Youth Created Art Unveiled

Kennedy Heights children and youth were busy this summer working with Northside artist Alexis London on two community art projects. Children in our elementary school summer camp designed and painted a little library that was installed in the community. The children worked with Alexis to explore the places that reading takes them and then created drawings of their ideas about reading which were painted onto the little library.

Meanwhile, youth in the middle school summer program worked with Alexis to design mural pieces for Warner Park Beach Shelter that celebrate northside wildlife and native plants. Youth sketched the drawings and then painted large wooden pieces that were affixed to the building. The mural was unveiled in a celebration with State Representative Melissa Sargent and northside Alder Anita Weier. The beach shelter looks fabulous with plants and animals placed on all sides. Go check it out.

MERIT Continues to Provide Youth with Skills and Information

By Stephanie Nash

With the 2014-15 school year off to a great start, it’s kind of hard to believe that MERIT has entered into year five of its five-year grant from the Office of Adolescent Health. Like a proud parent who has watched their baby grow; get bigger and better throughout the past 4 years, I greet this year with bittersweet anticipation. Madison Empowering Responsibility in Teens (MERIT) at Kennedy Heights continues to expand having new community and school partnerships including NESYB and Madison Spartan Basketball Associations, Team Supreme, Clark Street Community School, Lussier Community Education Center’s Youth Action Summer Internship Program.

This is in addition to faithful partnerships with Girl’s Inc, Kennedy Heights Boys Group, Black Hawk and Sherman Middle Schools, Work & Learn, Vera Court Neighborhood, East Madison Community Center and MSCR. MERIT is a holistic and educational platform that provides a safe space for youth, the focus is on sexual health education, teen pregnancy prevention, youth leadership and community involvement as well as self-esteem building, personal awareness and self-identification.
News From the Heights

Ten Great Years!
December 21 is my birthday and ten years ago on my birthday I got life-changing gift—a job offer to work as the director here. Over the years, we have built playgrounds, expanded partnerships, doubled our staff, started new programs, created art and hosted hundreds of community events. I have loved all of these events and milestones, but what brings me the greatest joy is getting to be a small part of so many fantastic children’s journey growing up. There is something so special about writing a letter of reference for college for a kid you met when they were in 3rd grade. Kids from Kennedy Heights have become parents, marines, college graduates and community leaders. It is such a privileged to watch and to know so many great young people and their families.

Richard Ballard: Eights Years at Kennedy Heights

By Erik House
After speaking with Richard Ballard, one of the eighth graders in our Kennedy Heights Boys Group, it was easy to see how much he loves and appreciates his community center. He has been coming to Kennedy Heights since he was five years old and has continued to be involved with the center’s programs throughout elementary and middle school. Now as an 8th grader, I have seen Richard take on a leadership role this year. For example, on one of our recent trips to Boulders Rock Climbing Gym, Richard volunteered to be trained in belaying so that the other boys would have more opportunities to climb. He sacrificed his own climbing time to assist his Brothers who had never before climbed themselves.

To quote him directly, “I’ve been going to the center since I was five and the reason I keep coming back is because Kennedy Heights isn’t just a center it’s a community, it’s a family. Kennedy Heights is where I grow up and I’ve loved this place since I was young and I would tell everyone to come here . . . I know I won’t stop coming until I have to. If you give Kennedy Heights a try you will love it, because I

Celebrating Fall With Horses and Pumpkins

By Alyssa Watts
On Monday, October 6th, the 4th and 5th grade After School Program took a field trip to the Interstate Horse Farm and Anderson’s Pumpkin Patch. At the Horse Farm, the students met Miss Nikki, who gave everyone a tour of the farm. Once Miss Nikki taught the students about the different animals they were about to see, they got to meet a few friendly farm cats, feed some hungry sheep, and even pet the big horses! After all the excitement of the horse farm, they hopped on a hayride that took them past some corn fields, through a forest, and even over a little stream. At the end of the ride, they arrived at the Pumpkin Patch, where everyone got to choose their own pumpkin that was “the size of their heads!”

