

TOWN OF WATERFORD
GENERAL FUND
2026-2027 PROPOSED BUDGET

DEPT/AGENCY: 10119 YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

LINE ITEM	DESCRIPTION	2024-2025 ACTUAL EXPENDED	FY2025 TRANSFERS IN/OUT	2025-2026 RTM APPROP.	2025-2026 ADDITIONAL/ TRANSFERS	ACTUAL EXPEND & ENCUMB AS OF 1/1/26	2026-2027 DEPT/ AGENCY REQUEST	2026-2027 BD OF SELECTMEN APPROVED	2026-2027 BD OF FINANCE APPROVED	BOF Approved \$ Increase	BOF Approved % Increase
PERSONNEL COSTS											
51110	ADMINISTRATION	218,781	5,967	228,332		90,314	168,134	168,134	168,134	-60,198	-26.36%
51210	CLERICAL/TECHNICAL	39,196	-7,517	48,120		7,748	94,440	94,440	94,440	46,320	96.26%
51810	OVERTIME	562	600	0		154	0	0	0	0	0.00%
51920	FICA	19,522	-489	21,148		7,035	20,087	20,087	20,087	-1,061	-5.02%
	SUBTOTAL	278,061	(1,439)	297,600	0	105,251	282,661	282,661	282,661	-14,939	-5.02%
SERVICES											
52020	POSTAGE	94		200		39	200	200	200	0	0.00%
52030	PROFESSIONAL FEES	6,438	1,439	5,000		5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	0	0.00%
52040	SERVICE CONT.& REPAIRS	1,040		1,060		451	530	530	530	-530	-50.00%
52050	DUES, CONF, & EDUCATION	574		575		574	587	587	587	12	2.09%
52080	TELEPHONE	2,500		2,500		2,500	2,600	2,600	2,600	100	4.00%
52380	PROGRAMS	405		500		177	500	500	500	0	0.00%
	SUBTOTAL	11,051	1,439	9,835	0	8,741	9,417	9,417	9,417	-418	-4.25%
DEPARTMENT TOTAL											
		289,112	0	307,435	0	113,992	292,078	292,078	292,078	-15,357	-5.00%

Town of Waterford Youth & Family Services

FY 27 Budget ~ 10119 Youth & Family Services

Prepared by Dani Gorman, MS, Director

Presented on behalf of the Youth & Family Services Advisory Board

Mike Buscetto, Chairman

FY27: \$292,078

FY 26: \$307,435

Waterford Youth & Family Services

2026-2027

FY 27 Annual Budget

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To: Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Representative Town Meeting
From: Dani Gorman, Human Services Administrator
Re: Duties and Responsibilities of Youth and Family Services & Looking Ahead
Date: December 8, 2025

Waterford Youth and Family Services is responsible for assessing and addressing the needs of children, youth, and families within its community. Youth and Family Services coordinates and provides prevention, intervention, treatment, and positive youth development services in collaboration with schools, law enforcement, courts, social service agencies, and community organizations. Its primary duties include conducting community needs assessments, developing and implementing youth and family programs, providing diversion and juvenile justice services, and offering crisis intervention, counseling, and family support. Youth and Family Services advocates for youth, promotes healthy development and school success, and ensures access to resources that strengthen families and reduce risk behaviors. Additionally, the Youth and Family Services manages program data and reports annually to the municipality and the Connecticut Department of Children and Families to ensure accountability and continued improvement of youth services. Ultimately, our Fiscal Year 2027 budget presentation is an investment in building stronger families and a more resilient and compassionate future for our youth.

As we present the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, our focus remains on strengthening the well-being of children, youth, families, and our community as a whole. This budget reflects our continued commitment to providing high-quality, accessible, and equitable services that meet the evolving needs of those we serve. In FY27, we aim to enhance prevention and early intervention programs, expand mental health and family support services, and invest in staff development to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of our work.

The proposed budget prioritizes collaboration, innovation, and fiscal responsibility. It supports data-driven decision-making, community partnerships, and outcome-based programming designed to maximize impact while maintaining transparency and accountability. By investing in youth and family services, we are investing in a stronger, safer, and more resilient community—one that provides every resident the opportunity to thrive.

Looking Ahead:

In Fiscal Year 2027 and beyond, Youth and Family Services will continue to promote the healthy development and well-being of children, youth and families by:

- integrating evidence-based prevention,
- early-intervention and diversion services;
- leveraging data and technology to identify need and target services;

- strengthening partnerships across schools, justice, social-service and community agencies;
- and promoting equity, resilience and family-centered practices.

We commit to adapting to emerging social, economic and technological shifts to ensure our services remain responsive, culturally competent and outcome-driven.

Also as we look ahead, it is clear that the demand for our programs continues to grow which is a reflection of the increased interest in data-driven programs. With this growth, we are also seeing the need for additional program space to better serve our participants and maintain the high quality of experiences we provide. More space would also permit us to serve more young people. At the present time, we have to limit enrollment even though the demand is very high. We have already made expansions in schools, after the school day is complete, so that our programs can continue to thrive and serve even more children. Expanding space for children's programs is essential to meeting both current and future needs of the community. As participation grows, adequate space ensures that programs remain **safe, high quality, and engaging** for every child



To: Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Representative Town Meeting
From: Dani Gorman, Human Services Administrator
Re: Duties to Restrain Fiscal Spending
Date: December 8, 2025

The Youth and Family Services Department budget represents a 5% decrease for Fiscal Year 2027.

The largest decrease is due to a proposed operational change in the staffing of one position as detailed here:

- The replacement of a Program Coordinator with an Intake Specialist & Administrative Assistant for the following reasons;
 - Changes in Service Demand:
Increased demand for specialized services such as community outreach, coordinated care, intakes, support services, enrollment programs, food bank, and assistance with well-being checks.
 - Role realignment: **An administrative support position is better aligned with the actual duties needed**, such as; reception, data entry, scheduling, intakes, record-keeping, and day-to-day clerical operations.

Background / History:

The department's primary staffing need is additional administrative support rather than a Program Coordinator. The majority of workload pressures stem from increased phone calls, program enrollments, client intakes, data reporting, grant documentation, scheduling, and general customer-service responsibilities. These tasks require consistent clerical capacity, not program-management expertise. An administrative support position is the most cost-effective and appropriate solution, ensuring that routine operational duties are handled efficiently while allowing the program staff to focus on higher-level responsibilities such as program development, service delivery, and program management. This change provides a more balanced staffing structure, improves accuracy and compliance, and supports the growing administrative demands of the department.

In making this decision, I reviewed workload and operational data with the First Selectman, Finance Director, Human Resources Director, as well as the Advisory Board Chairman. Discussion and data focused on;

- Volume of tasks currently being handled (emails, calls, paperwork, requests)..
- Number of programs, clients, or projects that require support.

- Even though the budget reflects increases in the salaries of several positions that are based on contractual obligations, these costs are offset by the replacement of the program coordinator with an administrative assistant. Increases also includes non-union wages. All wage increases are approved through the Representative Town Meeting and are a positive statement on the part of town leaders / elected officials to retain talent.
- An adjustment was made to the cost of phones.
- The budget also reflects a decrease in service contracts due to a new shared cost with senior services for the copier.

Note: We have also submitted requests in other town budgets. A summary of these requests, along with supporting explanations and proposed costs, is provided in the final pages of this budget presentation.

SERIES 51000: Personnel / Salaries**Administration: 10119-51110**

Human Services Administrator GGA Class F 261 Days (@50%) Shared with Senior Services Longevity 1%	\$61,880 \$928 \$62,808
Program Coordinator GGA Class A 261 Days	\$70,337
Human Services Coordinator GGA Class B 261 Days (@ 50%) Shared with Senior Services	\$34,989

Clerical: 10119-51210

Administrative & Intake Specialist Full Time 35 hour per week position	\$47,220
Administrative & Intake Specialist Full Time 35 hour per week position	\$47,220

**A \$5,000 stipend received from BOE (see projected FY26 revenue) will be used to offset the Program Coordinator position.*

** A \$14,103 stipend received from State Dept. of Education (see projected FY26 revenue) will be used to offset the Program Coordinator position.*

Total Salaries (Administrative + Clerical)	\$262,574
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FICA: 10119-51920

Salaries: \$262,574	
FICA Rate: x .0765	\$20,087
Total FICA	

TOTAL SERIES 51000:	\$282,661
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SERIES 52000: Services

Postage: 10119-52020

Background: Postage expenses have remained low due to the department's efforts to use electronic mail whenever possible. No changes are proposed.

Budget Year	Amount Requested	Amount Spent	
23-24	\$200	\$127	
24-25	\$200	\$94	
25-26	\$200	YTD \$7	YTDs as of 12/8
Postage Request FY 27			\$200

Professional Fees: 10119-52030

Background: Contracted services are provided by licensed/self-insured clinicians and are consumer-driven. Funds that will be received by the Janssen Settlement will be used to offset these costs in FY27.

Budget Year	Amount Requested	Amount Spent	
23-24	\$32,000	\$26,975	
24-25	\$5,000	\$6,439	
25-26	\$5,000	YTD \$4,200	
Professional Fees Request FY 27			\$5,000

Service Contracts and Repairs: 10119-52040

Background: The only amount requested in this line is for the department's leased copier which is a shared cost with Senior Services.

