



On Balance

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Empowering Madison's Youth of Color Through Making Justice

By Nicole Ki - Dec 19, 2016

In continuous efforts to mitigate racial disparity in Madison, Making Justice is providing a creative space for at-risk or court-involved youth to use art as an outlet for self-expression and to empower their voices.

An art program funded by the Madison Public Library, Making Justice holds weekly workshops for teenagers ages eleven to seventeen to engage in art through a "social justice lens." First created in 2014, the arts program was created to advance the Wisconsin Idea initiative to address "the nation's widest black/white educational achievement

gap and highest per capita black juvenile arrest and incarceration rate in Dane County, Wisconsin," according to the Making Justice website.

Making Justice serves over 400 kids who are mainly youth of color and come from low-income families. It is an initiative that aims to use art as means to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline says Carlos Gacharná, a recent arts major graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and facilitator of the program.



mentors to the kids in the program. The opportunity to connect college students and the community's disadvantaged youth fosters the growth of the kids in the program and enables them to envision attending college and pursuing their aspirations as a reality, Gacharna added.

"The act of inviting them to different campus spaces and getting them to hang out with college students, all of the sudden college stops becoming an idea and becomes a place – somewhere they've been before and can go again," Gacharna said. "I think having that change of mentality makes it way easier and I've seen it; the kids come in and don't seem like they care about school

In this issue:

- P3 Second Thoughts—Oakhill Inmates Share Their Stories
- P4 Teen Dating Violence—What to Do About It
- P5 Madison Street Team 2016: Desk Gum, Filthy Water, Cisgender
- P7 We're All in This Together—How Black Hawk Middle School transformed their culture
- P10 WI Trauma Project Efforts Continue in Dane County CYF
- P11 Judge's Corner
- P12 Youth Spotlight—Dylan Moffitt
- P13 Staff Spotlight—Carrie Cossom
- P14 Too Much Sauce



Carlos Gacharná

A unique aspect of Making Justice is it runs in partnership with college students at UW-Madison, who help create and facilitate the workshops with the students as well as serving as

See Empowering
Page 2

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On Balance

Empowering Continued from Page 1

but two months later they're talking about when they're going to college."

Along with connecting the kids with college students, Making Justice seeks to educate the teenagers through art. Making Justice is taught by facilitators and even professors such as Faisal Abdu'allah, an associate professor of the Arts Department at UW and world renowned visual artist from England. Abdu'allah is known for incorporating race, masculinity, and violence in his screen printing, printed media, film, and his other works and volunteers his time to work with Making Justice students.



Faisal Abdu'allah

The youth of color who enroll in Making Justice are taught and introduced to various art forms including creating black light chalk and neon light, which incorporate teaching science concepts while creating art. The weekly workshops also include screen printing, stop motion animation workshop, video game design, producing music, and writing and verbal performance workshops. The aim of these workshops is to educate the students and equip them with skills to express themselves and cope with their adversities, as well as give them a space to just be kids, Gacharna says.

"A lot of these kids don't really get to be kids. They're either treated like parents when they're at home because they have to take care of their parents or they're treated like criminals when they're in the system," Gacharna says.



Madison teens and UW students working together at the UW Art Lofts

"If you can just take those kids, have them have fun for a couple of hours and let them be kids, I think that's really healthy for them."

One high school junior in Making Justice named Kamo said that the program has given him a sense of community and has helped him become more open-minded.

"I like being part of a group. It's good to be around a lot of creative minds so you get to bounce ideas around with other people and it opens you to things that you wouldn't have thought about before," he said.

One of his favorite memories of Making Justice was being able to use the media lab to produce and write music and working with Abdu'allah, who

also produces music. In the future, he would like to pursue a career in producing Hip Hop music and rapping. He said that his experience has been "enlightening" and taught him good values and ways to go about certain situations.

Another high school junior, Sequoia, said that Making Justice has helped her find a calming outlet through utilizing art. She added that it made her realize her passion for art and wants to produce music in the future.

Making Justice, in its mission to interrupt the racial disparity in education, has impacted hundreds of youth of color locally and continues to provide a safe space for at-risk youth to become educated through art and give them a community to grow. With the support of UW students and staff, the Madison Public Library and the community, Making Justice is empowering the youth of color through various art forms and hopes to continue to reach and benefit more of Dane County's youth.