Richard, October 2014 above November 2009 below

Students at Horse Farm

Students at Pumpkin Patch
News From the Heights

Meet Kennedy Heights PASS AmeriCorps Members

Joey Foote
My name is Joey Foote and I am one of the new AmeriCorps members at Kennedy Heights Community Center. I work with fourth and fifth graders in the After School Program, as well as helping to lead the middle school boys group. I will also be working with students on literacy tutoring at Black Hawk Middle School.

I have lived in Madison for about a year and a half now and have really grown to love the city, especially the northside where I live. I moved from Norman, Oklahoma after graduating from the University of Oklahoma with a degree in international studies and history. My goal is to one day become a teacher and be able to impact students lives in a positive way. I will never forget the handful of teachers who had such great impacts on my development as a student and as young man.

In my free time I enjoy playing sports like soccer and Ultimate Frisbee, as well as playing the guitar and going to see live music. I also love to read. I am very excited for the opportunity to work with such great kids at this amazing community center!

Alyssa Watts
Hello! My name is Alyssa Watts and I am one of this year’s PASS AmeriCorps Members at Kennedy Heights. This year, I’ll be working at both Black Hawk Middle School as a literacy tutor and at Kennedy Heights with the 4th and 5th grade After School Program and Girls Inc. While I’m not originally from Madison, I have called it home for the last 8 years. I moved here in 2006 for my undergraduate studies in Sociology and Criminal Justice at UW-Madison, and then found work as a Financial Counselor and Mentor at the Madison College branch of UW Credit Union. This fall, in addition to my position with AmeriCorps, I am taking psychology courses in preparation for attending graduate school.

Outside of work and school, I enjoy exploring the city of Madison, as well as practicing yoga and dance—I studied dance for 13 years, including a few years spent with the Dance Program at UW-Madison, so I am extremely excited to work with the UW Dance Program during the Girls Inc. dance classes and performances.

My true passion has always been in engaging and empowering youth in their communities, as well as helping them find their voices in society. I look forward to working with the students of the Kennedy Heights community and can’t wait to see what they learn from me, and what I learn from them!

Pride, joy and determination are just a few of the great things resulting from our Early Childhood Program.

Alyssa and Joey

Staff

Alyssa Kenney, Executive Director
Jim Kidd, Custodian
Lydia Maurer, Early Childhood
True Yang, After School Coordinator, Early Childhood Teacher
Kate Remington, Early Childhood
Tyson Brown, Food Service
Xheva Munishi Food Service
Donna Stovall, After School Teacher
Megan Beckler, After School Teacher
Jaimie Schlicher, Girls Inc.
Doua Chang, Food Pantry
Stephanie Nash, MERIT Coordinator
JeVaughtnte Robinson, MERIT Facilitator
Yimmuaj Yang, Asian Outreach Coordinator
Joey Foote, AmeriCorps Member
Alyssa Watts, AmeriCorps Member

Alyssa and Joey
Upcoming Important Dates

November 14 Youth Empowerment Summit at Warner Park Recreation Center 11—7
November 18 Community Thanksgiving Meal at Black Hawk Middle School 6—7:30
November 21 Giving Tree Forms Due
November 24 Turkey Distribution
November 24 Food Pantry
November 27—28 Center Closed
November 28-29 Hmong New Year Celebration at Alliant Energy Center
December 1, 8, 15, 29 Food Pantry
December 22—26 Center Closed Winter Break
January 1 Center Closed
January 5 School year programming resume
March 12 COMETS Family Science Night

Low-Cost Internet MIGHT be coming to the Kennedy Heights Neighborhood

For the past year the City of Madison’s Digital Technology Committee has been meeting to develop recommendations to close the digital divide through offering free or reduced cost internet access to low-income residents. At the October meeting the committee selected four possible neighborhoods for this pilot. Kennedy Heights was one of the four neighborhoods selected. The city is currently requesting information from vendors to provide the necessary infrastructure and service to make this a reality. Alder Anita Weier, Lindbergh Principal Liz Fritz and the property management company, Meridian have all been supportive of our pursuit of this unique opportunity for the neighborhood. Please thank them. If you want to learn more or help contact Alyssa at the center. Keep your fingers crossed.