Budget Year	Amount Requested	Amount Spent	
23-24	\$1,060	\$985	
24-25	\$1,060	\$1,040	
25-26	\$1,060	YTD \$101	
Service Contracts Request FY 27			\$530

Dues, Conferences and Education: 10119-52050

Background: The annual dues is for Waterford to maintain its membership with the Connecticut Youth Services Association (CYSA) consisting of 102 member towns, CYSA advocates to sustain or increase state funding. 2% increase for FY27

Budget Year	Amount Requested	Amount Spent
23-24	\$550	\$550
24-25	\$575	\$575
25-26	\$575	YTD \$575

Dues, Conferences FY 27	\$587
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Phone: 10119-52080

Background: The costs for this line applies to cell phones, which are carried off-site and after-hours.

Budget Year	Amount Requested	Amount Spent
23-24	\$2,200	\$2,997
24-25	\$2,500	\$2,500
25-26	\$2,500	YTD \$1,085

Phone Request FY 27	\$2,600
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Programs: 10119-52380

Background: Costs, which are not covered by grants.

Budget Year	Amount Requested	Amount Spent
23-24	\$7,948	\$10,533
24-25	\$500	\$409
25-26	\$500	YTD \$174

Program Request FY 27	\$500
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TOTAL SERIES 52000	\$9,417
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Total Budget

TOTAL SERIES 51000	\$282,661
TOTAL SERIES 52000	\$9,417
TOTAL BUDGET 2026 – 20267 (FY 27)	\$292,078

INVENTORY UPDATE

EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES in EXCESS OF \$1,000

Department/Agency:

Equipment/Vehicles purchased or disposed

<u>DESCRIPTION OF ITEM</u>	<u>DATE OF PURCHASE</u>	<u>COST</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
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N/A

Budgeted acquisition –

	<u>DATE OF ESTIMATED</u>
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<u>DESCRIPTION OF ITEM</u>	<u>PURCHASE</u>	<u>ESTIMATED COST</u>
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N/A

**TOWN OF WATERFORD
PROPOSED REVENUE BY DEPARTMENT
2025-2026 FISCAL YEAR**

All revenues from each department must be listed in the following categories. Please add any revenue lines that are not listed below.

DEPARTMENT: Youth and Family Services

LINE ITEM	2024-2025 ACTUAL	2025-2026 ACTUAL	2025-2026 YTD	2026-2027 PROPOSED	VARIANCE
Alarm Monitoring					0
Alarm Penalties					0
Ambulance Subsidy					0
Beach Admission Fees					0
Benefit Assessments					0
Bulky Waste Fees					0
Conveyance Tax					0
Copy Fees					0
East Lyme Animal Control Fee					0
Enhanced E 9-1-1					0
Fines/Penalties					0
Hazardous Household Waste					0
Inspection Fees					0
Interest/Lien Fees					0
Inter-Municipal Revenues					0
Miscellaneous					0
Permitting/Licensing Fees					0
Program/Registration Fees					0
Recording Fees					0
Regional Communications Fees					0
Rentals					0
Sale of Recyclables					0
State Operational Grants	\$14,103	\$ 14,103	\$7,051.50	\$14,103	0
Tipping Fees					0
Versa Kart/Blue Box Purchases					0
*BOE Stipend	\$5,000	\$5,000	0	\$5,000	0
					0
					0
					0
					0
TOTALS	\$19,103	\$19,103	\$7,051.50	\$19,103	0

WATERFORD YOUTH SERVICES

FEE SCHEDULE

Program	Fee	Estimated Yearly Income	YTD
Afterschool Programs	\$45	\$10,125	\$6,547

Waterford Youth Services Bureau Grant Funding*

Grant	24-25	25-26	26-27 Estimated
DHMAS Local Prevention Council	\$4,153	\$4,153	\$4,153
Gardiner Family Foundation (Donation)	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
State Dept. of Education Youth Enhancement	\$16,657	\$16,657	\$16,657
Summer Enrichment Grant	\$20,748	\$24,524	\$20,000
United Way Grant	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$0
CT Food Share	\$7,000	\$3,300	\$0
CT Youth Gambling Awareness		\$4,750	\$2,750
JRB Grant			\$4,000
Janssen Settlement Finance holds records of these funds	\$48,529	\$48,529	\$48,529
Total Grant Funding	\$128,690	\$120,216	\$111,089

*We continue to seek out alternative sources of funding and innovative opportunities, which permit us to sustain and / or “grow” programs and services.

Town of Waterford Youth & Family Services
Special Revenues Program* Staff

Seasonal / Occasional Position	Grade	Average # Employees	Youth Services Program
Seasonal Assistants	01	3-8	• Camp D.A.S.H. • Afterschool Camp • Parent / Caregiver Programs • Recess Programs
Camp Assistant	04	85	• Camp D.A.S.H. • Afterschool Camp Activities • Recess Programs
Youth Services Assistant	10	5-10	• Camp D.A.S.H. • Afterschool Camp Activities • Weekend Programs • Recess Programs
Camp Director	11	5	• Camp D.A.S.H. • Afterschool Camp Activities • Recess Programs

*All positions listed have been vetted through the Personnel Review Board and Human Resources. None of the positions is contractual in nature and / or defined as “independent contractors.”

Camp D.A.S.H. is an 8 week summer camp program, offered M-F from 7:30am-5:30pm. The camp (seasonally) employs approximately 85 people with each staff person engaging in 15-35 hours per week. Camp tuition payments subsidize all salaries, supplies, activities, and fringe benefits.

Camp D.A.S.H. inspired afterschool programs offered during the school year in 6-8 week cycles per program. Each afterschool program (seasonally) employs three staff. Program fees and grants subsidize salaries, supplies, activities, and fringe benefits.

Recess / special programs are often Camp D.A.S.H. inspired mini workshops and take place during the holidays or weekends. Based on need, each program (seasonally) employs 3-5 staff. Salaries are paid through grant funds. None of these positions exceeds 988 hours per year.

Mental Health Independent Contractor Backup

Background:

The Town of Waterford enters into contractual agreements with Master-level clinicians. The agreements are between the Town and the clinicians and detail the standards that exist for independent contractors and their roles as mental health providers. The contractors also provide the Town with their liability insurance at a level coverage that is set by the Town.

The number of clinicians contracted is based on the needs of the department/ Town. Contractors enter into 1-year agreements. The agreements are signed by the first selectmen based on recommendation from the Town attorney and Finance Director. The Human Services Administrator oversees the vetting of the clinician.

The **rate per hour** is negotiated between the contractor and Town and based on the clinician's licensing and years of experience.

Mental health services provided are identified as below:

- Individual Counseling
 - Family Therapy
 - Support Groups
 - Crisis Interventions
 - Risk Assessments
 - Substance Use Assessments
 - Mental Health Check-Ups
-
- The Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW / the most senior clinician) is also contracted to provide supervision to the other clinicians, to ensure professional standards are met, and to review treatment plans. The LCSW also assigns cases and reviews files.
 - The Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) is also a contractor for the Youth and Family Services Department exclusively.

Mental Health Services

Clinician assigned to Youth and Family Services is Andrew Staunton, LCSW – Rate is \$70 per hour individual counseling (45-minute sessions / 15 minutes for notetaking)

- 50 sessions x \$70 per session = \$3,500

Clinician assigned to Youth and Family Services – Rate is \$50 per hour

- 30 sessions x \$50 per session = \$1,500
-

RecDesk

RecDesk serves as Waterford Youth and Family, and Waterford Senior Service's primary platform for program registration, payments, roster management, and reporting, allowing residents to easily enroll in programs while providing staff with real-time data to manage participation and capacity.

\$5,000

OptiSigns

Optisigns is a cloud-based digital signage platform that lets you turn screens (like TVs, monitors, or kiosks) into dynamic, remotely managed digital signs. It's designed for businesses and organizations to display content such as menus, announcements, promotions, social feeds, metrics, and more.

Canva

Canva is a web-based graphic design platform that allows users to create a wide variety of visual content easily, even without advanced design skills. It's widely used for social media graphics, presentations, posters, documents, marketing materials, and more.

Waterford Youth And Family Services

===== 2025 Annual Report =====



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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed people can change the world.

”

-Margaret Mead

WATERFORD



WYFS

Advisory Committee

Member Name	Title	Appointed By	Seat Name
Robert J. Brule	First Selectman	Ordinance	First Selectman
Chief Balestracci	Member	Ordinance	Chief of Police
JoAnna Bennett	Member	Board of Selectmen	Youth-Serving Organization Representative
Michael Buscetto, III	Chair	Board of Selectmen	Community Representative
Michael Cristoforo	Member	Board of Selectmen	Board Member
Tom Giard III	Member	Ordinance	Superintendent
Erin McNamara	Member	Board of Selectmen	Parent Representative
Ryan McNamara	Rec & Parks Liaison	Ordinance	Rec & Parks Dept. Liaison
Chris Muckle	Member	Board of Selectmen	Community Representative
Dani Gorman, MS	Director	Ordinance	MS Director / Municipal Agent for Children

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM HUMAN SERVICES ADMINISTRATOR

Dani Gorman

Fiscal Year 2025 was a year of progress, partnership, and purpose for Youth and Family Services. Guided by our mission to strengthen families and empower young people, we continued to provide essential support, innovative programs, and compassionate care to those who need it most. Throughout the year, our team worked tirelessly to respond to emerging community needs: expanding access to counseling, after-school enrichment, family support, and crisis intervention services. We deepened our collaborations with schools, community organizations, and local agencies to create a coordinated network of care that helped families build stability and helped youth reach their full potential.