Nicole Ki is a reporter for Madison365 and a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Madison pursuing journalism with a certificate in Asian American studies.

On Balance

Second Thoughts—Oakhill Inmates Share Their Stories

By Sedric Morris, DCDHS NIP

In July 2016, program staff from Dane County Neighborhood Intervention Program (NIP) and Dane County Juvenile Shelter coordinated a trip for 20 youth to visit and observe an inmate panel discussion at Oak Hill Correctional Institution (OCI), a minimum-security adult prison located in Oregon, WI. The inmate panel was comprised of 8-10 inmates of different races, cultures, ages, socio-economic groups, and educational levels. The inmates described, through personal accounts, the detrimental and destructive effects of committing crimes. Additionally, the inmates talked about the wrong choices they had made, the crimes they committed that ultimately led to incarceration, and how painful and sometimes dangerous it can be to live in prison.

The youth listened to the inmates share their personal experiences of spending a great portion of their life in prison, the sadness they feel from being away from their families, the next steps of those who would soon be released and the pain of others who would never be released. Inmates also shared personal stories about missed opportunities in helping raise the children they left behind due to making poor choices in life, and as a result, being incarcerated. Lastly, the inmates described what life was like for them on the “inside”, and shared examples of how they make the best of their time in prison. Each inmate got a chance to share his prison experience and stressed the importance getting a good education to the youth, making good choices in life and surrounding themselves with positive people to avoid making the same mistakes.

Overall, this experience provided an opportunity to teach youth about the consequences of crime, how it affects the offender and their families, friends, and communities as well as provided an opportunity to continue building links between criminal and juvenile justice agencies and organizations in an effort to help deter youth at-risk of being involved in the criminal justice system.

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On Balance

Teen Dating Violence – What to Do About It

By Dave Thorson, DCDHS

“It is during their teenage years – when they are no longer children, but not yet adults – that many young people begin to form their first romantic relationships. Yet without an understanding of healthy and unhealthy behaviors in dating relationships, teens are especially susceptible to becoming targets of dating violence and abuse. Consider this: nearly 1 in 3 teens who have been in a dating relationship report actual sexual abuse, physical abuse, or threats of physical abuse. Nearly 1 in 4 has been victimized through technology, and nearly 1 in 2 teens in relationships report being controlled, threatened, and pressured to do things they did not want to do.” (from breakthecycle.org).

With these sobering facts as their backdrop, and the reality that underlies their mission, DAIS (Domestic Abuse Intervention Service) developed the MENS program in an effort to educate high school age young men and teach them how to be role models to other teens in preventing them from engaging in aggression as they enter into dating relationships.

We all know that youth are constantly bombarded with many conflicting messages about how men and women should interact, especially when it comes to romantic or sexual relationships. Does no always really mean no, are girls really attracted to the “bad boys”, is it ever ok to send sexually explicit texts or photos, or ask a girl to send one? It can be confusing knowing exactly what the boundaries of acceptable behavior are. Members of the MENS group examine the root causes of domestic violence and are provided a framework for understanding how to navigate their journey to adulthood, and learning what it means to “grow up male” in our modern American society. Conversations are honest and sometimes uncomfortable as teens work to define, or in many cases are being challenged to re-define masculinity in a way that supports healthy relationships.

MENS provides a minimum of 10 sessions with high school aged male youth, focusing on gender roles and expectations, communication, conflict resolution, and recognizing healthy vs. unhealthy relationships. Participation is completely voluntary in this club-based group. The sessions are activity based and take just under an hour. They are co-facilitated by someone from DAIS along with an adult representative from the school/organization sponsoring the sessions. Once trained, the participants do outreach by providing presentations to fellow students, faculty, middle school students, and even at state wide conferences.

The current partner sites for the MENS program are Lafollette High School (two groups), Lussier Community Education Center, West High School, and Kennedy Heights Community Center.

If you are interested in learning more, contact DAIS at 608-251-1237. If you would like to schedule a speaker or a presentation, contact the coordinator at Fayez@abuseintervention.org. Be prepared to provide information on time, date, location, topics, number of participants, audience type, etc.

