

A seed, resolute and small,  
thrown off into the wild blown asunder  
from what was so sure to be a garden,  
now lost in the shifting sea of soil.  
But the seed persisted, cracking from its shell,  
digging its root against its earthen prison and rising,  
pushing onward, reaching,  
stretching further free to the unbound blue....

—from “Set Free Shine”  
by Quinn Hagerty

## From the Wellness Committee: Falmouth Students Tap Sources of Strength

*By Lisa Joy, Community Wellness Committee Member*

What can stand against the darkest downs of life, ebb the floodtides of despair and turn hope into health? In 1998, Mark Lomurray began harnessing the power of resiliency he’d seen as a young social worker in rural communities and among Northern Plains tribes. Today, his Sources of Strength (“SoS”) program is a recognized gold standard for suicide prevention and related issues. It’s widely used in schools, universities, detention centers, the military and community organizations. Robin Haley, Falmouth High School’s substance abuse prevention coordinator, introduced an SoS training for students and faculty in spring 2021 to help navigate through COVID-19. “This year was equally, if not more, challenging,” she said, and noted the alignment between SoS and the youth-driven Yellow Tulips

suicide prevention program that a group of students implemented in 2020. “The programs complement each other,” she said, “the difference being that SoS includes staff directly and ways to create everyday opportunities through conversation and language in class curricula.”

The training inspired five art, music, and theater teachers to form a learning team and introduce roughly 60 students to SoS concepts and small group activities. This past spring semester, their students worked on projects individually or in interdisciplinary pairs culminating in a SoS performance arts event in conjunction with the Spring Concert. “We had a lot of creative freedom,” said sophomore and advanced art student, Spencer Furze. “We all got something out of it



because we all put a lot of effort into it.” Spencer’s two self-depictions as a possum interacting with animals contrasted the struggle of being brought down by certain people with the sources of strength that his six close friends represent.


Falmouth High School student Quinn Hagerty noted how inherently personal it was to draw what you wanted and pick your own materials. Although he got the most out of technical aspects of the project, he said the process also prompted personal reflection. “There was a lot of looking inward and thinking ‘What do I really appreciate?’ and taking stock of that. It was therapeutic in a way.”

Both Spencer and Quinn described their enjoyment of the communal aspect of the art room. “I got to ask my friends what their pieces meant to them,” Spencer said, “so I learned about their struggles and strengths.” Quinn agreed, noting, “The friendships that everyone developed working on their pieces in close proximity were really strong.”

“We went from classes that caused a lot of anxiety and stress to one where we were all in a safe space creating art about how we honestly feel about different aspects of our lives,” explained Kaylee, a just-graduated senior. “So many classes, including history and English, focus on other people. This a chance to focus on how you are doing and what you are doing with your life. It was kind of therapeutic because we were all in it together,” she said, noting how atypical it was for an art assignment to require depictions of feelings. “It turned abstract emotions into a visual concept, so I could see the whole picture of my life better,” she said.

Elena Parr, who also just graduated, worked closely with a new musician friend. “My sources of strength are friendships,” she said. “Making this new friend reminded me of how friendships evolve, what they mean and how they’ve helped me through life, and so my artwork was based off that. It was very therapeutic and brought us closer together.” Her new friend wrote a song with Elena contributing lyrics, helping with the melody, and doing the required two art pieces. In the struggle, her friend is depicted with dark vines of anxiety and depression squeezing her neck and shoulders. “Behind her are overlapping thoughts and pictures that went through our minds while we were both in very dark places,” she said, “to give the sense of chaos you get.” The second piece memorialized the friendship with everything they love depicted in bright colors. The song’s three parts first described a slowly worsening progression of mental health, the paralysis that results and finally asking for and getting help. “It led to this big climax that ‘We’re going to be ok,” Elena said. Like the others, the exercise helped her visualize her thoughts. “When you are in that space, it’s hard to think past what you’re feeling,” she said, “and when you’re out of that space, it’s really hard to go back and process what you were feeling. So this process really helped me see all the things that I was dealing with.”

Robin Haley has been pleased with the student’s response to the program. “From an adult or teaching perspective, after reading some of their (required) reflections, I might see a more effective way of working with them after learning about their experiences and what they’ve shared through their art,” she said. “The hope is to continue tying in other departments,” she said, adding that it’s a long-term goal for all high school students and faculty to go through the training.



Sometime again, you're gonna feel lovely;  
No shame in self discovery  
Sometime again, you're gonna feel lovely;  
Nothing easy about recovery

*-From a song for the Yellow Tulip Project  
By Bella Joyner and Elena Parr*