In 2025, Youth and Family Services observed a continued rise in the complexity and urgency of issues facing children, teens, and caregivers. The most common concerns presented by families included mental health challenges, economic stress, and family conflicts, each often interconnected and intensified by broader social and economic pressures. Anxiety, depression, and social isolation remained the leading mental health issues among youth, reflecting ongoing adjustment difficulties following years of rapid societal change and digital influence. Families also faced increased financial instability, housing insecurity, and difficulties accessing affordable childcare and behavioral health resources. In response, our programs focused on

early intervention, counseling support, and strengthening family resilience through education, resource navigation, and community partnerships. By addressing these pressing needs holistically, we continue to help families find stability, connection, and hope for the future. In 2025, substance use continued to be a significant concern affecting youth, families, and adults across our community.

The ripple effects of addiction touched nearly every aspect of family life; from health and safety to housing stability, employment, and overall well-being. Among youth, early exposure and experimentation with substances such as vaping products, alcohol, and prescription medications remained areas of concern, often linked to stress, peer influence, and mental health struggles. Adults and caregivers faced increased challenges with substance misuse as well, particularly in connection with anxiety, chronic pain, and economic hardship. Our response focused on prevention, education, and recovery support. Through partnerships with schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations, we expanded outreach programs, offered family counseling, and connected individuals to treatment and recovery resources. By addressing substance use as both a public health and a family systems issue, we continued to foster resilience, promote healing, and strengthened the fabric of our community.

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2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2025 brought a continued and evolving demand for social services across our community. Families, seniors, and individuals faced increasing challenges related to housing affordability, food insecurity, mental health, and access to essential resources. Many residents sought assistance not only for immediate needs, but also for long-term stability and support systems that promoted resilience and self-sufficiency. Economic pressures, rising living costs, and the lingering effects of public health and social disruptions contributed to a higher volume and complexity of service requests. In response, our department expanded case management efforts and leveraged data collection to identify emerging trends to coordinate resources more effectively.

In 2025, the demand for food assistance reached some of the highest levels our community has seen in recent years. The Food Bank continued to serve as a vital resource for individuals and families facing economic hardship, providing access to nutritious meals and essential groceries during times of uncertainty. Rising living costs, inflation, and limited access to affordable housing contributed to a steady increase in the number of households seeking food support. Many families visiting the Food Bank for the first time shared stories of working multiple jobs, managing medical expenses, or caring for aging relatives while struggling to make ends meet. In response, we strengthened partnerships with local farms, businesses, and community organizations to expand food distribution and ensure no one in our community went hungry. The continued demand underscored the importance of our sustained investment in food security initiatives and collaborative efforts to address the root causes of hunger.

Our monthly Veterans Coffeehouse at Filomena's continued to be a great success, bringing together Veterans, their families, and community members for meaningful conversations, camaraderie, and support. Each month, participation grew as attendees developed new and lasting friendships in a welcoming environment. The positive feedback and strong turnout highlighted the importance of providing a consistent space where Veterans could relax, recharge, and strengthen their community connections. Additionally, our Veterans Liaison was

instrumental in building strong connections between Veterans, their families, and the community. Through dedicated outreach, resource coordination, and personalized support, the liaison helped ensure that Veterans receive the care, recognition, and opportunities they deserve.

We remained committed to developing and implementing data-driven programs that made a measurable difference in the lives of young people and their families. By using evidence-based practices and ongoing data analysis, we were able to identify emerging needs, track outcomes, and continuously improve the effectiveness of our services. This data-informed approach ensured that every program, whether focused on prevention, intervention, or youth development, was responsive, accountable, and aligned with the best interests of the youth we serve.

Our award-winning Dungeons & Dragons after-school programs become a cornerstone of youth engagement, creativity, and teamwork. By blending imaginative storytelling with social skill-building, these programs provided a safe and inclusive space where young people developed confidence, problem-solving abilities, and lasting friendships. The accolades this program has received reflects the dedication of our staff and the positive impact the program has had on participants; helping youth explore leadership, empathy, and collaboration through the power of play.

As we reflect on 2025, we celebrate the resilience of the families we served, the dedication of our staff and volunteers, and the measurable impact of programs that promoted safety, growth, and hope. Together, we continue to build a stronger, healthier community: one child, one family, and one future at a time. On behalf of the Youth and Family Services Advisory Board, Chairman Buscetto, the staff, and volunteers, I respectfully, present our Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report:



2005 ANNUAL REPORT

Meet Our Team



Dani Gorman

Human Services Administrator

Dani oversees the department's daily operations and leads initiatives that strengthen services for Waterford's youth, families, and seniors through collaboration and innovation.



Heidi McSwain

Human Services Coordinator

Heidi coordinates family services, community assistance, and volunteer programs, ensuring residents receive compassionate, effective support when they need it most.



Joseph Trelli

Program Coordinator

Joe develops and manages youth programs that inspire creativity, leadership, and connection, ranging from afterschool enrichment and summer camps to community engagement initiatives.



Mindy Stone

Administrative and Intake Specialist

Mindy serves as the Administrative and Intake Specialist, providing essential support to staff and residents alike. She manages program intakes, assists with client services, and keeps the department running smoothly with professionalism, efficiency, and care.

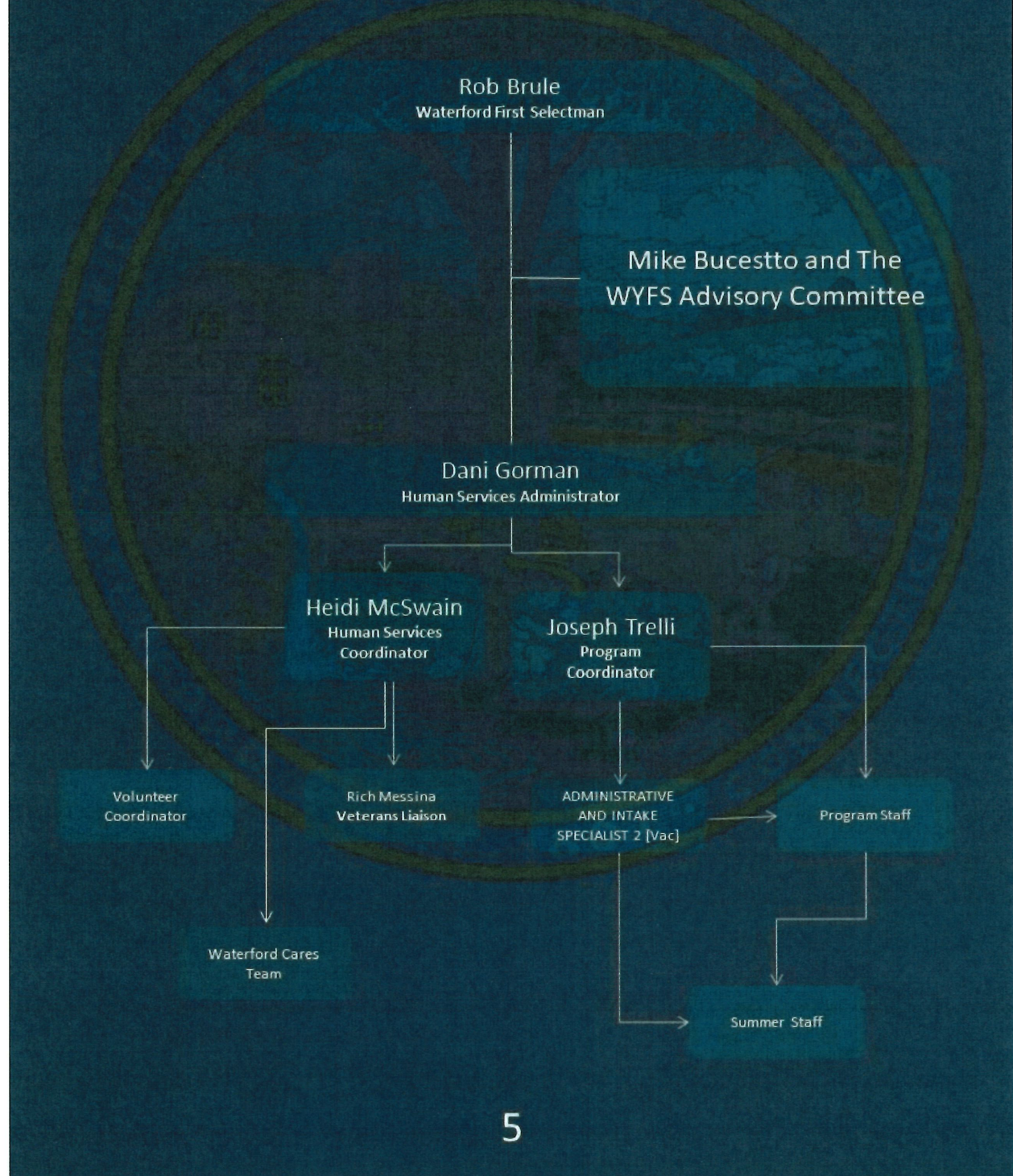


Anne Ogden-Hinner

Volunteer Coordinator

Anne coordinates the dedicated team of volunteers who keep the Waterford Community Food Bank running smoothly. She oversees donation organization, food distribution, and client support with compassion and precision, ensuring families in need receive consistent, reliable assistance.

Organization Chart



2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Youth Volunteers

This year, 49 middle and high school students served through our Youth Leadership Corps at Camp DASH, gaining hands-on experience in teamwork, mentorship, and community service while helping create an unforgettable summer for younger campers.



Adult Volunteers

Our dedicated team of adult volunteers keeps our Food Bank running strong, organizing donations, packing meals, and ensuring local families have access to the support they need. Their generosity and teamwork embody the true spirit of community.

