



On Balance

A publication of Dane County's Department of Human Services
and the Dane County Juvenile Court Program

October 2013
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Getting Your Happy Back – ADDS II Girls Summer 2013

By Veronica Hereford, DC-NIP Program Leader

For all who don't watch reality TV, this term was coined by Nene, a 40 something woman on "Real Housewives of Atlanta." She was divorced, had a son with legal issues, and faced several life changes. What does Nene have in common with 11-16 year old girls? They all have lost track with what happy is and means in their lives.

Last summer was such an experience – from outings that turned into epic challenges to groups on financial literacy to groups that had us bonding over homemade spa treatments. It was truly a blast and has prompted me to step up my game when dealing with these young ladies and their families.

How many of you remember your teen years? They were the best of times and the worst of times for many of us. However, I am sure we can all pick out rays of sunshine that lit our way and helped us become productive adults. What would have

We struggle to pull strengths from them and help them create new talents and skills. It takes dedication and an ability to look beyond the easy "give up" exterior many of our young ladies have developed. But it can happen.



Last summer when it was in the 90's, we scheduled a trip to Blue Mounds State Park. The goal: get the girls out of the city into nature, give them cameras to document their adventure, and let them swim. The plan was ingenious if I do say so myself. After an extended trip in the backwoods, we arrived at the check-in station only to see a sign that the pool was closed. Instantly the mood in the van changed, and we were in an extremely delicate position. The girls were cranky and it was HOT!!! We grilled and convinced them that we would come up with options after eating.

They were encouraged to go out in the woods and explore. They chose to sit at the table and recall every scary movie they had ever seen and

happened if that ray was so distorted and distant that you were unable to see it? This is the challenge our young ladies are facing today. They are facing lives full of disappointment, lack of opportunity, instability and lack of success. They have forgotten or have never known what their happy is.

This creates so many challenges for those of us who work with them.

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Melting at Olbrich Park

By Emily Risser, DC-NIP



On August 27th, DC-NIP hosted a successful cookout and 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament at Olbrich Park. It turned out to be one of the hottest days of the summer, but that could not keep us away from celebrating the summer programming of 2013 with some good food and fun games. More than 70 people attended the event. DCDHS Supervisor Andre Johnson manned the grill, Program Leader George Brown ran the basketball tournament, and I coordinated the rest. For the youth and workers who came, we set up a badminton court, bean bag toss and had kickball, volleyball and football for those who didn't want to play basketball. We also had a friendship-making station for those who wanted to relax and cool off in the shade.

The 3 on 3 tournament went very well with 6 teams playing for the medals. The boys played hard in the heat for nearly 2 hours and various staff refereed the games. The Lancers won the tournament while George's team came in second and Randy Molina's team came in third. After the medals were handed out, we had an impromptu dunk contest for a gift card and bragging rights. Julian Williams took the prize with some pretty awesome moves. Overall it was a fun and relaxing day in the heat with great food, laughter and games. Hopefully next time more of you will be able to stop by and join us to see these kids in a very different light!



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On Balance is a publication of Dane County Department of Human Services and Juvenile Court Program.

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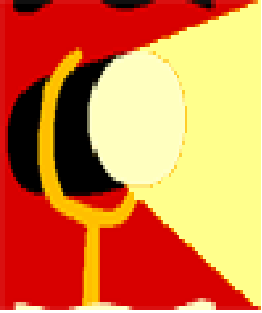
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Staff Spotlight – Officer Jack Wilkinson, Sun Prairie Police Department

By Brian Dean, Sun Prairie Schools

Officer Jack Wilkinson is the Sun Prairie Police Department Police Liaison for Sun Prairie High School and Prairie Phoenix Academy (Alternative High School).

Officer Wilkinson has been a police officer for over 16 years with the Sun Prairie Police Department. He has been in his current position as Police Liaison Officer for 5 years. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville with a major in criminal justice.

How did you choose the Sun Prairie Police Department? “They were the first to offer me a job,” laughs Officer Wilkinson. He explains that he was happy to become employed in his hometown and preferred working in a city police department as opposed to a county or state patrol. He likes a smaller, more tightly knit community in which to work.

Do you need any special training to be a school-based police liaison? “I have training in child development. It is an important part of school safety. Dealing with young people is definitely easier if you can talk to them at their level. With young children, this may even mean being physically at their level.” Officer Wilkinson adds that, “It is important for a child to see school as a safe place, as home life isn’t always seen that way.”

Trends you’ve noticed concerning young people? “Everyone has a smart phone! Young people have a hard time understanding when and where social media use is appropriate.” In general, notes Officer Wilkinson, “Today’s kids are more open and want to show you who they are.” However, he notes, “If you ask a young person the difference between an on-line friend who they have never met in person and a friend who frequently visits their home, they do not see a distinction.”

Also, Officer Wilkinson notes that, as opposed to the past, “Young people do not always have instant respect for an officer in uniform.” He explains, “Now we need to earn youths’ respect through our contact with them. In general, we need to build a history with a young person.” He adds, “Earning one youth’s respect can open doors through word of mouth to his or her peers.”

What would you want a young person to know about you before they met you? “I may not be the first officer they have met, but I would want them to have an open mind either way. I try not to hold kids responsible for their initial reaction. I try to convey, ‘let’s take a moment to pause and truly communicate.’ That can go a long way. Really, relationship building is the key to police liaison work, not just with young people but with parents and guardians, too.”

Is it true that you were a three sport athlete at Sun Prairie High School? “Yes, I even had some of the teachers that I work with now.”

