Performing Ourselves

On Saturday May 3rd, a year of practice and work came to life on stage. Eight girls from the Kennedy Heights Girls Inc. group displayed their recently honed dance and vocal talents on UW-Madison campus in the Margaret H’Doubler performance space. Performing Ourselves was the culmination of a year of learning under the guidance of UW-Dance Student, Ali Levine. They were FABULOUS!

Representative Melissa Sargent Guest Reader At Kennedy Heights

By: Lydia Maurer

Representative Melissa Sargent brought the joy of reading to ECP in May. With the ECP children enthusiastically nodding their heads in approval, Melissa chose to read one of her favorite childhood stories, The Very Hungry Caterpillar. As Melissa read to the children, she helped them count from “one apple” to “five oranges,” compared healthy food to junk food and explained the life cycle of a caterpillar. She happily joined the children as they flapped their hands to celebrate the very hungry caterpillar’s metamorphosis into a beautiful butterfly. Kennedy Heights Community Center thanks Representative Sargent for reading to our preschool children and for sharing her childhood memories to promote a lifelong love of reading.
News From the Heights

Kennedy Heights Community Center offers family style dining to promote healthier meals. Family style meal service allows children and teachers to sit down and eat together, creating a relaxing environment that promotes conversation. Children can not only develop good social skills but can also learn good nutrition habits. The food is passed cooperatively and respectfully from one child to another. Children serve themselves or receive assistance as needed and everyone participates in a pleasant social atmosphere.

Chefs Tyson and Donta prepare breakfast and lunch for Kennedy Heights Community Center’s youngest children, who enjoy meals that have no added salt and low-sugar content, are often whole-grain and served with fresh fruits and vegetables every day. The reaction among the children has been overwhelming, whole-wheat spaghetti with baby carrots is their favorite lunch and whole-grain cereal with a side of kiwi or trees (broccoli) is their favorite breakfast.

Combining nutrition and learning throughout the Early Childhood Program (ECP) and 4K curriculum, the children often assist their teachers in planning meals and preparing snacks such as homemade applesauce. They help prepare fresh fruits and vegetables. While the children are having fun in the kitchen exploring math and science, they learning what it means to eat for good health.

Note from the Executive Director

It is an exciting time in the Kennedy Heights neighborhood and for the city of Madison. The warmer weather provides more space and more opportunity: kids can play four-square, the Strong Women group can walk outside, families swing together at the playground and children climb the rock grotto and jump from the highest heights they dare.

The warm weather creates an openness in the neighborhood and more people are outside: cooking out, chatting with their neighbors and planting gardens in their yards. After this past winter, the warmth of spring warms my fingers and my soul.

It is also an interesting time in the city. People are talking about race and equity. People have been talking race for a while, and for many people race is not a discussion topic but an integral part of every experience. The discussions seem meatier and are taking place in churches, board rooms, city hall and at kitchen tables. More importantly, the discussions seem to be resulting in change: to school discipline policy, formation of community courts and money allocated to supporting the capacity of the community leadership.

Things are warming up and change is in the air.
News From the Heights

Middle School Boys Visit Society of Black Engineers

By: Shelton Evans

The Middle School Boys group went to UW-Madison to engage with the National Society of Black Engineer Students. The focus of the trip was to enhance the boys’ awareness about the possibility of attending college and about how important it is for them to take responsibility for their own education to ensure academic success. The boys had the opportunity to talk to UW-Wisconsin students that come from similar neighborhoods and backgrounds. They learned how to overcome the obstacles that they may face in the future. They also had an informal conversation over pizza about college admissions, fraternities, and opportunities after college to enhance their lives. Lastly, the boys participated in Engineering Jeopardy with the UW engineering students. It was a fun, educational experience.

Northside Scholarship Accepting Applications

By: Alyssa Kenney

Margaret’s Fund: A Northside Scholarship is accepting applications for its 2014-2015 award. Any Northside resident who is an adult returning to post-secondary school after an interruption in their education is invited to apply.

All applicants must be accepted into a degree or certificate seeking program for 2014-15 academic year. Preference will be given to applicants who actively participate or volunteer in Northside organizations and have overcome substantial obstacles or challenges to success.

You can obtain the application and full guidelines at www.northsidemadison.org and click on Margaret’s Fund. The application postmark deadline is Monday June 2, 2014.

Margaret’s Fund was established in 2007 to support residents of Northside Madison neighborhoods who are pursuing higher education.

College is expensive in many ways beyond tuition and books, the two areas covered by most scholarships. Because Margaret’s Fund is unrestricted, the recipient can use the award to pay for some of the often forgotten extra costs of college such as childcare, computers, transportation, , supplies, and special fees. The scholarship award is for $500.

Nicole Tackes, the 2010 returning adult recipient, says, “The scholarship was important for me because I used it to purchase my books and supplies without taking out any additional loans. The award helped me complete all my prerequisites for the nursing program – thank you.”