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Our Partnerships

In fiscal year 2025, we partnered with a diverse array of local entities. These partners offered critical support and played pivotal roles in addressing community needs. This collaborative network was essential in empowering us to continue our mission of supporting Waterford's youth and families through a wide range of services and initiatives.

211 Mobile Crisis
BJ's of Waterford
Bouvier Insurance
Brian Dagle Foundation
Broadway Kids
Cactus Jack Foundation
Captain Scott's
CB Painting Co.
Charter Oak Federal Credit Union
Chelsea Groton Bank of Waterford
Connecticut Foodshare
Connecticut Youth Services Association
Core Plus Credit Union
CriticalSigns and Screen Printing
Crossroads Presbyterian Church
Crown Pizza
Department of Children and Families
Department of Developmental Services
Dime Bank
DJ Pix
Ed's Plumbing, LLC
Filomena's Restaurant
Flanders Donut & Bake Shop
Garde Art Center
Gardiner Family Foundation

Gemma Moran United Way Food Bank
Heavy Hitters USA
Home Depot of Waterford
JLJ Knits
Joshua's Limousine
Juvenile Matters Court
Ledge Light Health District
LensCrafters of Waterford
Liberty Bank of Waterford
Longhorn Steakhouse of Waterford
Nana's Byrek
New London Homeless Hospitality Center
Northeast Medical Group
OneCircle Foundation
Rent-A-Space Waterford
Riverhead Building Supply
Safe Futures
SERAC
Shop Rite of New London
Sift Baker
Sirena Medical Aesthetics
Sportees
St. Paul Church
Supreme Pizza
TBBCF Foundation

Target of Waterford
Troop 36
TVCCA
United Way
UCP
UCFS
Waterford Ambulance
Waterford Board of Education
Waterford Fire Department
Waterford First Selectman's Office
Waterford High School Athletics
Waterford Leo's Club
Waterford Little League
Waterford Planning and Building Department
Waterford Police Department
Waterford Police Union Local 1948
Waterford Print Shop
Waterford Public Library
Waterford Public Schools
Waterford Recreation and Parks
Waterford Regional Lions Club
Waterford Rotary
Waterford Senior Services
Whaling City Athletic Club



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Program Overview

This year marked another incredible milestone for our programs. Camp DASH had a record-breaking summer filled with laughter, learning, and leadership, while our afterschool enrichment programs reached more students than ever before. From Dungeons & Dragons and digital art to cooking, cartooning, and leadership training, every experience continues to inspire creativity, build confidence, and strengthen the sense of community that defines Waterford. We're also proud to employ so many of Waterford's young residents, offering many their very first jobs and proudly earning the reputation as the *coolest* first job in town.



83 WATERFORD YOUTH UNDER 18
VOLUNTEERING OR EMPLOYED



450+ HOURS OF AFTER SCHOOL
PROGRAMMING



500+ HOURS OF SUMMER
PROGRAMMING



OVER 1100 INDIVIDUAL WATERFORD CHILDREN
PARTICIPATED IN AT LEAST ONE OF OUR PROGRAMS



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Our Programs



For FY25, our afterschool programs continued to grow in popularity, with several reaching full capacity in less than forty eight hours after registration opened. Families are seeking meaningful, high quality experiences, and our enrichment offerings are meeting that need with creativity, fun, and strong youth development outcomes. This rapid growth reflects the trust our community places in Waterford Youth and Family Services and the excitement students feel about being part of these programs.



Statewide Recognition for Waterford's Dungeons and Dragons

In Waterford, Dungeons and Dragons is more than a game. It is a tool for building confidence, teamwork, leadership, and communication. Through cooperative storytelling, students create heroes, solve problems, and work together to overcome challenges in a shared fantasy world. Guided by an adult facilitator, they learn to make decisions, express ideas clearly, support one another, and grow into leadership roles.

This mix of creativity and collaboration is why Waterford's Dungeons and Dragons program is gaining recognition across Connecticut as a model for youth development.



Youth Promise

Youth Promise, which is offered to all 5th graders, aims to build trust, promote safety awareness, and encourage responsible citizenship. Through classroom lessons, interactive activities, and community engagement, Waterford Police Department School Resource Officers partner with youth services program staff to help students develop life skills, understand the role of law enforcement, and make positive choices.



The program emphasizes communication, empathy, and decision making so students feel confident navigating real life situations. By working directly with trusted adults in their school community, 5th graders learn that they have support, their voices matter, and they can play an active role in creating a safer, more connected Waterford. Our success has gained attention across the state, and we have begun supporting other communities and organizations that hope to build their own versions of the Youth Promise model.

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Our Programs



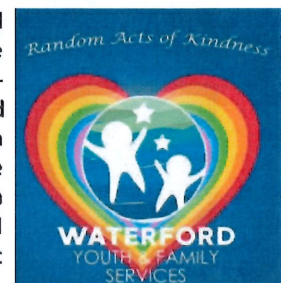
Girls Circle and Pathfinders are nationally recognized, research based group programs designed to promote healthy development, positive relationships, and resilience among youth. Girls Circle is a structured support group model that fosters self esteem, healthy relationships, and personal growth for girls. It is designed to counteract social and cultural pressures that can undermine confidence and connection, giving participants a place to be heard, supported, and empowered. Pathfinders provides a safe, structured space for boys and young men to build strong identities, practice healthy expressions of masculinity, and develop positive relationships. It helps counter harmful stereotypes and promotes emotional literacy, encouraging boys to communicate openly, reflect on their values, and support one another. Together, these programs strengthen social emotional skills, build community, and give participants the tools they need to thrive.

The Waterford Juvenile Review Board (WJRB) is a community-based diversion program that offers an alternative to the formal juvenile justice system for youth who have committed minor offenses. Its primary goal is to hold young people accountable for their actions while avoiding the creation of a juvenile court record. Youth are typically referred to a JRB by police, schools, or probation officers for minor incidents such as shoplifting, fighting, or truancy. To participate, the youth must admit responsibility for their behavior. The WJRB is made up of community members, social workers, police representatives, and youth service staff and meets with the youth and their family to discuss the incident and develop a restorative plan. This plan may include community service, counseling, apology letters, or educational programs. Once the youth successfully completes the agreed-upon requirements, the case is closed without court involvement.



Waterford Whiskers A youth cooking program that taught basic culinary skills, nutrition, and teamwork through hands-on food preparation. Beyond learning to cook, it provided an empowering and creative space where kids can build confidence, social skills, and emotional resilience which all key ingredients for positive mental health.

Random Acts of Kindness and Intergenerational Programs encouraged youth to build empathy, compassion, and community connection through positive social action. In these programs, children and teens participated in simple but meaningful acts like writing thank-you notes, helping a neighbor, or creating care packages that promoted kindness and emotional well-being. When paired with **intergenerational activities**, such as working on community projects, participants learned respect, patience, and understanding across age groups. These experiences strengthened social bonds, reduced loneliness, and fostered a sense of purpose for both youth and older adults. Together, Random Acts of Kindness and intergenerational programs created a caring community culture where all generations felt valued, connected, and empowered to make a positive difference.



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Camp DASH



Bloom BCS

Our collaboration with Bloom Behavioral Consulting Services allowed Camp DASH to be even more inclusive and supportive for all children. Through shared expertise and on-site support, we've strengthened our ability to meet diverse behavioral and emotional needs helping every camper feel successful, understood, and included.



Enrichment Comes to DASH

This year, we brought our most popular afterschool enrichment programs, like Dungeons & Dragons, LEGO STEAM, and Girls on the Run, into the summer, and the response was incredible. Students stayed engaged, creative, and connected while exploring their interests in new ways. The success of these summer sessions showed just how much our community values opportunities that combine fun, friendship, and personal growth all year long.



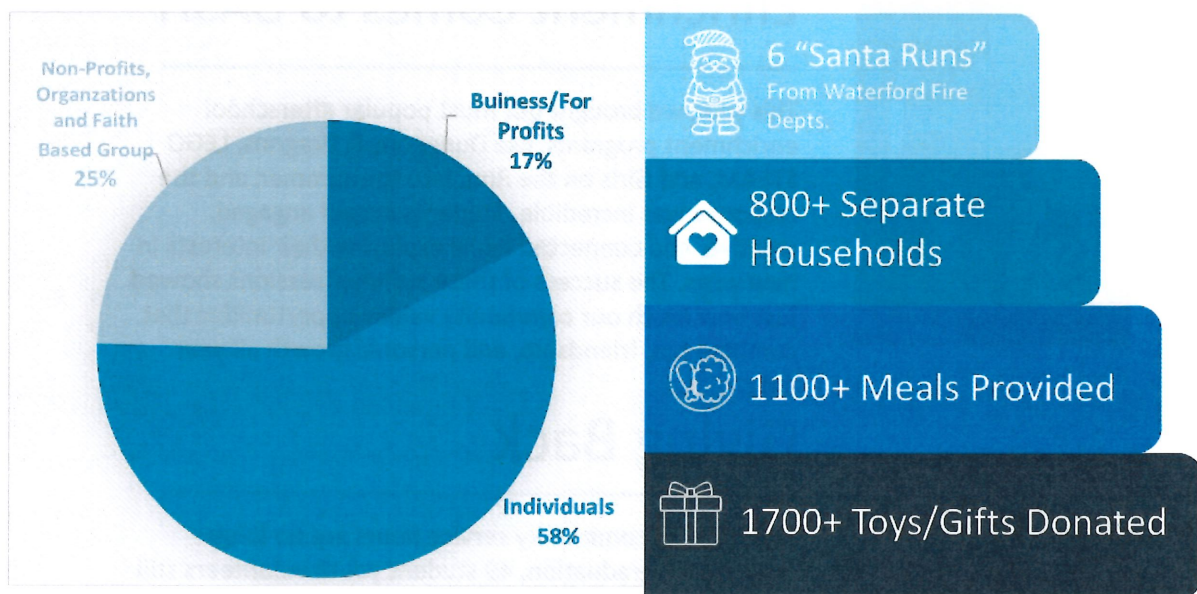
Giving Back

Even though community service hours are no longer required for graduation, 49 student youth volunteers still chose to spend their summer with us at Camp DASH, showing that the spirit of service is alive and well in Waterford. Alongside them, many local teens began their journey into the workforce with us, making Camp DASH not only a place of learning and leadership, but the *coolest* first job in town.