Officer Jack Wilkinson lives in Sun Prairie with his wife of 15 years and their two children. He was recently recognized at Sun Prairie High School’s Honor Retreat for his positive influence on school culture.



“Relationship building is the key to police liaison work.”

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MEET JOANNE BROWN, Multicultural Student Services Coordinator at James Madison Memorial High School

By Emily Risser, DC-NIP LTE Youth Worker



JoAnne Brown

JoAnne Brown is the Multicultural Student Services Coordinator (formerly known as Minority Services Coordinator position) at James Madison Memorial High School for the last 3 years. Her journey to this position began years ago in high school when she was attending Memorial. Because of the relationships she built with the minority service coordinators there, she always knew she would work hard to be that light for other kids, just like her mentors were for her.

In middle school, JoAnne became involved with Dane County's Neighborhood Intervention Program (DCNIP). There she was involved in the Future Black Leaders Club, Vice President of the Newspaper Club, was Teen of the Year and helped with the Dance Troupe all while playing Spartan basketball and attending middle and high school. During her junior year in high school, she became a youth worker at DCNIP, mentoring and coaching younger kids, which ignited her passion for working with

youth.

After working with at-risk youth, JoAnne knew she wanted to study Criminal Justice so she enrolled at UW- Parkside. She was there for two years when she realized she wanted to focus on school over the social life of college and transferred to UW-Milwaukee.

While in school, JoAnne worked both in residential treatment centers and for the Social Development Commission, where she worked as a deferred prosecution agreement worker with juveniles under court supervision. She lived in Milwaukee for awhile after graduation and worked at St. Charles and St. Rose to name a few. She went on to obtain a Masters' Degree in Human Services, worked in Rockford for a bit and ran a girls group home. She moved back to Madison to work in education. She worked in Steps to Success and the People Program at UW while patiently waiting for the minority service coordinator position to open up. JoAnne also received another Master's degree in School Counseling during this time, graduating in 2011.

Since then, JoAnne has been at Memorial as the Multicultural Student Services Coordinator and advisor of the Black Student Union. Her role as the coordinator ranges from working with students and families to provide access to college and career readiness program. She also works with staff to make JMM a more culturally respectful and embracing community. Her charge is to help students, families, and staff

to reduce the achievement gap at Memorial.

JoAnne also advises the Black Student Union and the minority student achievement club which aims to reduce the education achievement gap. Their focus is on mentoring and tutoring kids to community service projects in the surrounding area to cultural awareness with guest speakers and visits to historically black colleges. The students who go on these trips are also expected to present their experience on the trip and some history on the schools to teachers, the school board and students. JoAnne recognizes and credits the success of the program to collaboration and hard work. She holds her students to a high standard and encourages team effort.

After looking at her work and educational experience over the last 20 years, JoAnne has really started to understand where the problems and solutions are when working with at-risk youth. First, she was in delinquency prevention and thought if the behaviors were fixed, the problems would be fixed. Then when she moved into mental health, it was about fixing mental health issues and helping young people to be strong emotionally and psychologically. Now that she has been working in education, she has really begun to understand that when working with kids, it is the combination of looking at behavior, mental health, the fami-

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relate it to the area we now found ourselves in. Two young ladies went out with cameras and briefly explored the area. The majority, however, were afraid to try something they had never done before based on things that they had seen on TV. They should all consider becoming writers based on the stories they created at those tables. All I could say is, "WOW, we have a lot of work to do!" Think about how many things are unfamiliar to the young people we work with. If they create stories and create such aversion to a simple walk in the woods, how hard it will be to promote and push less structured and more independent risks in their lives? But hope abounds because two did go out and give it a try.

Don't get me wrong, the trip was not a total loss. Although the group came

up with multiple alternatives, unfortunately none worked out. The fact that they were still engaged in the possibilities let me know that at least we had a relationship that allowed them to come to the table with their input.

The van ride home from Blue Mounds was spent with the girls engaged in conversations about who they didn't like and who they wanted to fight or had fought. After being challenged to think about things they liked or something positive, they were like crickets chirping in the van. These young ladies have to find a way to define their happy, get their happy back, or the next generation will be even more difficult than this one. As future mothers, they can only teach and model what and who they are.

As summer continued, we embarked on more fun activities, trying to get our young ladies to reconnect with the kid inside of them and what happy means for them. We created homemade spa treatments. Thanks to all who sent baby food jars for them to take their creations home in! We talked about the importance of self care and decreasing stress in your life overall. They enjoyed the process and, most importantly, many of the items used can easily be found in the grocery store. So they can do this at home any time. We went to the zoo. Armed with cameras, they photo documented their adventure and were able to be themselves.

Brown

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lies and the youth's environments that really need to be addressed in order to help students be successful.

JoAnne also says that there has to be inspirational people in youth's lives. At the beginning of every year, her heart is broken when not a lot of her students go on to college because of the lack of positive mentors who can push the teen forward. JoAnne hopes that community members will come into the schools and talk to the kids because just a little presentation by a person who has reached some level of success, especially from people of color, can make an enormous difference in the way a child believes. JoAnne says, "When you think about it, the kids mainly see staff of color as security guards or in special education roles, so they subliminally receive the message that they can only go so far."

JoAnne's dream would be to have her own foundation where the focus is on college and career readiness, mentoring and scholarships for disadvantaged youth. Her next step might be in higher education working with students of color. In the meantime while she continues mentoring and inspiring her students, JoAnne would like to personally send her appreciation to one of her biggest inspirations: "Thank you to Stephen Blue for being the catalyst to getting me where I am today. I have always felt and appreciated being a part of your family, both at home and at NIP."