On Balance

Madison Street Team 2016: Desk Gum, Filthy Water, Cisgender

By Dean C. Bossenbroek, Briarpatch

Listening to six teenagers talk about their experiences working for Briarpatch's Madison Street Team (MST) during the summer of 2016 is kind of like turning on the Letterman Show expecting Madonna to talk about her latest pop-icon endeavors. Instead of providing another vanilla answer to what it was like working with her current collaborator, the next thing you know, Madonna starts describing how she battles foot fungus by peeing on her feet in the shower. It's real. It's honest. It's intriguing. It's a non sequitur.

The particular group of MST participants I spoke with in August began dutifully answering my questions about their summer employment highlights and lowlights. In addition to the traditional MST work of picking up trash on the streets of Madison, they spent the majority of their summer assisting custodial staff at various Madison Public Schools with building scouring. Their supervisors, Bryce and Selena, were also in attendance. It was the last week of MST programming, and they were celebrating with pizza. The kid's names below have been changed, but their responses are real.

What's the weirdest thing you found, while cleaning school buildings this summer?

The group generally agreed that the sheer amount of gum stuck to the undersides of tables was weird and nasty. They were also taken aback by conditions inside some school lockers.

Louis – “I can't chew gum anymore.”

Sue – “The lockers were so messy in the high schools. The kindergartners were cleaner.”

Adam – “There were boxes of shoes and clothes.”

Robert – “Yeah and the clothes were unhealthy.”

What was the greatest part about the summer?

Making money was the unsurprising, consensus answer.

What did you do with the money you earned?

Sylvia – “I opened a bank account, and saved \$800.”

Clay – “I bought a new laptop and saved some in the bank.”

Adam – “I spent a lot on food, and saved about a hundred bucks.”

Robert – “I helped out with family expenses. I want to buy a car.”

Louis – “I bought football equipment – mouth guard, visor, cleats – and clothes for school.”

Sue – “I saved about \$400.”

What was the worst thing about your summer job?

Adam – “Getting locker-cleaning bucket water in my mouth.”

Louis – “The window thing.” (There was an unfortunate window shattering incident involving a Briarpatch van. Thankfully nobody was injured.)

Sylvia – “When I smashed my hand.” (She wore an ace bandage the last week of work. This was not related to the broken window.)

Robert – “The heat.”

*See Street Team
Page 6*

On Balance

Street Team

Continued from Page 5

This is where the conversation veered off its predictable course...

Clay – “Having to remind people to use preferred pronouns – I wish I had been better at that.” (Clay’s preferred pronouns are they/them.)

I was impressed with Clay’s willingness to broach this topic in a group setting with an adult (me) in the mix, whom they’d met just 30 minutes before. As our society becomes more in tune with the fact that gender identity is not as simple as referring to others as only him or her, we at Briarpatch have been working at being more inclusive. More and more we are asking members of the various groups facilitated within our walls which pronouns each person prefers to have directed at them.

As one might imagine, a common initial reaction to this sort of conversation is one of confusion and then discomfort...and then confusing, uncomfortable silence.

I thanked Clay for bringing up the topic of preferred pronouns. I pointed out that even though they felt like they should have said more during the summer, they should give themselves credit for doing so now. Sylvia was seated next to Clay looking confused and uncomfortable. I asked Clay to explain to the rest of their MST teammates, what they were talking about.

Clay patiently began to offer insight into how individuals sometimes do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. As a result, referring to someone as he or she may not be accurate and/or how the person would like to be addressed; hence the more neutral they/them. Clay introduced the group to the terms cisgender and cisqueer. MST Crew Supervisor Selena jumped in and offered some simplified background on these concepts. Then we all went around and stated our preferred pronouns.

It was an educational opportunity I would not have predicted, and wow, was it ever valuable! So yes, a bunch of kids participated in Briarpatch’s summer youth employment programming, learned job skills, met new people, and earned paychecks. Like all of the programming at Briarpatch, the obvious things are often superficial, and the deep stuff happens because we provide the time, space, and attention for kids to stretch their brain muscles in addition to flexing their bodies’ musculature.