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Holiday Programs

In Fiscal Year 2025, our Thanksgiving and Holiday Programs continued to be a cornerstone of Waterford's safety net and community spirit. Together with over 100 individual donors and local business owners, we provided holiday food, gift assistance, and seasonal support to more than 800+ families and seniors who might otherwise have gone without. Through Thanksgiving baskets, Holiday Food assistance, and Sponsor a Family and Sponsor a Senior opportunities, residents, faith groups, civic organizations, and businesses worked side by side to ensure that every table was a little fuller and every home felt a little more hopeful. These programs do more than meet basic needs; they reduce isolation, affirm dignity, and remind our neighbors that they are seen, valued, and supported by their community.



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Waterford Community Food Bank



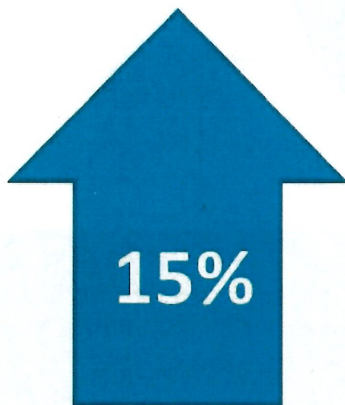
Volunteers

Our Food Bank thrives thanks to a dedicated team of 12 adult volunteers who work tirelessly under the leadership of Volunteer Coordinator Anne Ogden.

Together, they organize donations, pack meals, and ensure that local families have consistent access to nutritious food and essential support. Their compassion, reliability, and teamwork embody the very best of Waterford's community spirit.



By The Numbers



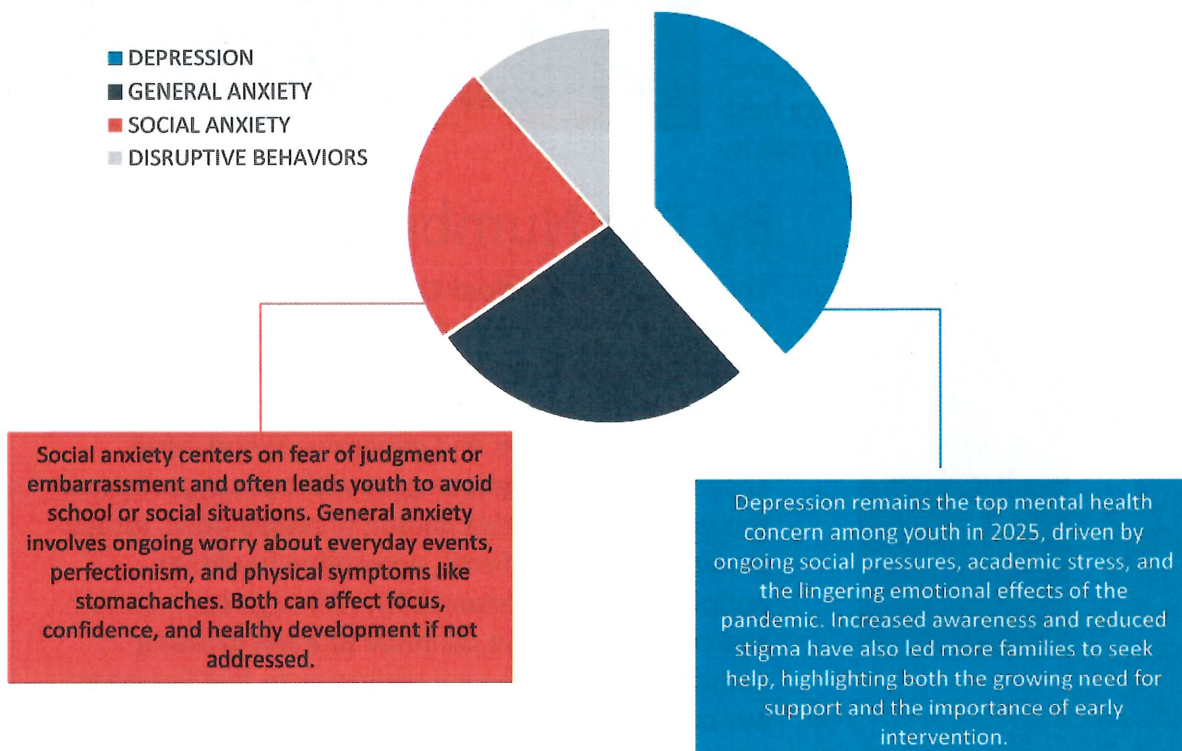
This year, the Waterford Community Food Bank served over 1,500 households and more than 3,000 individuals, an increase of nearly 15% from last year. As the need for assistance continues to rise, our dedicated volunteers and generous donors have ensured that no neighbor goes without support. New this year, our vegetable garden provides fresh, locally grown produce to clients, promoting healthier options and food sustainability. Through compassion and commitment, we continue to meet growing demand and provide vital resources to families across our community.

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Mental Health

Referrals for counseling continued to pour in from parents, grandparents, schools, DCF, juvenile court, physicians, and community agencies seeking support for children and families. The growing number of requests reflects both the community's increasing awareness of available mental health resources and the ongoing need for accessible, affordable care. Families reached out for help navigating challenges such as anxiety, depression, grief, and behavioral struggles, often brought on or intensified by academic pressures, family stress, and social concerns. This steady influx underscores the vital role our counseling services play in promoting emotional wellness and stability throughout Waterford.

TOP PRESENTING MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS IN FY25



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Human Services

In Fiscal Year 2025, our Human Services Department remained dedicated to enhancing the well-being of Waterford residents. Guided by compassion and collaboration, we focused on meeting basic needs, strengthening families, and improving quality of life through prevention, intervention, and direct support. The following highlights capture the scope and impact of our work throughout the year.

At WYFS we are committed to ;

- Assessed community needs to identify gaps in social, economic, and health-related services.
- Provided direct assistance such as food, housing support, energy aid, or emergency relief.
- Coordinated family and youth services, including counseling, case management, and early intervention programs.
- Promoted public health and safety by addressing issues like homelessness, mental health, substance use, and domestic violence.
- Supported workforce and economic stability through job readiness, childcare assistance, and access to benefits.
- Collaborated with other agencies and nonprofits to create an integrated system of care.
- Advocated for social equity and ensured fair access to resources and opportunities for all residents.



201 applications were approved for Energy Assistance, helping households stay warm and secure through the winter months.



154 Renter Rebate applications were processed, resulting in \$72,000 awarded to residents.



101 Farmers Market Nutrition Cards were distributed, totaling \$4,000 in local food support.



\$4189.77 in Endowment Funds was used to assist residents facing emergencies, providing critical support for auto repairs, housing needs, and other unexpected hardships.

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Veteran Services

Waterford Veterans Coffeehouse at Filomena's—The Waterford Veterans Coffeehouse at Filomena's provides a welcoming space for veterans to connect, share stories, and access valuable resources in a respectful and supportive environment.

By fostering fellowship and mutual understanding, it strengthens the bonds within the veteran community while honoring their service and sacrifice. Proudly the largest veterans' gathering in eastern Connecticut, the Coffeehouse continues to grow, with attendance increasing by 35 percent as the community remains deeply committed to ensuring every veteran feels valued, connected, and supported.

12 Coffeehouses
for FY25



100 Veterans Avg.
Attendance



400+ Veteran Food Bags
distributed through the year



Supporting Waterford's Veterans

Under the leadership of Veterans Liaison Rich Messina, we have strengthened its outreach to local veterans in 2025. A Vietnam War veteran himself, Rich has helped dozens of Waterford veterans access critical resources, benefits, and tax relief programs. His dedication and compassion ensure that those who served our country receive the care, recognition, and support they deserve.

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The Waterford Care team is a multidisciplinary group of town providers who work collaboratively to ensure that residents who have been referred receive comprehensive, efficient, and person-centered care. By integrating medical, behavioral, and social support services, the team promotes seamless communication among providers, reduces duplication of efforts, and enhances outcomes. Our goal is to deliver consistent, high-quality care tailored to each resident's individual needs and preferences.

Referrals to the Waterford Cares Team come from a variety of sources, including adult caregivers, family members, law enforcement, fire and ambulance services, as well as other healthcare and community service providers. This broad referral network ensures that individuals in need of support are identified promptly and connected to the appropriate services and resources.

In fiscal year 2025, the Waterford Cares Team managed an average of five new cases per week. The residents referred to the team presented with a range of ages and complex and interrelated challenges, including mental health concerns, substance use issues, chronic medical conditions, housing instability, social isolation, and difficulties accessing essential community resources. Through a collaborative and person-centered approach, the team worked to address these needs holistically, ensuring that each individual received the appropriate level of care and support.