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RIGHT TRACK WORK CREW SUMMARY 2013

By Andre Johnson, DC-NIP Supervisor



The Right Track Work Crew completed its second summer of operations. Programming was productive and positive for all youth involved. Programming lasted 5 weeks, starting on June 21, 2013 and ending August 1, 2013. A total of 17 young men participated in the program. These young men were divided into two work crews, Community Supervision Unit (CSU) and Court Diversion Unit (CDU). Division of groups was based on a referral process. Each group worked 8-12 hours per week, per client, including employment training with Commonwealth Development. Combined, both crews worked a total of 674 hours this summer. Youth completed work during the summer with a number of non-profit organizations such as, AS_ONE, INC., GOODWILL INDUSTRIES, and the SECOND HARVEST FOODBANK of Southern Wisconsin.

Projects included were:

Preparation and reconstruction of landscaping for elderly.
(AS_ONE, INC.)

Composting preparation at a community farm. (AS_ONE, INC.)

Landscaping at Community Apartment for Disabled Adults
(GOODWILL INDUSTRIES)

Meal preparation. (SECOND HARVEST FOODBANK).

Paint Preparation for elderly family on home. (AS_ONE, INC.)

Some projects were just for one day. Others were over a few weeks. For example, the work crew worked 189.25 hours at SECOND HARVEST. During that time they contributed to the



distribution of 19,345 pounds of food, which equates to 16,119 meals. A quote from a letter received from the SECOND HARVEST FOOD BANK states, "Thank you for coordinating several volunteer groups with Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin during July. It was great to meet your groups, and we hope everyone had a wonderful time volunteering. On behalf of all of those we serve, thank you for truly making a difference for those struggling with hunger in southwestern Wisconsin. If you'd like to volunteer again, please don't hesitate to call. We look forward to working with you in the future". Overall, the youth had a positive first work experience and all stated that they would recommend program to friend as a starter employment program.

More Pictures on following page...

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Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin Fosters Enhanced Stability in the Community with a New Facility

By Dean C. Bossenbroek, YSOSW

Stability is the quality, state, or degree of being firmly established.

Many of the youthful clients, who find their way to Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin (YSOSW), are seeking stability in one way or another. For some youth this means holding themselves accountable in the eyes of the court for their unlawful actions. For others it involves resolving conflict within their family unit with the help of trained counselors. Some kids are seeking acceptance from friends, family, and peers as they define their personal identities. For a growing number of Dane County youth, stability means having a place to sleep at night, and a plan for a safe living situation when they awake in the morning.

For over 40 years YSOSW has been helping kids and families become more firmly established in our community. In an effort to expand currently available services and to provide increased stability to Dane County's population of homeless youth, the nonprofit organization has begun construction of a new 18,000 square foot facility at 2720 Rimrock Road. The building site is six blocks south of the Beltline.

Included in the blue print is space for an eight-bed, temporary shelter for runaway and homeless youth. It will be the only shelter of its kind in Dane County.

YSOSW Executive Director Casey Behrend says, "YSOSW decided to include space for a temporary shelter in its new facility, because of the unmet needs of runaway and homeless

youth in Dane County. Current services provided by YSOSW's Briarpatch Program include emergency shelter in licensed foster homes for one to two nights, which often does not meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth." Behrend further noted that licensing of the temporary shelter and operating funds for this service need to be secured before shelter services will be available to youth.

Briarpatch Basic Center Program Coordinator Jeanne Schneider concurs with the reasoning for the temporary shelter. "The eight-bed unit will be the biggest benefit (of the new facility) for our Briarpatch Basic Center Program. Being able to offer longer term (up to 28 days), temporary housing is huge. We will be able to spend more time working with runaway and homeless youth to help them get needed services in place."

YSOSW Program Director Jay Kiefer identifies our youth and the community as beneficiaries of this added service. "Youth under the age of 18, who find themselves homeless or in unsafe living situations," will have a place to be safe, while receiving support as they negotiate with the system for success. Many otherwise law abiding homeless youth end up having police contact and become involved in the justice system. The temporary shelter has the potential to reduce the number of young people running afoul of the law by giving them opportunities to make sound decisions about their future in a safe environment, rather than making questionable decisions about

their immediate circumstance, like how to acquire their next meal.

Tyler Schueffner is YSOSW's Street Outreach Program Coordinator, and spends a significant amount of time in the community reaching out to homeless young people in an effort to bring stability to their tenuous circumstances. According to Schueffner, the adult homeless shelters in Madison are no place for children and young adults. Young people are often taken advantage of in adult homeless shelters in ways that would be horrifying to most caring adults. The YSOSW temporary shelter staff will be able to help each client focus on his or her strengths without the client having to worry about being victimized.

Current services provided by YSOSW will continue at the new facility and will be enhanced by the expanded space dedicated to youth and families. The move will likely take place in February, 2014. Behrend says the agency "intends to embark on a fund raising campaign in the coming months." He also states, "The agency hopes to stabilize and reduce facility costs," by owning the property rather than continuing to rent. The decision to buy property and build a new home for YSOSW was the culmination of "an exhaustive, three-year search for a building site or an existing building to renovate," says Behrend. The agency is using proceeds from the sale of the former Briarpatch property on East Washington Avenue as seed money for this project.

