the Youth Center. My relationship with each of the staff members grew every year. That's really important to me. I felt wanted at the Youth Center and felt important. There are so many things in my time at the Youth Center that can't be put into words, from funny things the kids say, to what they do, to the goofy things the staff does to make each other laugh. This place is so much more than just a job. It truly is a place where you can feel comfortable and joke around and have great connections with the kids and still have a level for respect for each other. The Youth Center is a home to me and I don't know what I would do without this place. My senior year was my hardest year especially towards the summer. I was realizing that I would not be working there after school every day. I would be leaving for college that fall and was getting nervous and scared about it. We went on a staff outing to Mount Major that summer and got poured on by rain as soon as we were heading down the mountain. It was a great last trip with all of these people. My coworker Aisha and I really did appreciate how close we got with the staff to the point where I believe we can both say they are our second family. The last day the Youth Center was open in the summer, I was there for the whole day saying goodbye and getting a bit emotional. What really set me off was when Rick had a one on one with me outside and told me "This isn't goodbye it's only see you later. We will miss having you here every day, but I know that you are ready to move on from the Youth Center." He had brought me so far in my life and the Youth Center as a whole prepared me for a lot of things that I will use out in the real world. My personality grew and developed here and without them I don't know how ready I really would have been for college. My family helped a lot, but I think the Youth Center really helped me get ready to move on in life. When I left for school I wasn't homesick at all, I was prepared for my life to come.

Allie Cavanaugh, 16 y.o.
Former Youth Center member

"It has been about 4 years that I haven't been a participant at North Andover Youth and Recreation Services... You guys may not know but all the support that was provided to me by everyone who worked there helped me through so many good and bad times... I miss you all and hope I get the time to visit everyone soon!!! Thanks for everything you helped me through... Every person that supported me should know that all the support you guys gave me has made me a better and stronger than I ever thought I would be... I will never forget the day we did the turkey toss and I won... It was really fun like it always was and always will be... Again thanks for all the support everyone gave me!!!"

Brienne Hart

Personal Assistant to John Henry
The Henry Organization
Boca, Raton, FL

"North Andover Youth Services is an exceptional organization with dedicated staff members. I became involved with NAYS as a middle school student and my Journey with them has yet to end. The programs they offer taught me leadership, compassion and commitment, they also allowed me the wonderful opportunity to experience giving back. Rick Gorman goes above and beyond what the job requires. His support and dedication had a direct effect on my success. Today, the Youth Center is an extraordinary facility with fantastic programs and it is wonderful to see the many children of North Andover that benefit from being involved there."

Tara Hughes, Parent
North Andover, MA

"I have two children, Michael (8) and Emily (6). After school today we decided to go to Drummond Park and burn off some energy. When we arrived, there was a group of teenagers hanging out at the playground. They started up a game of 'volleyball' over the monkey bars. My 8-year-old son was enthralled with watching 'the teenagers' playing. He finally got up the nerve and asked if he could play with them. They said YES! 'I'll tell you he was in seventh heaven to be playing with the big kids. I think he will be up on cloud nine the entire weekend! My daughter sat on the bench with me watching the game. A little while later, one of the girls playing came over to Emily and invited her to play too. It was one of those moments, as a parent, that brings a tear to your eye. The joy on the faces of my children as they played with these 'big' kids was priceless! The reason I am writing to you is because I feel that teenagers get a bad reputation a majority of the time. I know when I first pulled in and saw such a large gathering I thought that it might spell trouble. Those kids that were over there today were great! I am almost positive that they are regulars at the Youth Center. This is why I felt compelled to write you and tell you what a great group of kids you have over there. I was only able to catch a few of the names. However, the three kids that stood out the most to me were Olivia, Kyle and Evan. They made my two little ones feel like they were a part of the team and essential to score the big win. I did not get last names but I am hoping you will have an idea of who these three are. Please extend my heartfelt thanks to them for making the day for two little kids! They will be talking about this afternoon for weeks to come!"

Kimberly Festa Cratty, LICSW

"North Andover Youth Services has a positive impact on North Andover due to the vision and hard work of Rick Gorman. NAYS began as two overworked, underpaid twenty-somethings working out of a two room attic helping to "make a difference". The effect these two individuals had on students was powerful. They allowed each individual to be inspired, by simply believing in them. To witness NAYS' growth is dumbfounding; but part of me knew that Rick Gorman could accomplish anything. I began my "career" as a high school student working summers with Rick and NAYS. It was more than a job, it was an awakening. The concepts of self-awareness, respect and trust were exemplified in NAYS. From employing the "poor high school student" to facilitating groups at the middle school to offering basketball leagues, NAYS is the backbone of North Andover."