The Waterford Cares Team completed 75 well-being checks in the field. These visits played a vital role in supporting the physical and emotional health of our community members. By meeting individuals where they are, the team was able to identify needs early, provide timely assistance, and strengthen connections between residents and local resources. This proactive approach ensured that no one is left without care, fostering a safer and more supportive community for all.

The team's dedication gained the attention of other local leaders, who recognize Waterford Cares as a model of commitment to residents in need. This continued collaboration and recognition highlight the impact of proactive, compassionate community outreach.

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Looking Ahead



Looking ahead, Waterford Youth and Family Services is poised for another year of growth and innovation. With an expanded after-school team, we are broadening our reach across Social Emotional Learning, enrichment programs, and youth development initiatives. This added capacity allows us to engage more young people in meaningful activities that support mental health, creativity, and leadership.

Our growing lineup of after-school opportunities will continue to inspire students through teamwork, skill-building, and creative exploration. At the same time, our team is strengthening mental health support across all programs, ensuring families have access to the guidance and resources they need.



As interest in our programs continues to rise, so does the need for additional program space. Demand is higher than ever, and increased space would allow us to maintain the high quality of our programs while serving more young people. We have already expanded in several schools to meet these needs, and additional space will be essential for sustaining the growth and success of our children's programs.



WYFS Program Growth, Trends and Analyst for WYFS Afterschool Programs

Winter 2025 to Winter 2026

Graph Key:

-  **Light Blue – Maximum Capacity:** Represents the maximum number of participants each program can accommodate, based on factors such as available space, staffing levels, and instructor preferences. This line helps us understand the program's full potential and whether we are operating near capacity. Tracking this metric allows us to identify when additional resources might be necessary to expand offerings.
-  **Orange – Actual Enrollment:** Shows the number of students who successfully enrolled and participated in each program. This line is essential for measuring the program's effectiveness and demand compared to its maximum capacity. Understanding actual enrollment trends helps us assess whether we are meeting community needs or if adjustments to promotion, scheduling, or resources are required.
-  **Green – Waitlist:** Reflects the number of parents who placed their child on a waitlist when a program was already full. Waitlists are an important tool for gauging unmet demand and help us prioritize which programs might benefit from expansion. Although rare, withdrawals can occasionally provide an opportunity to enroll waitlisted participants.
-  **Red – Abandoned Carts:** Indicates programs added to a RedDesk cart but not fully registered. This metric highlights interest levels, even if it doesn't translate directly to enrollment, and provides insights into potential barriers to completion, such as cost, timing, or that the program is already full. Analyzing abandoned cart data can guide improvements in program design or the registration process to better capture this interest.

Trends Analysis Winter 2025 to Winter 2026:

A comparison between Winter 2025 and Winter 2026 shows clear growth in both program variety and overall participation. WYFS expanded its offerings to include more creative, technology, and enrichment opportunities alongside its popular Dungeons & Dragons programs, allowing the department to reach a wider range of students across multiple grade levels.

Enrollment remains strong, with most programs filling near capacity and several generating waitlists. Programs such as Girls on the Run, LEGO STEAM, and multiple D&D groups saw particularly strong demand, indicating continued interest in both physical activity and collaborative, creative programming.

Waitlist and abandoned cart data also highlight additional community interest beyond confirmed enrollments. In some cases, programs filled quickly or families explored multiple options before finalizing registrations. Additionally, certain programs demonstrated flexibility in meeting student needs, such as the Winter 2026 High School D&D program, which expanded slightly to support students seeking social connection opportunities.

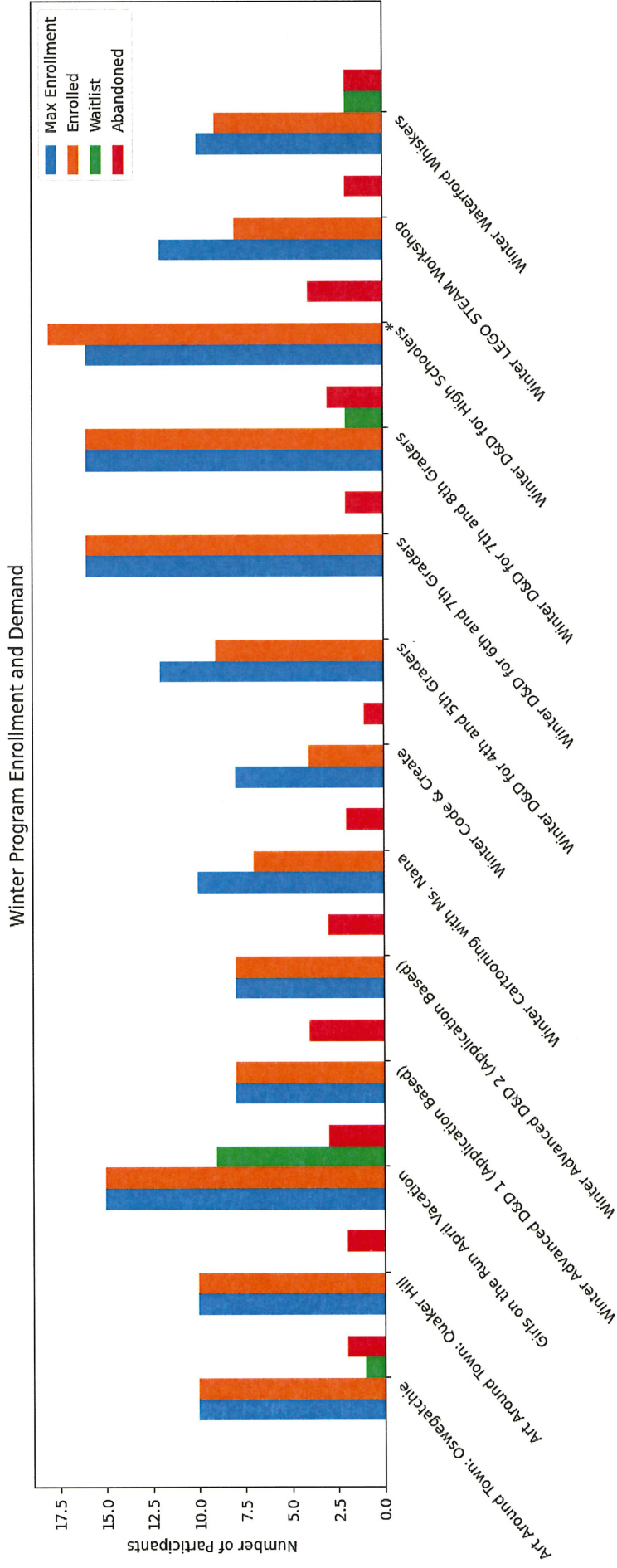
Overall Growth Analysis from 2024 to 2026:

From 2024 to 2026, WYFS afterschool programming has shown steady growth in both participation and program variety. Many programs consistently operate at or near capacity, with waitlists indicating continued demand from families.

Core programs such as Dungeons & Dragons and LEGO STEAM remain highly popular, while the offsite Art Around Town programs held at the elementary schools have shown immense popularity, quickly filling and generating strong interest. Overall, the data suggests increasing community engagement and highlights opportunities to expand high-demand offerings.

Current Winter Session 2026

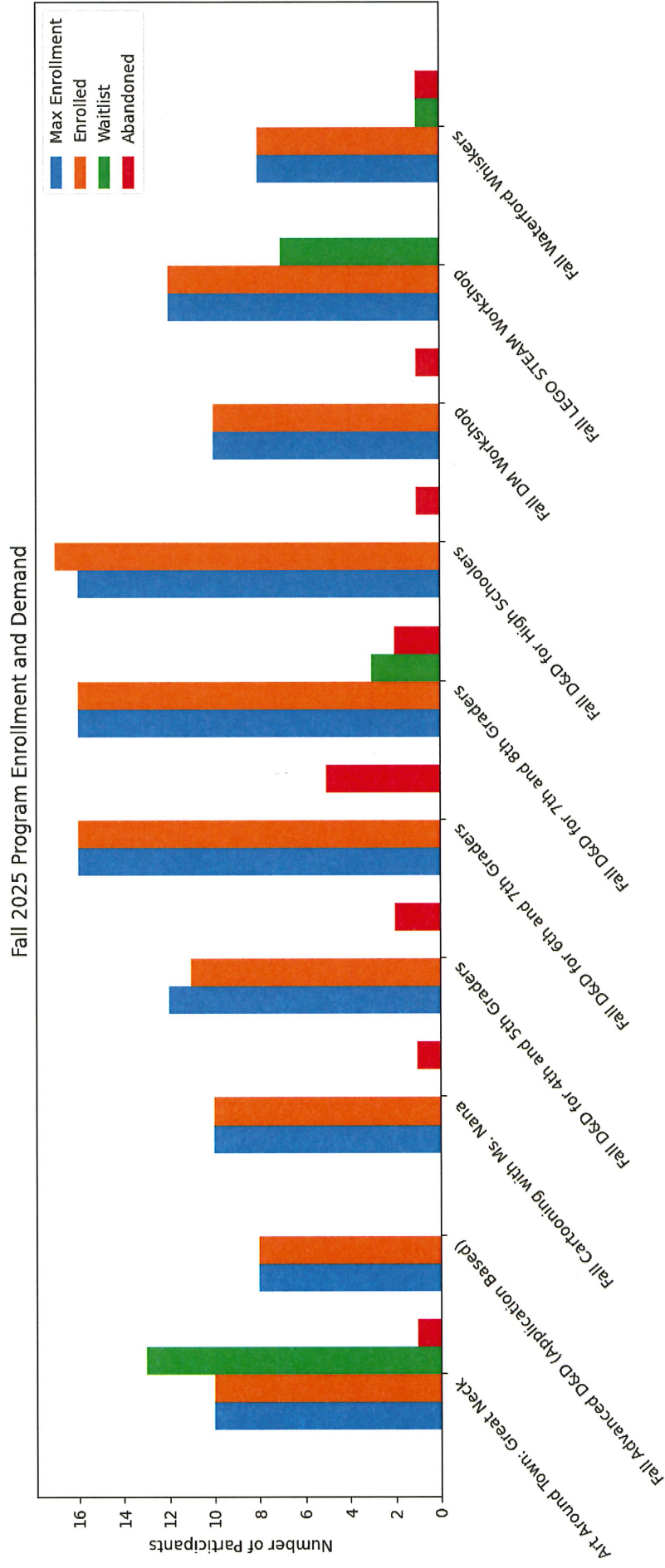
Enrollment, Waitlist, and Abandoned Numbers by Program



* Per a request from the Guidance Dept. at WHS we were able to add two additional students to our High School D&D Program that had a social emotional need to find peer connections.