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YSOSW

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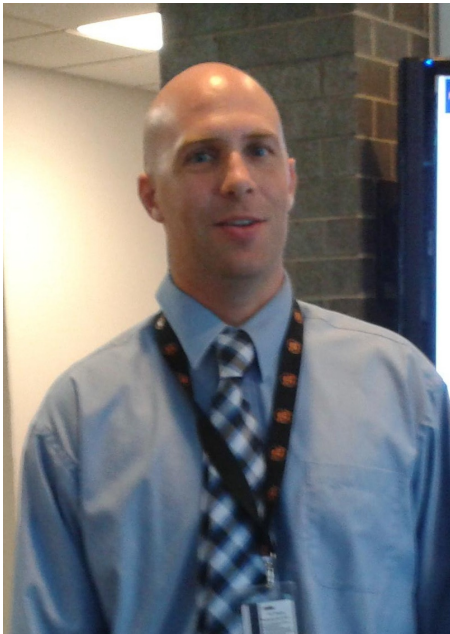
In an ironic reflection of the positions in which its clients find themselves, before YSOSW is able to move to its new permanent home, the agency will move to a temporary space while construction of the new building is completed. Stakeholders will be notified of YSOSW's temporary location as soon as it is confirmed. The agency will continue to provide all of its current services while at this temporary location from

November, 2013 through February, 2014.

If you would like more information about this groundbreaking development in the realm of youth oriented service delivery here in Dane County, please contact Casey Behrend at (608) 245-2550, ext. 212 or via email at casey.behrend@youthsos.org.

DJC Staffing Change

By Rhonda Voigt, DCDHS Supervisor



Jeb Searls was appointed to the position of Madison Corrections Field Supervisor in the Northwest Regional Office of the Division of Juvenile Corrections effective May 20, 2013. From 2001 until his current appointment, Jeb worked as a Probation and Parole Agent in the Division of Community Corrections (DCC) in Monroe, Beloit, and Milwaukee. Jeb worked as a specialty agent supervising Domestic Violence, Spanish speaking and High Risk Sex Offender caseloads. In Rock County Jeb facilitated Cognitive Intervention groups for adult offenders. In addition, Jeb served on several DCC committees such as Evidence Based Practices, Domestic Violence and the Safety committee. Prior to joining the Department of Corrections, Jeb was a Residential Counselor at the Sunburst Group Home where he evaluated and counseled male youth between the ages of 13-17 years old. From 1989 to 2000, Jeb was a supervisor with Brodhead Parks and Recreation Department, contributing to community youth programs.

Jeb earned his Bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville with a major in Criminal Justice and a minor in Sociology. He has been a valued member of his community by organizing a fundraiser for the Green County Child Advocacy Center, being an active member of the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association officiating middle and high

school boys/girls sports as well as participating in school events serving as a role model/mentor for youth and parents.

Welcome to your new position in the Division of Juvenile Corrections Jeb!

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Research Based on the Dane County Youth Assessment Survey Illuminates the Challenges LGBTQ Students Face in Schools

By Brian Dean, Social Worker, Sun Prairie Schools

National statistics show that the rate of bullying and harassment towards Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Questioning youth remains high. Bullyingstatistics.org states that 9 of 10 LGBT youth report being bullied at school in the past year. The Dane County Youth Assessment Survey (DCYAS), which surveys all 7-12 graders in Dane County schools every three years, has been used in several key scientific papers regarding bullying and LGBTQ youth. This article provides an overview of those published articles.

First let's point out that in terms of school law, harassment is a legal term applied to certain protected classes (based on personal characteristics) such as (but not limited to) race, color, disability, sex or sexual orientation. This article will look at some "bias-based" harassment findings based on research done using data from the Dane Co, Youth Assessment Survey. The broader label of "bullying" is frequently used in literature and refers to the repeated, aggressive behavior of one person intended to hurt another person, physically or mentally. Bullying is not directed at someone based on their status in a protected class. Bullying can include: verbal bullying, social bullying (leaving someone out of a group, for example), physical bullying and cyber bullying. When these types of bullying are committed against a person of a protected class it is labeled "bias-based harassment".

"...Youths experiencing biased-based harassment at school are at greater risk for compromised health than are youths experiencing non-bias based harassment or no harassment." (Russell, Sinclair, Poteat, Koenig, American Journal of Public Health, March 2012)

According to the DCYAS, slightly fewer than 6% of Dane County youth identify as LGBTQ. This longitudinal survey also shows overall bullying rates in the county have increased from 41% of students reporting at least one incident in the past 30 days in 2005 to 55% of students in 2012.

One reason for educators to be concerned about these trends is that LGBTQ students who are victims of bias-based harassment are more likely to have lower grades, higher truancy rates and less intent to graduate than their peers (V. Paul Poteat, Boston College, Dane County Youth Assessment News Brief #1). Also, bias-based harassment of LGBTQ students leads to higher rates of substance use across substances (smoking, drinking alcohol, binge drinking, marijuana use, inhalant use and methamphetamines) than even their non-bias-based bullied peers. For example, while non-bias-based bullied youth are 1.7 times as likely as their un-bullied peers to binge drink, bias-based harassed LGBTQ students are 2.5 times as likely to binge drink as compared to their non-bullied peers (Poteat, DCYA News Brief #2).

A Need to Protect Transgender Youth from Victimization

Transgender youth also suffer higher rates of victimization than their cisgender (a person whose gender identity aligns with his/her assigned sex) peers--especially in terms of physical attacks such as being pushed by other students. In fact, transgender youth are more than twice as likely to report being pushed by a peer as their cisgender peers. Transgender youth are also three times as likely to be cyber harassed as their cisgender peers. These rates of bias-based harassment may also contribute to transgender youth exhibiting higher rates of suicidal ideation (28% to 11%), suicide attempts (13% to 3%) and sadness (33% to 20%) than their cisgender peers. (Mohr, 2012 DCYA Transgender High School Youth Data, prepared for GSAFE, 2012)



Brian Koenig, President of K-12 Associates, states, "Thanks to the DCYA we have access to one-of-a-kind information about LGBTQ students and some of the challenges they face in school. From this data, we're seeing how LGBTQ kids are particularly affected by bullying and other harassing behavior and that we need to have specific strategies to address their victimization."