In the future, if you would like to read more accounts like this of Briarpatch programming please check out either our website: www.youthsos.org or our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/YSOSW/>

On Balance

We're All in This Together

How Black Hawk Middle School transformed their culture

On a recent Friday morning, the halls of Black Hawk Middle School were empty and quiet as Mike Jones, the school's Positive Intervention Behavior Specialist, made his rounds, peeking his head into a few classes.

In Jessica Jones-Carver's art class, students were busy working on a "We Are Blackhawk" sign while listening to "Today's Hits" on Pandora radio.

He paused at a few spots between classrooms to point out student artwork themed around "social and emotional learning targets" decorating the walls.

I can recognize how my family and culture influence my beliefs and actions, reads one, skirted by a collage of colorfully drawings and magazine cutouts.

I can understand how advocating for my community contributes to the common good, reads another, which introduces student-created posters connected to one another with a common path.

A year ago, Jones says, the environment wasn't quite as serene. Back in the office, he and Jones-Carver and some of their colleagues gather around a conference table to talk about the change in culture they've helped create.



Jessica Jones-Carver and Mike Jones

Back then, Principal Kenya Walker served as the Assistant Principal, "but it was like I was a Dean," she remembers. Like many of her colleagues, Walker says behavior response monopolized much of her time. "We were constantly plugging holes. Plug one up and another one would pop."

"We were constantly plugging holes. Plug one up and another one would pop." – Kenya Walker



Principal Kenya Walker

The office sometimes fielded 70 or 80 calls about behavior from classrooms in one day — calls about students walking out of class without permission, disrespecting others or cursing.

"Last year our behavior response was stretched so thin," Walker says. "We couldn't reach all the classrooms in time."

Part of the problem, Jones offers, is that "we weren't communicating with each other. If I talked to a student, I may not realize that I was the third staff member who talked with that student that day. There wasn't a system for addressing each behavior."

The result was that from October 2014 to mid-January 2015, Black Hawk staff tracked 2200 incoming behavior calls.

"This year," Jones offers in comparison, "between September and January, we've had about 1200."

"Eleven twenty-three" to be exact, Walker clarifies. "I've got that number burned into my brain," she says, laughing.

So what changed?

**See Black Hawk
Page 8**

On Balance

Black Hawk

Continued from Page 7

Distributing leadership

Last spring, then-Principal Sean Storch, Kenya Walker and others on the School Based Leadership Team began discussing ways to more effectively address behaviors. During a day in March dedicated to professional development, they implemented a plan to tap in to the talents of their staff, asking grade-level teams to identify behavioral problems specific to their grades and giving them autonomy to dictate behavior policies.

Teachers worked together to identify the problems and had to agree to be unified on whatever decisions or suggestions came out of it. Walker and Storch made the final decisions on how the behavior responders and administration would support the grade-level teams.

"There aren't words to describe the difference that has made."

"There aren't words to describe the difference that has made," says Assistant Interventionist and Special Education Assistant Tracy Drill of the staff buy-in this year. "From the top down you hear, 'I trust you, I value your voice.' That makes staff want to come in earlier, give up their lunches, do the extra work."

Consistent expectations and consequences

For each behavior, staff developed a tiered set of interventions that were consistent throughout the entire school, using the [Behavior Education Plan](#) as a guide. The interventions were designed to be restorative, giving students a chance to reflect on their choices and repair any trust or agreement broken. Eighth grade students who arrive late to class at least four times in a week, for example, are required to attend a lunchtime reflection meeting as their first intervention.

Clearly communicating policies with students and families

Just as important, staff communicated these plans clearly to both students and families at the beginning of the school year. They were asked to sign a contract — everyone understood expectations and consequences. Jones explains, "It was clear that at the first incident, this will happen. At the second, this will happen. The message to parents is, 'We're trying to support your child in being successful in school.'"

"We don't have students walk out of class. We put systems in place to control that." — Kenya Walker

Keeping students in classrooms, learning

It started working almost immediately. Take "walk-outs," for example. Last year, students leaving class was one of the school's major behavior issues. "This year," Walker begins, pausing dramatically, "We don't have students walk out of class. We put systems in place to control that."

