

Historical Overview

In 1957, the Youth Bureau's Board of Commissioners became the official arm of City Government for the purpose of dealing with problems and concerns of the City youth. In May 1963, City Council made an appropriation for the staffing of the Bureau and for other expenditures necessary for its operation. James T. Douglass the first Executive Director along with part-time Secretary Marilyn Baily were hired.

Mayor Alvin R. Ruskin appointed Harold Siegal as the first Chairman along with 15 other members made up the original Board of Commissioners. They were to serve four-year overlapping terms, and in ex-officio capacities. Also serving on the Board were the heads of the Police Department, Department of Health, Law Department, Recreation Department, Board of Education, City Court, and Boys and Girls Club. In 1964, the membership of the Board was increased to 18.

Anti-Poverty Legislation

In 1964, when drafts of the pending anti-poverty legislation, War on Poverty, became available, the Youth Bureau began to lay the groundwork for the City of New Rochelle's participation. The City Council requested that the Youth Bureau submit a report of the feasibility of New Rochelle's participation in the War on Poverty. As a result of this study, and based on the Youth Bureau's recommendation, a resolution was passed which gave official sanction to the establishment of a Community Action Agency Program Committee. It was this data which laid the foundation that resulted in New Rochelle being the first City in Westchester County to be funded under the aegis of the Community Action Program Committee. In 1965, Joseph A. Tortelli became the Executive Director until 1976 where he resigned.

Community-Based Organizations

The Bureau also played a major role in the preparation of proposals for community-based organizations, Neighborhood Youth Coups, the supplementation of youth services through the Boys and Girls Club, and the implementation of a Youth Group Work Center. The Bureau also agreed to undertake the operation of the Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Youth Group Work Center until a more permanent arrangement could be made.

In March of 1965, the Youth Bureau entered into an agreement with the New Rochelle Community Action Program Committee for the operation of a Youth Extension Service Center. This proposal was designed to combine an outreach approach with a group work center, and would seek to serve youth primarily from the target areas as designated in New Rochelle's presentation to the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity. Its staff included a Director, a full-time worker, and a part-time secretary. The weekly attendance was two hundred and 223 youngsters. A special tutoring program was also implemented and 62 students were recruited for this program. They were tutored by 30 students from the College of New Rochelle and Iona College on a weekly basis. Subjects included Spanish, Geometry, World History, and Social Studies. The entire program was turned over to the New Rochelle Community Action Agency on August 1, 1966.

Past & Current Executive Directors

In 1976, Paul D. Dennis was promoted to the position of Executive Director. Mr. Dennis initiated many community / school-based programs. Paul was a strong advocate for youth and their families, for the services needed to support both groups, and the overall betterment of the City of New Rochelle.

Since 1993, Kelly Johnson has strengthened the agency's overall services through collaborative efforts with various community partners. The Youth Bureau's collaborative efforts with local agencies/businesses, as well as County-wide organizations have created new programs in the areas of Youth Empowerment, Youth Employment, Student Advocacy, After-School Initiatives, and other Youth Development Services

Today, 50 years later the New Rochelle Youth Bureau and its Board of Commissioners continually strive to meet the challenging needs and concerns of our youth population.