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Bias-based Cyber Harassment is More Harmful Than In Person Harassment

"Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others." (Bill Belsey: www.cyberbullying.ca) Youths who are victims of bias-based cyber harassment based on their membership in a protected class (race, religion, sexual orientation...) are: 4 times as likely to have panic attacks, five times as likely to suffer depression and 8 times as likely to attempt suicide, as youths who are not harassed or bullied at all. Victims of bias-based cyber harassment demonstrate even more negative mental health outcomes than youths who suffer in person bias-based harassment. They are twice as likely to suffer panic attacks and depression and 2.5 times as likely to attempt suicide as their in person bias-based harassed peers. (Sinclair, Bauman, Poteat, Koenig and Russell, Journal of Adolescent Health)

Homophobic Victimization Affects the Entire School

Even the perception of being gay can lead a student to be victimized by his or her peers. A 2003 study based on the DCYA, by Dr. Dorothy Espelage of the University of Illinois and Brian Koenig of K-12 Associates, indicates that up to 22% of middle school students report teasing another student who they perceive as gay while 17% of high school students report the same behavior. A 2008 study by Espelage, noted that sexually questioning teens were more likely to be teased than their peers who identified as heterosexual. Also, a 2005 study by Poteat and Espelage found that bullying and homophobia are strongly interrelated among middle school students; that is, the more homophobic a student is, the more likely he or she is to harass someone. The study also showed that males are more likely than females to be the victim of such harassment. Additionally, males are less willing than females to remain friends with youths who identify as LGBTQ (Poteat, Espelage, Koenig, J Youth Adolescence, May 2009). Dr. Espelage asserts that victimization as a result of homophobia "is not necessarily limited to LGBTQ-identified individuals, but can create a hostile climate for all students as it is a way which masculine/feminine gender-role norms are promoted and maintained (Espelage and Swearer, School Psychology Review, 2008).

Suggested Best Practices

One way for schools to respond to the heightened health risks and poorer educational outcomes exhibited by bias-based harassed youths is to develop effective Gay Straight Alliances (student clubs dedicated to improving school climate for all students). Poteat, et al., reported that schools with GSAs report lower rates of suicide, truancy, smoking and drinking for LGBTQ students. Besides starting GSAs, other recommendations by Poteat, et al. include developing a positive school culture through integrating curriculum that promotes healthy friendships, communication and respect. Also, it is important to provide teacher and parent workshops that teach bullying prevention and intervention and include bias-based harassment modules. Educating students on web safety and how to report cyber bullying/harassment should be included in a comprehensive effort. Schools should also assess for victimization as a cause of students' mental health concern. Finally, Brian Jucehms, Director of the Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE) has this advice for schools:

"The start of the school year is a great time for schools and districts to take positive steps to expand and strengthen their supports and services for LGBT youth. It starts with strong leadership from administrators who directly engage the issue, followed by training for staff to learn and share best policies and practices. Curriculum should provide both mirrors that reflect and affirm LGBT students and windows for non-LGBT students to unlearn stereotypes and develop respect for differences. Schools should actively create safe spaces for LGBTQ students, particularly youth of color who might face racism in more traditional spaces. Finally, all should not be silent when they hear homophobic or transphobic comments, including "that's so gay." Interrupt the behavior and use it as a chance to educate. Your LGBT students - even the ones you don't know - will be thankful."

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Youth Resources

Alianza Latina

An educational and social group for LGBTQ Latino youth and Latino adults and their allies. 608.246.8372

www.facebook.com/alianzalatina/madison alianzalatina1@gmail.com

People Like Us (PLUS)

A queer youth group that engages in grassroots organizing for Southeast Asian and African-American/Black youth around issues of sexuality and gender identity & expression. <http://www.aboutfreedominc.com/>

Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE)

Youth leadership, student organizing, educator training, educational justice, and parent advocacy.

(608) 661-4141 www.gsafewi.org

MMSD – GLBTQ Resource Person-Liz Lusk

Supports GLBTQ students/staff and families (608) 663-8449 mlusk@madison.k12.wi.us

OutThere

LGBTQ 18-24 year old social group at OutReach. (608) 255-8582 www.lgbtoutreach.org

PFLAG-Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays www.pflag-madison.org

Proud Theater

A youth run, youth organized queer theater group that performs around the Madison area. www.proudtheater.org

Teens Like US (TLU)

Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin 4 24-hour Helpline (800) 798-1126 LGBTQ Support Group

www.youthsos.org

TransParent

Group for parents of gender expansive students-can access through MMSD LGBTQ mlusk@madison.k12.wi.us

Wisconsin Division of Public Health-

Informational website about health disparities and resources for LGBTQ youth www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lgbthealth

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Education Collaboration Project Aims to Help Youth in Foster Care

By Ginny Whitehouse, DCDHS Social Worker

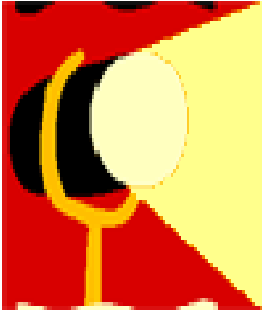
Last fall I was selected to represent DCDHS on the “Wisconsin Education Collaboration for Youth in Foster Care” grant project. Fancy title for a team of folks from WI DCF and DPI who had gotten a two year grant funded, which was to include staff from MMSD and DCDHS working towards the goal of improving educational outcomes for kids in out of home care, especially foster care. Project teams were created and a Program Manager was hired by DCF earlier this year. Areas being addressed by the teams include Research / Evaluation, Practice Implementation, Data Sharing, and Portal Development. I assumed that my role would be representing the Department at numerous committee meetings, but it’s proven to be more varied than that.