Katie Petraila, RN
Boston, MA

"I began my journey with NAYS when I was twelve years old as I nervously entered the North Andover Middle School. When Rick Gorman came in to speak to our class about joining TEENCO, I underestimated the impact he and North Andover Youth Services would have on my life... Having had an affiliation with NAYS for over half of my life, they have had a major impact on the person I have become. 'I've never been given such wonderful opportunities of volunteer service and leadership; as well as guidance, support and role models. It is no surprise when I come home to North Andover; I stop by NAYS to see my second family before my first. "

John McVeigh, Head Basketball Coach/Administrator
Brooks School, North Andover, MA

"I remember the first time I heard the name 'Rick Gorman'... I was in 7th grade and a friend of mine was talking about going to a dance sponsored by something called TEENCO. I had no idea what any of it meant, but I went to the dance anyway. In the next 6 years, I learned a lot more thanks to what would eventually become NAYS. As an organization, it gave me a chance to meet and interact with all types of kids through all the activities and trips they sponsored; a chance to take part in decision-making and leadership through the Youth Council; a chance to play all the basketball I could ever hope to. NAYS brought to the town a lot more positive experiences for a lot more kids. Even more importantly, it wasn't just geared to a certain type of kid... it was for everyone. Rick and NAYS are what I remember most about growing up as a kid in North Andover-They made it a lot of fun and a much better place to live."

Ellen Lynch, UML Class of 2009

"The North Andover Youth Services has been a huge part of my life since Middle School. From TEENCO Dance Committee and Middle School dances to GiveBack and Summer League games, Youth Services has always housed a welcoming community. The staff has always been personable and looking to help. I have had so much fun and learned so much."

Ed Keisling
North Andover, MA

"Looking back from when you started to where you are now, it's amazing to see the progress and the impact you've had on the community. Kudos to Rick Gorman and the staff for sticking to your vision and following through! I look back at the time with your Programs fondly and appreciate the time still that you spent with us and our 1's."

Alexa LoRe, Emmanuel College Class of 2008

"The YC is just a great place to grow and meet new people and have some new adventures. As a staff member and a camp counselor, it is amazing to see the effects that this place has on so many kids. The YC has given me so many great opportunities and for me to tell future employees that I worked there will really help me in the long run. I honestly can't describe how amazing this place is. Just walking inside you can feel it. It is just a great place to be. "

Amanda Mortenson, Public Relations Executive
Chicago, Illinois

"To reflect as to how Youth Services has affected my life is quite a challenge. This is because Youth Services is a key component of my life. Once I entered Middle School, I became involved with programs such as Peer Mediation and TEENCO. It was at the small office in the old, white building next to the red barn, where all of our functions were held that I learned to become the woman I am today. Through the guidance of the staff I learned how to face life's obstacles and adversities. Once I entered High School, my connection with Youth Services grew. I was hired part-time to assist with the running of the new Youth Center and the popular Summer Fun program. I learned to be a positive role model and mentor to many of North Andover's youth. I also became a leader to my classmates. Working at Summer Fun was my way of giving back what I learned growing up from the staff at Youth Services. Through the 9 years with the program I have had the opportunity to watch North Andover's youth grow into wonderful young adults. I hope that my impact on their lives was as influential as Youth Services was to me. "

Chris Asaro
Haverhill, MA

"Some of my most influential experiences have come from one source outside of my family, that source is located at 33 Johnson Street in North Andover's "Olde Center" It used to be referred to as the Red Barn. I have so many memories of Youth Services. Gorman's Workers is what we called ourselves as we washed the walls of the red barn for the hundredth time or painted the old buildings floors battleship gray, again. I learned qualities like responsibility, leadership, teamwork and most important of all Respect. I am proud to have had the privilege to be part of Youth Services. "

Diane Uttley, Parent
North Andover, MA

"As a parent of three grown children, North Andover Youth services has been a part of my family's life for many, many years. NAYS has been a place where my children have gone to seek advice and to ask for help. As Middle School and High School students, my kids knew that they could turn to Youth Services when they needed someone other than their parents or friends to talk to. Rick and his dedicated Youth Services staff are here for all of us. They are here for our community. Most importantly, they are here for our youth, providing them with the experiences and the tools they need to become confident and productive members of our wonderful community."