

West Bloomfield Youth Assistance to hold awards ceremony

'We're expecting a large crowd this year'

By: [Mark Vest](#) | [West Bloomfield Beacon](#) | Published April 26, 2023



West Bloomfield Police Department Deputy Chief Curt Lawson is one of the supporters of the West Bloomfield Youth Recognition Awards Ceremony, which is set to take place May 10 at West Bloomfield Middle School.

Photo provided by West Bloomfield Youth Assistance

GREATER WEST BLOOMFIELD — For more than a quarter of a century, there has been a concerted effort in the greater West Bloomfield area to recognize youth who offer valuable contributions to society.

The spotlight has illuminated local students via the West Bloomfield Youth Recognition Awards Ceremony, and next month, community members are invited to be part of another event.

The 27th West Bloomfield Youth Recognition Awards Ceremony is scheduled to be hosted by West Bloomfield Youth Assistance at 6 p.m. May 10 at West Bloomfield Middle School.

Young people who are part of the West Bloomfield School District are recognized for volunteer services, concern for the well-being of others, personal self-growth and developing leadership skills, according to a press release from the WBYA.

Nominations come from schools, hospitals, religious organizations, police and fire departments, and private residents.

Local county and state dignitaries participate in recognizing the nominees.

West Bloomfield Police Department Deputy Chief Curt Lawson has served in various roles for the Youth Assistance for approximately 10 years. He currently serves as a secretary for the nonprofit.

"I've enjoyed every year attending the awards ceremony, and every year, I come out inspired by them," Lawson said. "These are some of our brightest, best students. ... Whether it's leadership, volunteer service or just seeing their personal growth, I think it's very important that we recognize that. ... The community should be very proud of these students."

West Bloomfield Youth Assistance is a nonprofit organization that offers professional counseling services and conducts prevention programs for youth and their families who live within the West Bloomfield School District.

Connie Kanoyton is an office and event coordinator for the nonprofit.

She said the students who are recognized range from elementary to high school and don't have to be part of Youth Assistance to be nominated.

"I think it's very important, because our youth today, they need to know that they do make a difference," Kanoyton said. "We have to support them. We have to build them up. We have to let them know that they are appreciated. ... It doesn't matter if it's a big thing (or) a small thing. ... Each step is progress."

Although the students who are nominated don't have to be part of Youth Assistance, the event itself can help draw attention to the positive things that the nonprofit does.

From Lawson's perspective, West Bloomfield Youth Assistance helps students stay out of the criminal justice system.

"If we can give them rehabilitation, if we give them counseling for anxiety, depression or anything like that, that's a win-win for the community," he said. "It's really a win for law enforcement that should be concentrating on other things."

Lawson said that West Bloomfield Youth Assistance offers casework services for students, as well as prevention programs for things such as vaping, drug and alcohol use, anxiety, and bullying.

“I thought it was a great way to help kids, to help families — to keep them out of the criminal justice system, so I became part of it 10 years ago, and I’ve loved it ever since,” he said.

Issues such as truancy and retail fraud can also be reasons why students become part of West Bloomfield Youth Assistance.

Kanoyton shared her take as to how the nonprofit benefits students.

“They start coming to school, they start participating in activities, their grade level goes up,” she said. “It’s a fantastic program that we have ... at no cost to them. It’s free of charge, where they can come in with their parents and get this counseling.”

Lawson has taken notice of the support West Bloomfield Youth Assistance has received over the years.

“West Bloomfield Township and West Bloomfield School District have been huge supporters, both in spirit and financially,” he said. “They give quite a bit of money to youth assistance, and also, we get financial assistance from Oakland County Family Services, Family Court, and Keego Harbor and Orchard Lake also financially assist us. So, there’s a lot (of) people that see the value in youth assistance. This has been going on for many years.”

There is no charge to attend the West Bloomfield Youth Recognition Awards.

“We, so far, have 35 nominees,” Kanoyton said. “These individuals have all made a big, big difference in our community. We are very excited about the ceremony. ... We’re expecting a large crowd this year.”

For more information about West Bloomfield Youth Assistance, visit wbyouthassistance.org.

Residents who are interested in volunteering can email Kanoyton at connie@wbyouthassistance.org.