My initial task was to review a survey (regarding communication between child welfare staff and school personnel) DCF had developed for county workers and school staff. My next task was to send the on-line version of the survey to my co-workers and strongly encourage them to complete and submit it. Once that was done, Focus Groups were scheduled and it was my job to recruit DCDHS workers to participate in them. Around the same time, a snapshot of our County’s kids in OHC was extracted from e-WISACWIS, and I was asked to answer specific questions regarding each of the 215 kids on the initial list. In the end, a number of kids’ records were not reviewed for various reasons, resulting in my compiling information on a sample of 186 kids in OHC. As one might expect, the largest group of DCDHS kids in OHC are enrolled in MMSD, so it makes a lot of sense for DCDHS and MMSD to be working jointly on this grant implementation team.

The next task for our Department will be setting up a focus group for teens in OHC, specifically those enrolled (or recently enrolled) in MMSD. Once again I will be calling on my co-workers to assist me in identifying appropriate youth and convincing them (hopefully with food and gift cards) to participate in this group. The topic will be communication between DCDHS and MMSD – what do kids in OHC want school staff / caseworkers to know or not know about them, what is or could be supportive to kids in placement, as well as other issues related to being in out of home care. We hope to conduct this group in mid-October.

Future goals of the grant team include getting an on-line portal up and running that will allow two way communication between county social workers and identified school staff, to be piloted by DCDHS and MMSD. (Exciting!) Towards this end, policies and procedures regarding confidentiality and sharing of information are being reviewed with an eye on improving communication between our systems.

On Balance



Agency Spotlight: Rubin for Kids

By Emily Risser, DC-NIP LTE Youth Worker

Rubin for Kids is an organization created in 1995 in honor of Peter Rubin and the work he did as assistant public defender specializing in juvenile affairs. The fund was established honoring Peter's legacy and to carry out his vital work. It is devoted to recognizing and rewarding disadvantaged young people who achieve personal goals at school, at home or in the community. The fund distributes Youth Achievement Awards and Post High School Scholarships to deserving youth, and the awards require direct interaction between adults in the community and recipients. Peter believed that a caring, consistent adult could immeasurably enhance a child's chances for success in the community and the fund upholds this belief. There are almost no administrative costs; they are set up as a nonprofit corporation and donations are tax deductible. Therefore, every dollar goes to help kids.

Rubin for Kids acquires access to deserving kids through teachers and school social workers as well as the Dane County juvenile justice system. In addition, the Board Members of Rubin for Kids are caring individuals from the community, comprised of members of the judiciary, the schools, the juvenile justice system, the business and medical community, all who contribute greatly to the success of the program.

Nominations for the Youth Achievement Awards can be made by anyone who recognizes deserving kids who have been working towards their goals despite overwhelming obstacles. Awards are handed out throughout the year based on nominations. Post high school scholarships are awarded to students who will be attending an accredited two-year college, technical school, engineering or business school, beauty school or other educational institution or apprenticeship program. While academic achievement is considered, they are especially looking for students who have made significant contributions in their family, neighborhood, school or community despite poverty, disability or other personal hardship. Though students cannot nominate themselves, teachers, social workers, psychologists, educational assistants, mentors, principals, coaches or other adults who have a relationship with a student are encouraged to submit a nomination.

Rubin for Kids has given out a substantial number of Youth Achievement Awards since its creation in 1995. The award is \$100-\$250 stipend for deserving youth. In addition to the Youth Awards, Rubin for Kids has handed out \$1,000 scholarships to 19 high school seniors for Madison College and four students received \$1,000 scholarships for a second year. In order to keep up handing out these awards and scholarships, Rubin for Kids hosts one fund raising event per year. Most donations are received at that time, but contributions are welcome at any time. Please check on their website for more information. <http://www.rubinforkids.org/index.htm>

Thank you Rubin for Kids for all that you do to inspire and assist youth achieve their goals in and around the community!

On Balance

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM IS TRANSFORMATIVE

By Emily Gall, Logistics/Communications Coordinator, Northwest Passage

In a New Light, a premier youth photography program, is about hope. It's about strength. It's about empowering youth to discover potential within themselves they could never have dreamed possible. **In A New Light** is a therapeutic nature photography program at Northwest Passage, a residential treatment and assessment center for children dealing with the struggles of mental illness and behavioral disorders. This program emphasizes skilled expressive arts training and nature immersion, ultimately enabling marginalized youth to define themselves by their strengths rather than their weaknesses.

Since **In A New Light's** inception in 2010, artistic results have been no less than astonishing. Our youths' artwork has been featured in books, films, and witnessed by over 500,000 people at exhibitions around the United States. However, here, success is measured not in accolades, but in personal transformation. Hundreds of youth have left Northwest Passage with a new belief in their own potential, a set of refined artistic skills, and a connection to nature from which they will draw strength for the rest of their lives.