Questions about Margaret’s Fund can be directed to Alyssa Kenney at 213-7917 or Anne Pryor at 244-7099.
News From the Heights

New Opportunities With Sierra Club

By: Lisa Charron, PASS AmeriCorps Member

In February, we took a group of fourth and fifth graders cross country skiing. We ate a big breakfast at the center before heading out for Elver Park on the west side. There, we met up with volunteers from the Sierra Club’s Inner City Outings program. They helped us rent skis, boots, and poles for all the kids. Then, we taught the kids how to ski. The first lesson we taught them was how to get up when they fell. Everyone laid down on the ground, faced their skis the right way, and with some difficulty, got to their feet. This skill came in handy for the rest of the afternoon.

At first, we all moved slowly as the kids got used to the motion of classic skis. Once they figured out that it’s more like walking than ice skating, they really got the hang of it. We all sliced through the powdery snow in a line, sometimes falling but always getting back up.

By the end of the trip, several kids had really gotten the hang of it! They searched for the biggest hills in the park, struggled up them on the slippery snow, and then got their reward by flying back down, all smiles. I had a great time teaching the kids one of my favorite winter pass times, and was happily surprised when they said they wanted to go another time. The trip was a great way to break up the long, cold winter and turn the snow-covered park into our own playground.

Five Things I Learned at Ready By 21 National Meeting

By: Stephanie Nash, MERIT Coordinator

1. No matter what measures are used, we need to do better at helping all young people grow up ready for college, work and life. Raising “ready” children and youth requires a steady stream of support from families, schools and communities to ensure that young people are equipped, prepared and engaged.

2. The college- and work-readiness rates of high school seniors and high school graduates are appallingly low. Readiness must encompass developmental skills or assets, school completion and success, exposure and risk prevention. It is not only the schools that should be held responsible for fixing the “readiness” problem of our youth, it is the entire community.

3. Light bulb moment as Ralph Smith, managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, spoke about readiness, equity and the need for social change: "Are we ready to find the courage and willingness to close the gap between what we know and what we do?"

4. Patrick McCarthy, CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, spoke about policymakers working together for impact. "We know how to scale. The problem is that we've scaled a lot of things that don't work very well."

5. The power of Positive Youth Development is getting teens involved in activities they’re interested in and involving them in communities can improve their health and reduce teen pregnancy rates.
News From the Heights

**After School Clubs Rock!**

By: Taleah Cameron-Cuesta, Age 10

Every Monday this winter, the other Kennedy Heights kids and I went to Lindbergh Flying ACCES and went on field trips. There was a club for Rockin’ Robots, Jumpin’ Jellybeans, Nature Nuts, and Aspiring Artists. I was in Jumpin’ Jellybeans.

In Jumpin’ Jellybeans, we went to Madtown Twisters to do gymnastics. We jumped on the trampoline, we played in the bouncy house, and we swung on ropes. It was fun! All the clubs looked fun, but I liked Jumpin’ Jellybeans best! I loved Jumpin’ Jellybeans.

Some of the kids got to go to the downtown library and built robots out of Legos. Another group went to the Art museum and learned to draw. All of the clubs were really fun.

**Come Join the Northside Youth Council**

By: Chrisy Herndon, Age 13

The Northside Youth Council is a group of middle school and high school students who meet once a month to plan events and talk about what’s happening in the community. The Northside Youth Council is looking for teens eager to make the Northside a better place to live, work, and play.

In March we planned a poetry slam at Warner Park, which is a competition for students to write their best poetry and perform it. We are hoping to plan more fun things for kids soon!

Our group got a By Youth For Youth grant to host a Youth Empowerment Summit this November.

**Girls Inc. Performs, Dances, Learns**

By Jada Shaw, Age 12

Since September, Kennedy Heights Girls Inc. has had a dance program for girls, 4th grade and older. A few months ago we went on a field trip to UW Department of Dance and met a wonderful artist named Rhodessa Jones. Rhodessa is a dancer and she teaches dance all over the world. She helps women who are in jail in California and in Africa. We did a workshop with her.

We also practiced dance every Wednesday all school year. Our teacher was a UW student named Ali. In December, we performed at Warner Park. The final performance was May 3rd at UW Department of Dance, on a real stage in a real theater. It was a great experience to learn about dance, to learn about ourselves and to perform for a happy audience.
News From the Heights

Dionna Stovall is T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Awardee

Dionna Stovall is an After School teacher at the Kennedy Heights Community Center. She is also the recipient of a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship. Dionna is pursuing her associate’s degree in Early Childhood Education from Madison College. This has been no small feat. Dionna has been a committed and skilled teacher at Kennedy Heights for five years. She continues to work full time while completing a credit-based education. This can be attributed to Dionna’s dedication to children and commitment to learning what is new in the field. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Wisconsin provides access to higher education to those in the child care field. Dionna is a deserving recipient of this scholarship. We are grateful to such a skilled teacher.