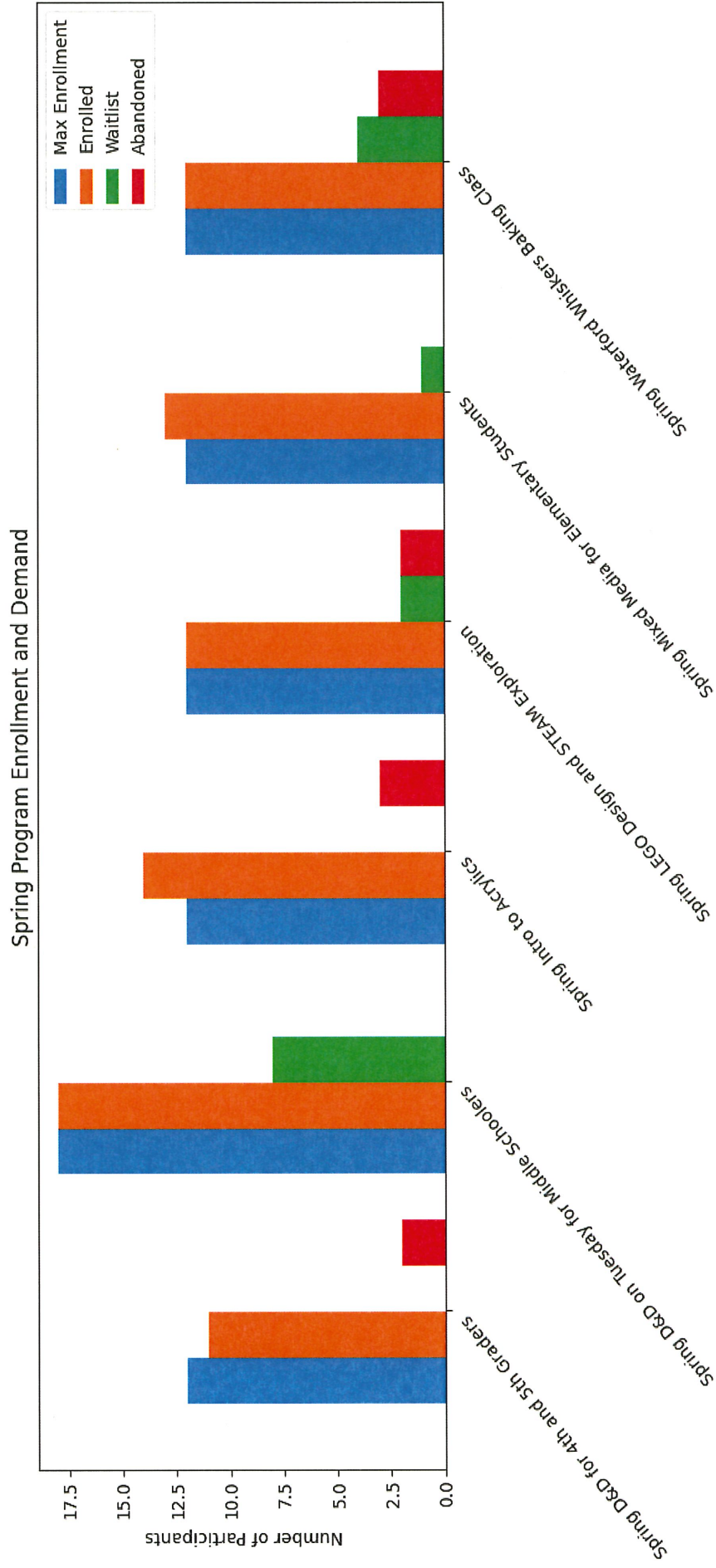
Fall Session 2025

Enrollment, Waitlist, and Abandoned Numbers by Program



Spring Session 2025

Enrollment, Waitlist, and Abandoned Numbers by Program



WYFS Program Growth, Trends and Analyst for WYFS Afterschool Programs

Winter 2024 to Winter 2025

Graph Key:

Light Blue – Maximum Capacity: Represents the maximum number of participants each program can accommodate, based on factors such as available space, staffing levels, and instructor preferences. This line helps us understand the program's full potential and whether we are operating near capacity. Tracking this metric allows us to identify when additional resources might be necessary to expand offerings.

Royal Blue – Actual Enrollment: Shows the number of students who successfully enrolled and participated in each program. This line is essential for measuring the program's effectiveness and demand compared to its maximum capacity. Understanding actual enrollment trends helps us assess whether we are meeting community needs or if adjustments to promotion, scheduling, or resources are required.

Green – Waitlist: Reflects the number of parents who placed their child on a waitlist when a program was already full. Waitlists are an important tool for gauging unmet demand and help us prioritize which programs might benefit from expansion. Although rare, withdrawals can occasionally provide an opportunity to enroll waitlisted participants.

Purple – Abandoned Carts: Indicates programs added to a RecDesk cart but not fully registered. This metric highlights interest levels, even if it doesn't translate directly to enrollment, and provides insights into potential barriers to completion, such as cost, timing, or that the program is already full. Analyzing abandoned cart data can guide improvements in program design or the registration process to better capture this interest.

Trends Analysis:

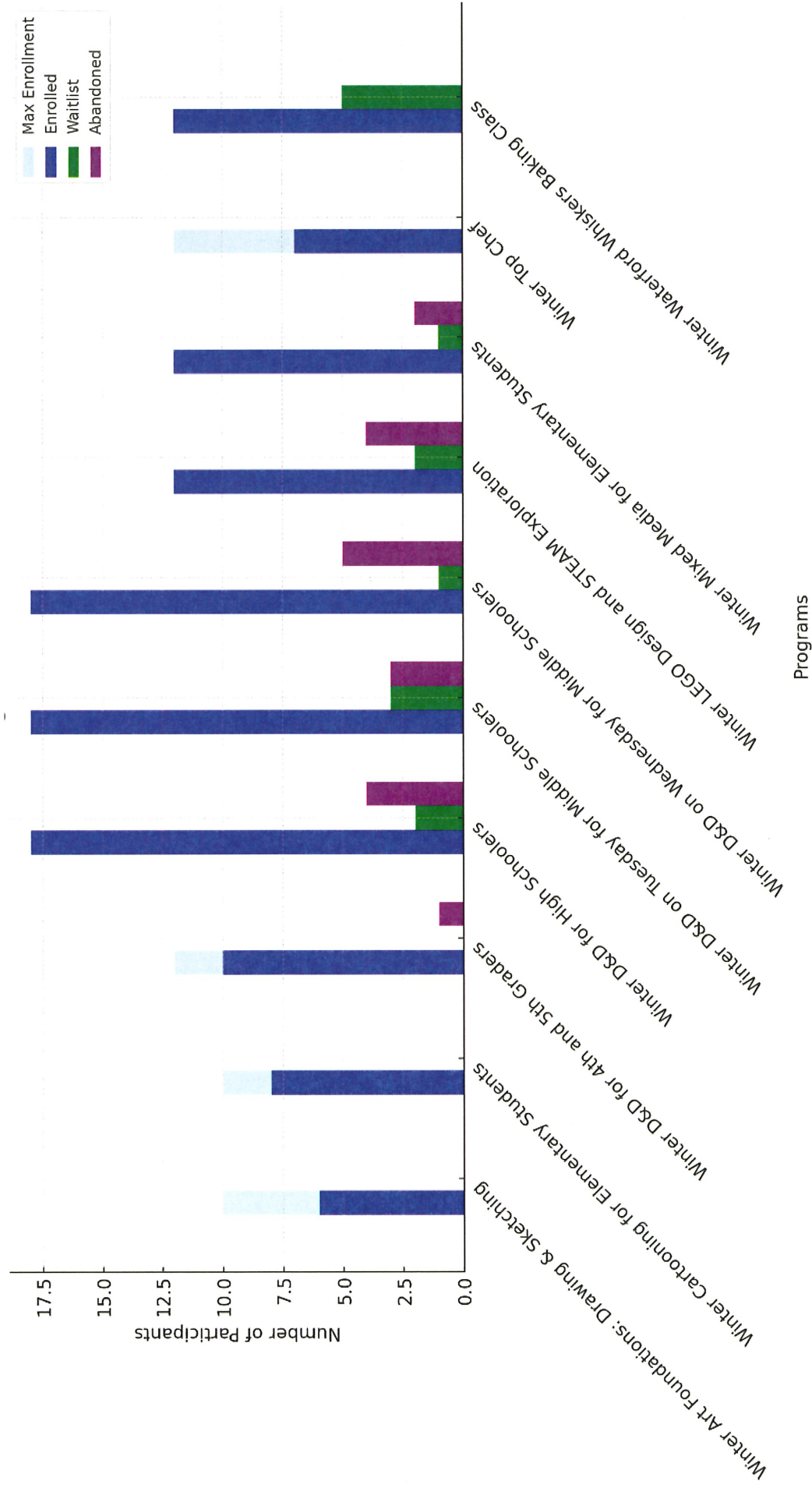
Over the last year, the graphs reveal consistent growth in enrollment across all seasons, with actual enrollment (Royal Blue) steadily approaching maximum capacity (Light Blue) in several programs. Waitlist numbers (Green) have fluctuated but remain significant, particularly in the Fall and Winter sessions, suggesting unmet demand. Abandoned cart data (Purple) shows interest exceeding enrollment, particularly during peak seasons, indicating possible barriers such as timing conflicts, costs, or limited capacity.