In a New Light has partnered with the National Park Service and received funding from the National Park Foundation to bring youth on the epic photography expeditions

featured in this exhibition. Multiple groups of young men traveled to Badlands, Isle Royale, Yellowstone, and Rocky Mountain National Parks, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, as well as the project's training grounds on the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway.



*The Overture Center for the Arts in downtown Madison is currently hosting an exhibition featuring the work of **In A New Light** participants from Dane County. Together, the photos tell a story of marginalized youth who have found deep inner strength through transformative experiences with art and nature. Personal reflections and poetry by the artists accompany each photo, revealing how they have come to understand their experiences, struggles, hopes, and dreams through their photography. The result is a truly moving experience for viewers. This exhibition continues through October 28th.*

On Balance

DANE COUNTY'S HOUSING CRISIS CREATES CHALLENGES

JFF Works to Stabilize Difficult Situations For Families

Information provided by Ron Chance, DCDHS Community Services Manager

"I am being evicted from my apartment tomorrow. I have funds to stay in a motel for one night and then we have nowhere to go. I make less than \$800 a month and have three young children. What should I do?" This is just one of the many calls that JFF workers receive on a daily basis for families on the brink or encountering homelessness.

To hear that Dane County has been experiencing a significant housing crisis should be of no surprise to anyone. This situation has been made more challenging due to a very low vacancy rate plus a more recent trend of corporations buying up low income housing stock and upgrading it for higher income tenants.

DCDHS' JFF (Joining Forces for Families) social workers, including some who've been working in the community for more than 15 years, indicate that this is the worst housing crisis they've seen. More specifically:

- ◆ Dane County currently has one of the lowest vacancy rates in the U.S. – 2% in comparison to the national average of 8.6%.
- ◆ Landlords can pick and choose; families with the highest and best housing history obtain the housing in almost all cases.

Many landlords now require a full month's security deposit as opposed to one half month's security deposit as in prior times. Some require that income be double the rent.

Families with poor credit histories and criminal records are now having an extremely difficult time finding housing. They're either doubled up with another family, staying temporarily in a shelter, or living in their vehicles. At times, parents place their children with other people and then sleep in their car. Shelter home capacity is insufficient to accommodate the need.

Despite this difficult housing situation, JFF community social workers have a long history of successfully stabilizing* families in households, either by preventing eviction or managing to locate housing for people with poor credit, negative rental histories, and/or criminal records. JFF staff are aware of both formal and informal resources for rent and utilities – both of which, if left unpaid, can result in eviction. Working with community partners, they've been able to piece funds together from a variety of sources.

Over the last 5 years, JFF staff stabilized an average of 1,703 family situations per year. Way to go, JFF! Keep up the good work for families.

**Stabilizing a family situation implies alleviating a situation or crisis which could have resulted in a significant adverse change in circumstances, i.e., change in living status or family composition, income loss, etc.*

On Balance

Stars of Tomorrow Basketball: Motivating Our Youth through Athletics

By Randy Molina, DC-NIP



2013 Right Track Stars of Tomorrow Champions: team Indiana

There were fans in the stands, the music blaring over the speakers and some very good basketball was being played on the court. No, this wasn't an NBA or college basketball game, this was the Dane County Neighborhood Intervention Program's Right Track Stars of Tomorrow youth basketball league on Wednesday nights this past summer. On those nights at the Boys and Girls Club in the Allied Drive Neighborhood, you could stop by and see something very special taking place. Walking into the gym, you would witness a community cheering on young men as they worked and competed for every rebound and every shot in order to win and achieve that victory. For these young basketball players, it was a chance to compete in front of a crowd and the opportunity to play the sport they love while doing something positive in the community; but for the volunteers and staff, it was more than that.

The Dane County Neighborhood Intervention Program, or NIP, sought to create an environment where we could cultivate learning and teach life skills utilizing something these young men already enjoyed doing: playing basketball. Connecting through sports, the Right Track Stars of Tomorrow league has been able to engage a large group of young males and allow them to play in a safe environment while instilling in them a sense of pride and leadership. The summer league was comprised of six teams with around ten high school aged players per team from all over Madison and surrounding cities. The majority of participants targeted for the league were youth who may not have been going down the right path and were in need of some intervention and redirection. Basketball was the hook we used to engage these young men in order to help them move in a more positive direction.

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Stars

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On any given night there would be a challenging group of young men in the gym, from gang members to youth already involved in the Juvenile Justice System. These are the youth that Children Youth and Families Juvenile Justice Services Manager Stephen Blue wanted his staff to recruit for Stars of Tomorrow because he saw a need that wasn't being filled elsewhere. Surrounding these at-risk young men with positive role models and a safe competitive environment, the summer went off without any incidents. This fact should not go unnoticed and credit be given to the staff, league coordinator, Shelton Kingcade, Randy Molina, Frank Rodriguez, and Antonio Hoye. At NIP, we recognized that in the summer it is easy for the youth we work with all year to stray and get involved in activities that would be detrimental to their growth. Right Track Basketball was able to fill that time in the afternoon and night with pro-social interactions and mentoring that would empower these young men and help them as the school year approached.

Stars of Tomorrow Basketball is a tool that NIP is using in order to further our mission within Dane County of helping youth that have had difficulties and are moving in a bad direction. Through basketball and other activities we have been able to introduce job training, life skill building and positive relationships with volunteers who genuinely care for the lives of the youth they are working with. The summer league ultimately ended with one team as Champions, but for all the youth and staff involved, the experience created a much larger sense of pride and community. So in the end, all participants emerged as Champions with the ability to believe in themselves and the knowledge that there are people out here who care and will help them to succeed.