Program Receives National Award For Innovation

By: Jordan Harder, PASS AmeriCorps Member

The Dane County service organization, AmeriCorps, Partners for After School Success (PASS), was recently featured in a national publication. America’s Service Commissions and Innovations in Civic Participation recognized PASS AmeriCorps as an innovative program in the 2014 edition of Transforming Communities through Service: A Collection of the Most Innovative AmeriCorps State and Volunteer Generation Fund Programs in the United States.

PASS responds to the educational needs of youth by placing 35 AmeriCorps members at school and community host sites in predominantly low-income or resource-scarce communities. The goal of PASS is to improve the academic achievement and school engagement of students through positive relationships. PASS volunteers provide literacy tutoring and academic support through 1:1 literacy tutoring to struggling readers for a minimum of 15 sessions over the course of a school year. Members also provide extensive learning programs that build social and life skills.

On the Northside, PASS AmeriCorps members working at Blackhawk Middle School, Kennedy Heights Community Center, Vera Court Neighborhood Center, and Sherman Middle School have been helping kids achieve both in and outside of school through enriching programming and service learning.

I am constantly amazed at the compassion and effort put in by every single PASS AmeriCorps member. Bolstered by great leadership from the director of PASS, Connie Bettin, I’ve seen AmeriCorps members around Madison transform the lives of students and their communities. Congratulations, PASS AmeriCorps, for receiving this great commendation and for another successful year of serving Dane County youth! PASS AmeriCorps is “getting things done” on the Northside.
News From the Heights

MERIT Program Releases Impact Report For National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

By Alyssa Kenney

The Madison Empowering Responsibly in Teens (MERIT) Program is a citywide initiative that seeks to empower young people to make positive decisions about their future and their sexual health. Kennedy Heights Community Center has been a program partner since the beginning. Over the past 3 years the program has been delivered to over 2000 youth in Dane County.

On May 9th, the MERIT program celebrated the National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and presented the key findings of the program’s impact to the community.

“MERIT program positively impacts all participants. Participants report improved knowledge of safe sex, sexually transmitted diseases and overall sex health efficacy. Sexual Self Efficacy is knowledge, skill set and ability to make positive decisions regarding sexual health and demonstrating confidence in the ability to refuse having sex or to take precautions. In addition, participants in the community center setting report significant gains in social outcomes commonly associated with positive youth development,” reads the impact report.

In a nutshell, the MERIT program works at giving youth the knowledge and skills they need to make good choices. Further, the impact is better for youth who continue to engage in community center programming.

If you would like a copy of the report or more information about MERIT you can contact the community center at 244-0767.

Kennedy Heights Volunteers Spotlight—3 Stars

Danielle Dragon takes the bus from campus each week so she can help in the After School Program. She has also helped the center develop some infographics to better illustrate our work to donors.

Martin Babcock has been a volunteer for over three years. He implemented a social emotional curriculum with kids, helps with homework and on field trips. He even came out to support our girls at their dance.

Early mornings and heavy lifting are a breeze for Arkhora Pwang. Every Monday morning, Arkhora meets the Second Harvest delivery truck and helps to unload over one ton of food for the food pantry. This is critical and time sensitive work.

Kennedy Heights is currently seeking two PASS AmeriCorps Members for the service term starting September 1, 2014. See our website www.khcommunitycenter.org or call Connie Bettin, PASS AmeriCorps Director for more information 242-6422.

Summer Counselor-in-Training KHCC is seeking a high school ages student to assist with our summer camp program. To apply interested students must complete an application by June 6th.
Now Enrolling Summer Camp

For the first time in ten years, the Kennedy Heights Community Center will host two free summer camp programs for children on the Northside. The elementary age summer program came about due to the growing need for quality programming for younger kids and with support from the City of Madison’s Emerging Opportunities Program. Kennedy Heights will offer two, eight-week summer day camp programs. One program will provide programming for children currently in 1st - 4th grade and the second program will provide programming for youth in 5th – 8th grades. The programs will run concurrently at the community center starting June 23rd from noon—4:30 PM. Children need access to enriching activities and new opportunities. Summer is a great time for children to explore their current interests and try new activities. Interested families should complete and submit an enrollment form by June 6th. Forms are available at the center or by calling 244-0767.

Upcoming Important Dates

May 26 Memorial Day—Center is Closed
June 2 Northside Scholarship Applications Due
June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Food Pantry
June 5 Black Hawk Talent Show at 6:30 PM
June 11 Last day of After School Program and 4K
June 11 Last day of Early Childhood until summer
June 12 Last day of school—Madison schools
June 23 Summer Camps, Early Childhood Program and Summer Food Programs Begin
July 4 Independence Day Center is Closed
July 7, 14, 21, 28 Food Pantry
August 4, 11, 18, 25 Food Pantry
August 15 Last day of Summer Camp, Early Childhood Program and Summer Food Program
August 20, 21, 22 School Registration
September 4 School year programming resumes