Thanks to these strong systems, teachers feel more equipped to respond to behavior issues themselves, rather than reach for the phone at the first sign of trouble. "The call is now the last thing they do," she says. "They do everything they can prior to that to keep students in the classroom, learning."

Authentic authority figures

Principal Walker also credits Black Hawk's new Dean of Students, Jamie Sims, for setting the right tone with students and helping staff stay consistent with expectations and consequences. His colleagues describe him as someone students can relate to "without being phony."

Sims calls himself "a big believer in getting parents involved in kids' behavior. I like to help bridge that gap, so parents know when their kids are having issues. Not just to have them in the loop but to be supportive of what we're doing."

He bridges that gap skillfully, thoughtfully choosing his words when calling parents. He begins all calls with, "We really like your kid...."



Black Hawk Middle School Dean Jamie Sims with a student

**See Black Hawk
Page 9**

On Balance

Black Hawk

Continued from Page 8

Attitudes changing

Kathleen Zuniga, Bilingual Resource Teacher and one of the leaders of the eighth grade social-emotional curriculum, says she's seen a shift from last school year to this school year in the attitude of the students who need more support.

"There were times in the last few years," she says, "when you'd have to clear all the students out of the classroom because a student was refusing to leave the room. They knew the 'consequence' was not going to be a restorative thing."

Now, Zuniga says, "they understand they need support and know it's going to help them and that you're there to support them."

Most of the time, if Sims does need to remove a student from the classroom for an intervention, "we're bringing kids back," which was not the case last year. "It's usually an easy fix, like a restorative conversation, maybe getting parents in on the conversation. And teachers are comfortable with us bringing them back into class."

In fact, he says, sometimes he's called to a classroom only to arrive to find the problem has already been solved. "The teacher will say, 'Nope, they're fine. I told them you were coming and they're fine.'"

Zuniga says it helps that the consequences are tiered, getting progressively serious. "The students know that and don't want to bump it up to the next level."

Rewarding positive behavior and getting to the root of problems

Something staff weren't able to do for students last year, simply because they were busy "plugging holes," is reward students for positive behavior.

"It's hard to be a Positive Behavior Coach if you're just addressing negative behavior," Mike Jones says. "Yesterday we had a movie day where we were actually able to reward kids who are doing the right thing."

What's more, social workers, counselors, psychologists and other Student Services staff once overburdened helping to respond to behavior cases are now better able to focus on helping students through their specialized roles.

Kathleen Zuniga underscores the importance of this — "It's finding the root cause of the behavior instead of just have them go sit somewhere else."

The learning goes on

During their chat, two walkie talkies belonging to Sims and Jones briefly crackled. They paused, ready to respond, and then there was silence.

"I don't even carry a walkie this year," Principal Walker says. "We're averaging maybe 10 calls a day."

"Even less," Jones counters. "At the highest we averaged 10 or 12 calls a day in September," at the very beginning of the school year when students are testing limits and getting used to rules.

As you would expect with the drop in calls, the number of other indicators has also dropped. For example, by this this time last year, 29 student fights had taken place. This year, there have been two.

"The back of our shirts say, 'We are all in this together,'" Jessica Jones-Carver points out. "That's the overall theme this year. If there's a need, we're not afraid to help each other. We're here to support the students together."



Bilingual Resource Teacher Kathleen Zuniga with a student

"The kids who haven't had behavior problems or don't typically have problems are not being disturbed." – Jamie Sims

***See Black Hawk
Page 10***

On Balance

Black Hawk

Continued from Page 9

And, Walker says, “It’s showing in everything — especially their learning. This year, with a more restorative approach, we’re not just plugging holes, we’re repairing relationships, having kids reflect on the choices that they make.”

The culture has impacted all Black Hawk Students, not just those needing interventions. “The kids who haven’t had behavior problems or don’t typically

have problems are not being disturbed,” says Jamie Sims. “That doesn’t happen anymore. We handle it — and not by tossing them out of the building. The learning goes on.”