Neighborhood Intervention Program Gang Response Intervention Team (GRIT)

By Randy Molina, DC-NIP

The Neighborhood Intervention Program's Gang Response Intervention Team (GRIT) is part of the Dane County Human Services Juvenile Justice. GRIT was created in part to assist with a rising gang issue in the county but also to empower adolescents and give them the tools necessary to stay away from gang life and other delinquent activities. At The Neighborhood Intervention Program or NIP, we try to intervene and redirect youth who are going down the wrong path by offering support both in and out of schools. GRIT workers Aaron Perry and Randy Molina try to do this several ways.

GRIT in itself needs to be able to not only do early intervention and prevention with youth who may be starting to get involved with gangs, while also respond to situations that arise

as a result of gang involved youth already in the community. We do the intervention and prevention by establishing Right Track groups in schools with students who are identified as being "at-risk" for gang involvement or who may be showing early signs of gang member behavior. These students are usually selected based upon school and social worker recommendations as well as if they are already involved in NIP and the Juvenile Justice system. Groups are conducted in the schools during school hours. The time of the groups depends on the students' class schedules and availability of space, as well as what is best for the group's academic success. The level of the groups varies from school to school based on need and the types of youth involved. Some groups may be more

for prevention and early intervention, while others need more redirection and a higher level of intervention because the members are heavily gang-involved.

Through our relationships with students, members of the community, families and other agencies, GRIT is often on the front lines when gang issues pop up, and we are able to respond and help to resolve the situation. We can sometimes do this by arranging mediations between gangs or gang members as well as doing 1 on 1 intervention with those involved. We are in a unique position due to ongoing relationships with the youth and our ability to com-

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GRIT

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municate with them and help them see the consequences of their potential actions. Our goal is to keep the young people we work with and mentor safe in school and in the community so that they may be successful and productive members of our community.

Here is a list of the schools we are facilitating groups at this year.

Randy Molina:

Monday- Jefferson Middle School

Tuesday- Sennet Middle School

Wednesday- Memorial High School

Thursday - Cardinal Heights Upper Middle School (Sun Prairie); Sun Prairie Youth Center (nights)

Aaron Perry:

Monday- La Follette High School; Madison East High School

Wednesday- Brotherhood Group in Allied Drive Neighborhood

Dates TBD- Verona High school; Great Gray Neighborhood group

Juvenile Justice

Corner

It has been said life is a series of seconds, minutes, hours, weeks, months and years. Recently, my life has been a series of significant weeks. I will share a few of those special ones in this article.

Last week a bipartisan group of legislators, with the support of legal groups and youth advocates, held a press conference to announce circulation of a bill that would return first time, non-violent 17- year-old offenders to the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Justice system. The dialogue began nearly six years ago with various elements becoming delaying points of contention. As this round of dialogue gathers steam, many of us have long understood the rationale for the return of 17-year-olds to the Juvenile

Justice system, be it the extensive brain development research or the moral reasoning. Many of us practitioners embrace this return along with the additional resources counties will need to service these youth.

Last week, Chief Noble Wray of the Madison Police Department retired. Many of us who attended his retirement ceremony were there to celebrate his contributions to the City of Madison. While listening to the many speeches from the dignitaries who spoke that night, I was reminded of my first encounter with Noble many years ago.

Both of us were eager and idealistic about change and how we could make a positive impact on the Broadway/Simpson neighborhood in the mid eighties. From day one, I could tell he was a special individual, a caring man with integrity and vision. Over the many years, our paths have crossed on various committees and initiatives. In all those interactions, I always came away impressed and saw a man who had not lost any passion for the people of this City.

Stephen Blue –

CYF Juvenile Justice Services Manager



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JJC

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I will miss those interactions with my friend Noble, but wish him, Michelle, and their two sons all the joy they deserve in their next chapter of life.

Now, into next week; the CYF Juvenile Justice Service Units will hold its quarterly all staff day. Generally, the afternoon is spent on JJS practice issues, training, or presentations given by a system partner. The meeting will be special in that we shall be acknowledging the work of a special group of system professionals. Awards will be given in the following categories:

Gene Weidemann Award: This award is given to a social worker who has exemplified positive social work values. They have demonstrated an ability to form positive connections to the youth and the families they serve through the use of creative and individualized case plans. This worker has demonstrated respect for the culture, dignity and diversity of clients through words and actions. The recipient of this award has earned the respect of their colleagues and their co-workers.

Award Recipients for 2011-12* and 2012-13**

Charlie Larson*

Erik Nielsen*

Bob Syring**

Suzanne Blackamore**

Restorative Justice Award: This award is given to an organization or individual who has demonstrated in the course of their work, beliefs in the Balanced Restorative Practice Principles, then engages, promotes and provides restorative justice learning opportunities for youth.

Award Recipients

2012 – Jackie Hammonds

2013 – Sheri Gatts

Competency Builder Award: This person is noted for their consistent work in the community in the fostering skills, and the development of individual strengths in youth.

Award Recipients

2012- Lisa Kvistad - MMSD

2013- Robert “Bob” Wynn - Millionaires Club Inc.

DCNIP James Rumph Staff

Award: This person has demonstrated a commitment to the vision and goals of the Dane County Neighborhood Intervention Program and the youth it serves above and beyond the call of duty.

Award Recipients

2012-Aaron Perry

2013-Allan Chancellor

2013-Shelton Kingcade

Youth Gang Prevention Award:

The person or individual recognized by this award has in the course of their work provided youth an alternative view of youth gangs and an opportunity vision beyond this path.

Award Recipient 2013

Common Wealth Development and Youth Services South West Garden Project