Overall Growth Analysis:

The afterschool programs have experienced clear growth over the past year, demonstrating increased community engagement and demand. Waitlist and abandoned cart metrics indicate untapped potential, signaling an opportunity for expansion or process improvements. These trends highlight the program's success in fostering participation while identifying areas for resource allocation to meet rising demand effectively.

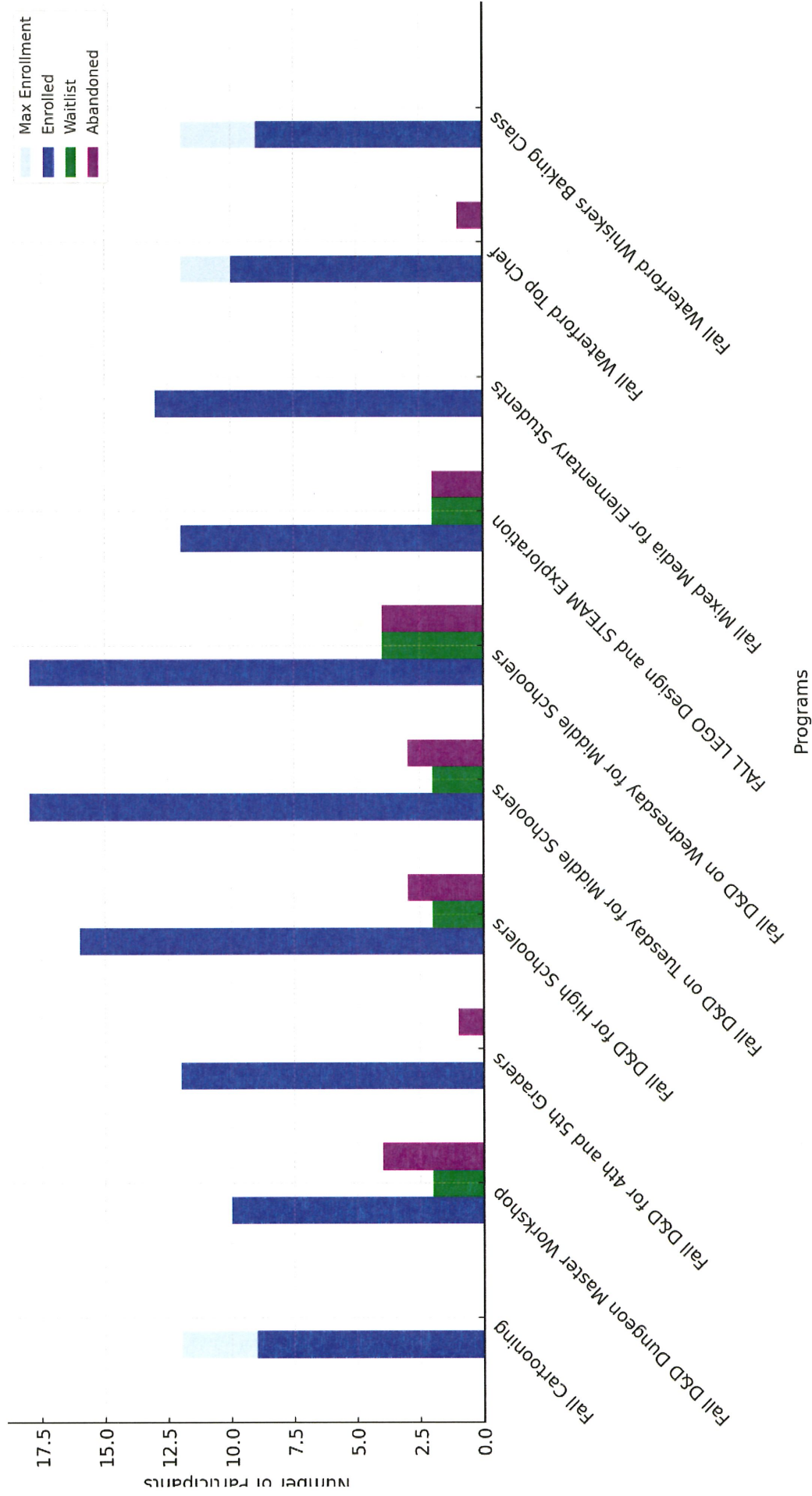
Winter Session 2025

Enrollment, Waitlist, and Abandoned Numbers by Program

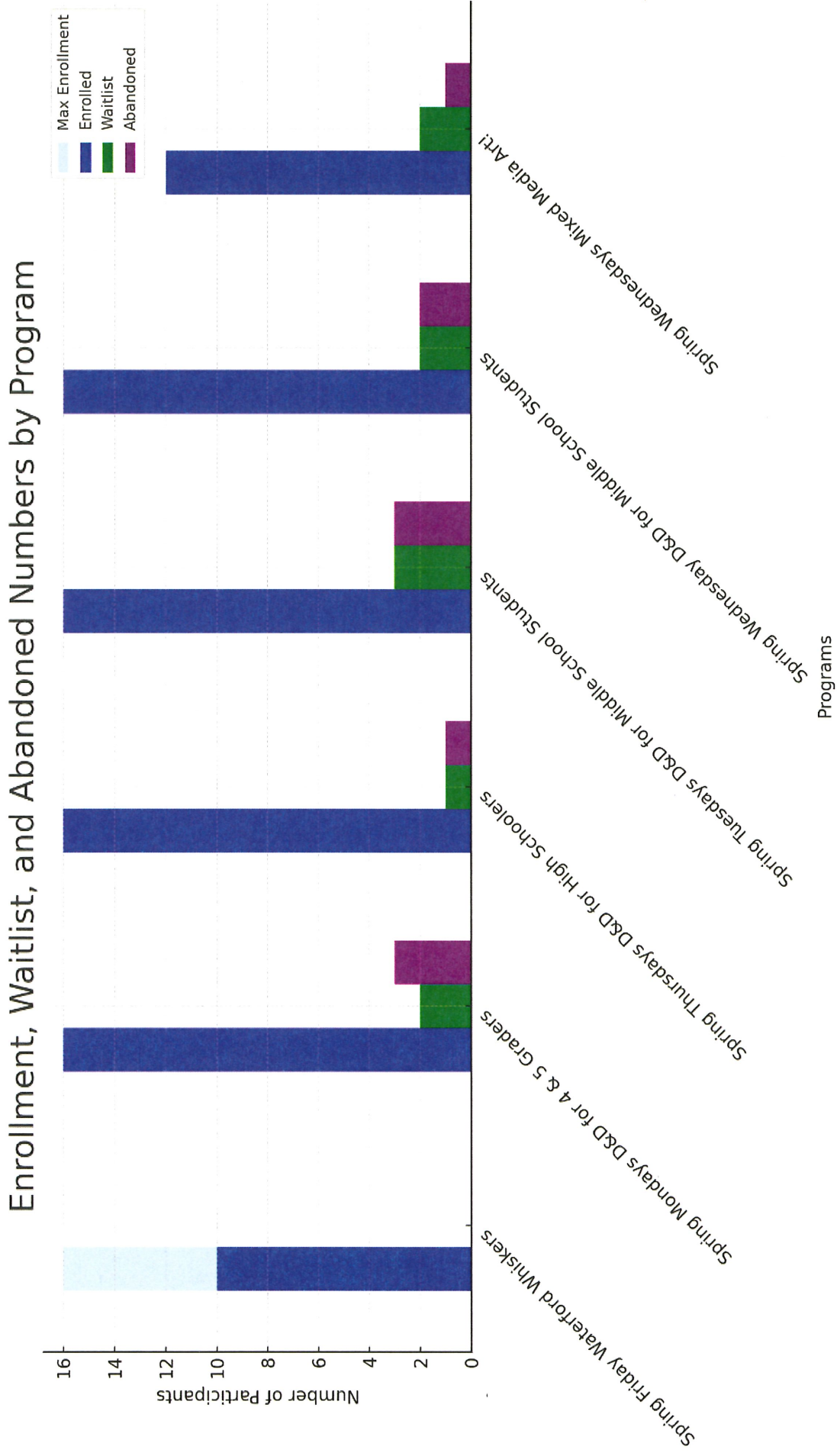


Fall Session 2024

Enrollment, Waitlist, and Abandoned Numbers by Program



Spring Session 2024



Winter Session 2024