WI Trauma Project Efforts Continue in Dane County CYF

By Julie Ahnen

Last April, a group of CYF staff came together to begin the long process of moving the Division toward a more trauma-informed culture, with structure and interventions in place to better support staff and the children and families that we serve. There is no instruction manual or road map for this long-haul process, but a committed group of staff are patiently settling on some ideas for initial implementation. The Core Implementation Team is made up of staff from CPS, JJ, NIP, Subcare, ARTT, JFF, and Support Staff. If you don’t know who is representing your area of specialty, ask around. We have been working on developing an “elevator speech” to explain to others what we are up to, and I think we are up to the challenge of being asked! Katie Myhre from Community Partnerships is also on our Team and is keeping us informed about CP’s efforts around trauma-informed care (TIC).

During team discussions, two main areas of focus have emerged - how to enhance our physical spaces and how to build and maintain emotionally supportive environments for all CYF staff. Groups of staff at SMO, STO, NIP and NPO have been meeting and planning around improving the look of the lobby spaces. Bob provided funding for each office to use for artwork and more. JFF staff have been encouraged to think about how their office environments could be improved as well. Community partnerships with schools and other organizations are being explored for artwork possibilities, which staff are really excited about! Recent Team Meetings have been devoted to preparation of our CYF colleagues for Secondary Traumatic Stress training. The team is committed to providing training for all staff, but we want it to be seen as more than just another required training. Watch for more information to be provided to CYF staff in the form of articles, surveys, and Unit Meeting discussions. We are all in this together, and we look forward to what’s to come in 2017!

On Balance

Judge's Corner

By Judge Shelley Gaylord



The Juvenile Division of the Circuit Court has been very active during the past year. Dane County continues to work with Casey Family Programs and has had a Judicial Engagement Team (JET) for the past two years. This team has a steering committee and workgroups whose focus is on improving outcomes for youth who are in need of out-of-home care.

These workgroups have been actively meeting to implement recommendations. Beginning in early 2016, the court now assigns GALs and attorneys for parents in time for the temporary custody hearing. A parent-child visitation project for CHIPS cases was also created with a local non-profit agency providing the services. The service provides more chances for parents with children in out-of-home care to see children in supervised settings and has dramatically increased the number of visits.

A Circles of Support process to engage community members in helping families who are on the cusp of needing CPS services will be implemented in early 2017. A committee called THRIVE has been formed, which involves service providers, DCDHS, community members, Corporation Counsel and Judge Gaylord and is working on early intervention strategies in the community. Three judges met with various members of 100 Black Men and other community groups to work on coordinating efforts for mentoring youth in the delinquency and CPS systems.

Dane County judicial officials attended a meeting in Denver in August sponsored by Casey Family Programs on Differentiated Case Management in CHIPS cases. The local team is addressing case flow management priorities and developing plans to improve case processing, resulting in timelier permanence for children.

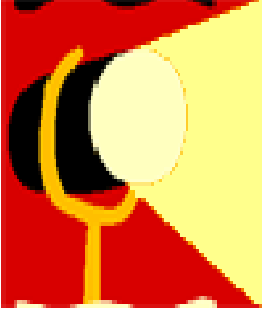
At the end of 2016, the court modified its use of restraints procedure for youth in juvenile court. Now the presumption is that juveniles are not in any form of restraints during the branch hearings unless there is an established risk that the court determines requires their use.

There will be numerous training opportunities in 2017 for system stakeholders on Permanency, Interstate Compacts, housing resources and other topics.

Judges, DA, court staff and others have been meeting to address DA staffing shortages in juvenile cases and to discuss calendaring options. There has also been discussion on changing our rules for delinquent youth and for parents in CPS cases so that recommendations and court orders can be more individualized rather than the current "templates" that are presented to the court.

In early 2017, we will be setting priorities among all of the relevant stakeholders in delinquency and CHIPS cases including the courts, attorneys, human services, providers, guardians ad litem and others who work with Dane County youth. We hope to identify short-term and 3 year term goals for all stakeholders to further help focus our efforts to improve the system.

On Balance



Youth Spotlight – Dylan Moffitt

By Alan Chancellor, DCDHS NIP

Dylan Moffitt, a 17-year-old Junior at LaFollette High School, participated in programming with the Neighborhood Intervention Program for most of 2016. After a bout with bad decision making, Dylan took full advantage of the opportunities offered by DCNIP and decided on a more positive path forward. The self discipline he has displayed and commitment to education should help in life and with future endeavors.

Dylan is an aspiring Botanist and has played Lacrosse for the Eastside Lancers for 3 years. A highlight from Dylan's time with us was a summer visit and tour of UW Milwaukee, which was guided by previous program participant Elijah Hill, now a junior at the school. We had a great time seeing the aspects of student life on campus and learning about the various academic areas of study. As it turned out, Dylan and Elijah were somewhat familiar with each other from LaFollette.

About halfway through our tour, a very serious Elijah took time to ask the young men in the group about their commitment to school and current study habits. He stressed the importance of independent study time outside of the classroom, sharing with them that for him it's easily 4-6 hours per day. Dylan also took time along the way to share with the group some memories of experiences he had on the UWM campus while visiting his older sister who graduated from there.

Last fall, Dylan participated in Making Justice, a joint venture with UW Art Department, students and Madison Public Library Bubbler program. Our semester with the program ended with a highly attended final art show at the Commonwealth Gallery on December 8, 2016. The art now moves to the State Building at 316 West Washington (6th floor) where it will be on display through April 2017.

We would like to wish Dylan the best of luck as he begins the college application process with hopes that he is accepted at a university of his choosing.



On Balance



Staff Spotlight – Carrie Cossom

By Heather Crowley



What is your current role within JJ?

I am currently working as a Youth Worker with Dane County. I was hired to help identify adolescent girls that are at-risk of being gang-involved and/or victims of human trafficking. (These are often related.) I also provide guidance, mentorship and support to girls at Middleton HS and Memorial HS.

Why did you pursue Social Work as a profession?

I chose to pursue social work because I wanted to work with adolescents that are at a disadvantage and having a hard time dealing with issues that are beyond their control. I want to provide support in any way that I can, so that their childhood and adolescent years are as productive as possible.

What would you like to share about your background?

I am a high honor graduate of Upper Iowa University. In August 2016, I received my Bachelor's in Human Services with a training certificate in Social Work. I have faced many challenges throughout my childhood, but I managed to overcome them and have been making positive efforts to maintain my future success.

What do you enjoy most about your current position?

It helps me critically think about changes I can help make in the community. I also like working with the juvenile population because they keep me updated with how the world is evolving from their perspective. This helps me make more informed decision about the changes necessary to help serve the youth population.

What are some job duties you have that people may not be aware of?

I attend the monthly meeting of the Dane County Community Coordinated Response to the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. This Subcommittee brainstorms ways to prevent sex-trafficking and raise awareness about the issue. I also do assessments of individuals referred to me by social workers or law enforcement with regard to at risk juvenile females. I also mentor some of these girls as well as girls at the high schools previously listed.

What else would you like people to know about you?

I am from the West side of Chicago and I am very proud of where I come from, because it made me who I am today. Most of my experiences help me connect better with our troubled youth and I empathize with them wholeheartedly. I am all for Social Change and Justice and I am proud to serve the population I work with.

On Balance

Too Much Sauce

By Veronica Hereford, DCDHS NIP

Lights....Cameras....Action!!! On December 6th the place to be was at the Commonwealth Gallery on Madison's east side. On a Crispy pre-winter day, the young people in the ADDS II Program at NIP made their artistic debut. There was music, food, dancing, and a good time had by all.

What exactly am I talking about? Well let's start back at the beginning. In September 2016, the young people in ADDS II embarked on a journey of epic proportion. Their mission, should they chose to accept it, work with an artsy group of college students to develop an art show. Each of the young people accepted the challenge. They all committed to a project that they had no idea what it would turn out to be in the end.



They each showed up and worked to create a show that reflected them. There were weeks that were easier than others. There were weeks that they really weren't feeling the work that we were doing. There were many weeks when they couldn't figure out what we did that week would in the end turn out to be anything that anyone would want to see. But each week they showed up and they did the work. Each week even when they didn't want to they participated in activities that sometimes made them feel exposed and uncomfortable. Each week they tried food from around the world, sometimes they couldn't even pronounce the name of the food.

All of their hard work culminated into an art show that was spectacular, well received and a reflection of the brilliance that lies in every young person. The pride that shone on the face of the youth as their family members oohed and aahed over the beautiful works that they created was a moment that they will remember for the rest of their lives.

